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Discussions On The Conduct of War

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Nathan Finney

Brett Friedman

Jon Klug

Gerry Long

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John Wilson

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A Note From The Editor

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Military Operations*.

The IJ Group, and the staff of *Military Operations*, wish to congratulate Clint Ancker for winning the 2013 Frederick M. Franks, Jr. Award. Clint is a member of *Military Operations*' Editorial Advisory Panel and has been Director of the US Army's Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate for almost 20 years. The Franks Award is presented annually for 'long-term contributions to the ground-fighting and warfighting capabilities of the U.S. Army' and 'the transformation of the mounted force to fight and win in unified land operations'. Clint was selected for the award for his 'demonstrated improvement in mounted warfare, specifically in the area of survivability, lethality, manoeuvrability and mobility.' The award was presented by Lt Gen David G. Perkins, commander of the US Army's Combined Arms Center, at Fort Leavenworth.

2014 should be an interesting year. Coalition forces will largely withdraw from Afghanistan, marking the end of 11 years of continuous military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and 12 years since the first deployments into Afghanistan in support of the Northern Alliance. It is also the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War, or First World War. 2014 should therefore be a year for reflection. What have we learnt? What should we learn? What do we now know about learning?

1914 showed that armies had no real answer to the problem of modern rifled weapons. Afghanistan, and to some extent Iraq, actually tell us that that problem has not yet been resolved. In practice, recent conflicts tell us that when modern rifled weapons are coupled to obstacles, (in the form of IEDs, singly or in combination) then the seemingly most capable armed forces in the world can be reduced to movement at a snail's pace and protracted, indecisive conflict. Have we actually learnt anything since 1914?

Clearly we have. In some ways we have learnt a great deal but, as demonstrated above, in some ways we have not. That tells us something about collective learning. It may be that the great efforts expended in the 1990s, 2000s and the present decade on Centres for Lessons 'Learnt' have told us a great deal about small questions, and yet very little about big questions. In a sense that is worrying. It also suggests that *Military Operations* isn't about to go out of business. There is still much, and much that is important, to learn.

The Operational Level of War, and operational art, has been a theme of discussion since the first edition of *Military Operations*. Nathan Toronto's article in this edition takes that debate a concrete step further. Rather than saying that the operational level does, or doesn't exist; or that it should, or shouldn't exist; his article asks when operational art (and hence discussion of an operational level) *is likely to be useful*. It presents some novel and valuable insights. More will no doubt emerge in future discussion. It does, however, prompt a further question: *how much* of an operational level is useful? In my personal opinion, the concept of an operational level and operational art can be useful in several circumstances. However, it is often grossly overdone in bloated command posts which actually detract from the campaign which they exist to run.

Nathan Finney, Brett Friedman and Jon Klug look at a specific aspect of theatre-level operations. Their article 'Out of Balance: Rebalancing Access and Overcoming Denial' is, partly, a critique of the US Air-Sea Battle concept. Not least, it reminds us that mechanisms for forcible entry into opposed theatres of operations are not a substitute for robust campaign design. They may be a necessary part of a campaign plan; but of themselves, never a necessary and sufficient part.

'All our recent conflicts have been viewed as relative failures with the corresponding 'push back' from the general public, since no-one articulated the idea that there will not be a decisive battle.' Those few words from the conclusion of Gerry Long's article, 'The Edge of Glory' provide both an important insight and a clarion call. 'What constitutes success' in low-intensity conflict is clearly important. If we do not understand that, how can we recognize it when it occurs? But, equally importantly, what would it feel like, both for the participants and the general public? Has a low-intensity conflict ever resulted in a euphoric sense of victory? And, if not, what does that mean for the education of the next generation of commanders?

If Long is right, western armed forces may not be able to achieve decisive battle in low-intensity conflict. However, '[t]hey do

face Dien Bien Phus, Mogadishus and Ia Drang Valleys', as William Owen reminds us in his article 'The Tactics Gap'. Modern armed forces can and do lose, and lose badly. It happens. In a previous century it happened at Isandlwhana and Adowa. 'The tactics gap' suggests that that is in part a result of a failure of professional military education: a failure to really understand the dynamics of combat. There is an objective element in the study of tactics; yet western armed forces, their schools and their officer academies don't seem to teach it. Yet today many field officers have master's degrees. Are we, perhaps, teaching them the wrong things?

The anonymous piece in this edition, entitled 'Training Observations,' is not strictly an article. It is taken verbatim from a post-exercise report written by a serving officer. He is not particularly senior but (in the editor's opinion) highly perceptive. A battle-group went out on exercise. After years of involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, it had forgotten that infantry should fight on foot. It had forgotten how to give simple and quick orders. It had forgotten the importance of slick drills and SOPs. It had forgotten how to handle its AFVs. The observations could easily apply to several armies. Its contents are important in their own right. But they are also important because they remind us that no matter how much we may think we have learnt in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is a great deal that we have forgotten.

Military Operations discusses how land forces do, could, or should fight. One answer is: 'morally; or not at all'. There are any number of good reasons why the armed forces of developed countries should fight in ways which are both morally defensible and within the rule of law. Some laws exist to prescribe what is morally right and wrong. Murder is a case in point. Armed forces will have great difficulties if their officers and soldiers cannot, or do not, discriminate between murder and a lawful act of war. John Wilson recently attended a trial of three servicemen accused of murder on military operations. He describes his thoughts in 'The Killing of an Unknown Afghan Fighter in September 2011'. In some ways it is the most important piece that *Military Operations* has published to date.

In 2013 the staff of *Military Operations* ran a highly successful two-day Masterclass at St. John's College, Cambridge. Just under 30 people, from 12 countries, attended. They were from a mixture of serving military, professional and academic backgrounds. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. *Military Operations*, and The IJ Group, will expand its programme of events for 2014. Please look out for announcements on our websites.

It has been half a year since the publication of the fourth edition of *Military Operations*. The reason is quite simple: the flow of articles. We have received many proposals and draft articles. We had to reject one or two which simply weren't good enough. One or two writers couldn't, or wouldn't, write simple clear English. But the great majority didn't discuss how land forces do, could, or should fight. They were outside the scope of Military Operations. There is a demand: our subscriptions keep growing, and people keep visiting our websites. When we visit military units we see our articles printed off, and people ask us about *Military Operations*. People are interested, worldwide. To go back to the beginning of this editorial, Coalition forces have been involved in Iraq and Afghanistan for over a decade. So, there is no shortage of first-hand experience. There seems to be no shortage of ideas. The only shortage is one of people who write, in simple clear English, about how land forces can, should or could fight.

This means you.

If you have read this far, you are interested in land warfare. Please open up your laptop and write. We are here to help you turn good ideas into insightful, interesting and relevant published articles. We look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Storr
Editor, Military Operations
January 2014

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Does Operational Art Exist? Space, Time, and a Theory of Operational Art

Nathan W. Toronto [i]

What is the utility of operational art? Practitioners and theoreticians alike have argued that modern warfare requires the application of operational art.[ii] In fact, at the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, every academic course in the curriculum has the words "Operational Art" in its title. There is an ongoing discussion about whether it was Napoleon Bonaparte or Ulysses Grant who brought the operational level of war into being.[iii] Other students of military operations and strategy have argued that the operational level of war either does not exist or is not useful,[iv] or that operational art itself has consumed strategy.[v] Furthermore, many of the principles of strategy that Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz describes in *On War* are similar to ways of thinking that are taught as operational art. Even still, a number of military leaders have credited the U.S. Army's application of operational art with notable successes, from Panama in 1989 to Afghanistan today.[vi] In short, there are some who accept operational art's utility as a matter of incontrovertible fact, and others who suggest that it is not useful at all.

In the interest of clarity, it is worth noting that this debate sometimes does not distinguish between operational art and the operational level of war. Operational art is a way of thinking, and is distinct from the operational level of war, which is a military echelon intended to apply operational art. The operational level of war changes, presumably, from one conflict to another. However, since most who suggest that operational art has little utility also tend to suggest that the operational level of war does not exist, this argument puts the level and the way of thinking in the same category.

As for the debate on operational art's utility, if, on one hand, there is no operational level of war, and if operational art bears little sway on conducting effective military operations, then what explains the U.S. and allied militaries' commitment to the concept? If, on the other hand, operational art has existed since some point in the nineteenth century, then has all warfare since then required this changed way of thinking?

Operational art is neither an incontrovertible fact nor useless, but rather an idea whose utility varies across time and space. There may be times when it is better to believe that operational art simply does not exist, but other times when operational art is essential for strategic success. Put another way, the origin of operational art, as one theorist observes, is simple: "The first time a commander faced a type of problem that created the need to disperse his force's tactical actions, and he responded by purposefully arranging those tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to pursue a strategic objective, he was practicing operational art."[vii] Under what conditions, then, does a commander face these types of problems?

The answer to this question relies on what defines an engagement. Strategy, as Clausewitz avers, is "the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war,"[viii] and it behooves the strategist to define what constitutes an engagement in the conflict upon which he has embarked. Are the discrete, tactical engagements in a given war of the sort that require commanders to "purposefully [arrange] those tactical actions in time, space, and purpose"? Are there forces that influence whether some engagements have more meaning for strategy than others? In other words, the character of engagements—and thus the character of a war—help define the space between tactics and strategy, and can also help practitioners know when operational art is truly necessary and when it is merely nice to have around.

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Space

The typology of engagements can be characterized along two axes: space and time. The first axis, space, is familiar to students of operational art. The increasing scale of land warfare over the course of the nineteenth century, necessitated by the increasing lethality of the battlefield, also increased the space over which single engagements tended to occur. This emptying of the battlefield made it necessary for commanders to rely on staffs in order to organize and synchronize military efforts in pursuit of strategic aims; these aims became difficult to achieve unless tactical actions were organized into campaigns.[ix]

Thus, to decide tactical engagements required more space and more violence than commanders could physically see and control, and states—because of the size of armies—could no longer concentrate the mass necessary to make any tactical engagement truly decisive. This relationship between the violence available and the level of control necessary to fight led to a systematic expansion in the space required to conclude tactical engagements; this increase in the size of the engagement thus drove the need for campaigning. From a campaign planning perspective, the size of a potential battlefield is of crucial importance, since the available mass, reach, and control of violence in a given space informs the commander's decision to organize tactical actions into a campaign. Other things equal, then, when military engagements are of a larger scale, they are more likely to require the application of operational art in order to achieve strategic aims.

Over time, technology and other factors have influenced the scale of the battlefield. The centralization of state control over resources beginning in the late Middle Ages contributed to the mobilization of unprecedented levels of military manpower. Increased manpower, in turn, required more space on the battlefield and contributed to such phenomena as the Napoleonic corps system, improved quartermastering, and the military profession. Following these trends, and connected to them, the industrial revolution precipitated an explosion in communications technology (telegraph and railways, in particular), the industrialization of warfare, and the rise of nationalism. These trends help explain why the battlefield has become so lethal, and why one observer calls the modern battlefield "empty."[x]

There are factors that can contribute to the shrinking of the battlefield, as well. The lethality of the battlefield is based not only on the availability of firepower, but also on target acquisition and precision. So, combatants that can conceal and anonymize themselves—say, by fighting in and among the population [xi]—can in effect shrink the space that an engagement takes to resolve itself. This is one reason the troop surge was so successful in Baghdad—it forced insurgents to reveal themselves over a large swath of terrain, exposing them to the superior technology and firepower of Coalition forces.[xii] In addition to this, the proliferation of sensor technology can increase a commander's scope of control over an engagement, essentially shrinking the battlefield in cognitive, as opposed to spatial, terms.

In sum, when it comes to space, the size of the engagement is determined by both longer-term, historical trends like the diffusion of technology, and shorter-term choices such as the disposition of forces and the use of technology. The fact of the matter is, though, that the size of the engagement varies from conflict to conflict. There is no guarantee that the historical conditions that initially led theoreticians to consider the relevance of operational art will, in fact, replicate themselves in the future.

Time

The second axis along which engagements can be characterized is time, more specifically the delay between tactical outcomes and the strategic effects these outcomes aim to achieve. Deciding some engagements has a more rapid strategic effect than other types of engagements. On one end of the spectrum, if a war is characterized by a large number of engagements that, individually, have little effect on accomplishing national policy goals, then this tends to increase the time delay between tactical outcomes and strategic effects. Large-scale counterinsurgency and combined-arms continental land warfare are examples of these types of engagements. On the other end of the spectrum, if a war is characterized by a few engagements that are highly significant strategically, then this tends to decrease the delay between tactical outcomes and strategic effects. A nuclear holocaust would be an example of this type of engagement. A longer strategic time delay heightens the need to arrange tactical actions in a strategically coherent way. Other things equal, then, military engagements with a longer strategic time delay are more likely to require the application of operational art in order to achieve national policy goals.

One crucial caveat is in order: not all engagements are created equal. Some engagements have a disproportionate effect on the outcome of wars than others, even if they could all be considered part of the same class of engagement. Gettysburg, in hindsight, had a tremendous impact on the outcome of the American Civil War due to its timing, location, and political ramifications, even though it was similar to other Civil War engagements in terms of the tactical violence employed. What is more, this "tipping point" effect is often hard to anticipate, as with the Battle for Ramadi, Iraq, in 2006 and 2007.[xiii] So, the delay between tactical and strategic outcomes can be a function of strategic forces as much as it is of tactical conditions; the strategic time delay is sometimes hard to predict.

That said, there are some factors that do tend to influence the length of the strategic time delay systematically, and they are just as varied as those that influence the size of the battlefield. One factor is the resilience of the enemy, or the enemy's ability to continue operating in the face of adverse tactical outcomes. An enemy's resilience might result from forces such as access to funding or knowledge of the terrain, but it could also result from ideological commitment to a cause. This suggests that the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century and the explosion of Islamist extremism in the twentieth have contributed to a general expansion of the strategic time delay.

Another factor influencing the length of the strategic time delay is civil-military relations. When civilian control over the military is less direct—when the military has the cognitive space to consider and manage the potential uses of military violence—then the strategic time delay is longer and the application of operational art is more likely to be useful in attaining national policy goals. Such has been the case, for example, in the post-Vietnam US military and the interwar Soviet military, which generally received the cognitive space to manage military operations as they saw fit. It need not be the case, however, that every operation conducted by a military force be governed by the same directness of civilian control. For example, the US military of today has much less freedom of thought in the conduct of covert direct action missions, such as those to capture or kill top al-Qaeda targets, than it does over the conduct of large-scale counterinsurgency operations, such as those in Iraq from 2003–2011. In addition, the directness of civilian control over the military can be tied to the individuals involved—few American Secretaries of Defense have been as directly involved in military decision-making as Donald Rumsfeld was in the run-up to the 2003

Iraq War. So, while different countries' civil-military relations may exhibit general tendencies, this is still contingent on the character of the military engagements and personalities in question.

Technological and other factors can also influence the strategic time delay. Media penetration of the battlefield increases the likelihood that an engagement will have a rapid political effect, so social media and other web publication technologies have tended to make individual engagements more salient strategically. At the same time, some military forces have demonstrated an ability to insulate the battlefield from media penetration—such as the Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank. Some battlefields are decidedly more hostile that others to media penetration—such as many naval engagements and Syria from late 2011 on. Another important factor in establishing the strategic time delay is the extent of national will that a state devotes to it. The crossing of the Suez Canal in 1973, for example, represented a tremendous investment of Egyptian national resources relative to the country's overall ability to apply violence. This helps explain why the Egyptian national narrative focuses on the successful crossing, rather than on the Egyptian Army being largely surrounded and unable to conduct operations at the cessation of hostilities.[xiv] Had the crossing failed, the strategic effect would have been immediate and devastating, so the strategic time delay was very short in that case.

In sum, as with an engagement's size, the delay between an engagement's tactical outcome and its strategic effect is contingent on a number of factors. To be sure, though, some engagements have had a shorter strategic time delay than others, so it is worthwhile to think about how this variation matters for the utility of operational art.

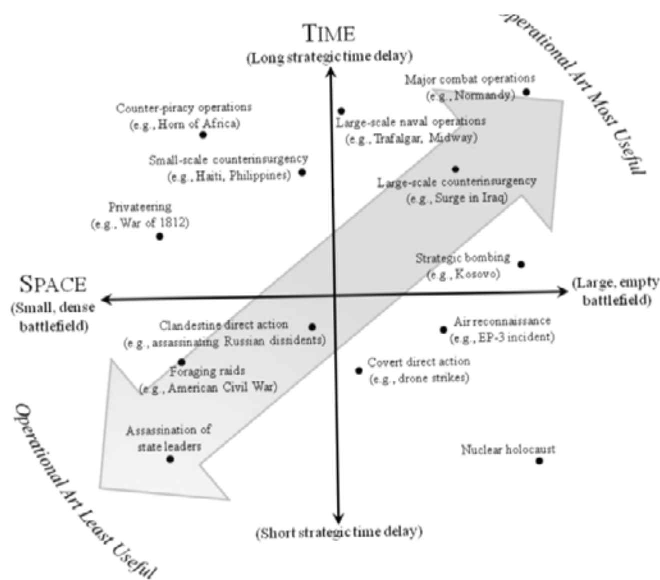

Figure 1. Space, Time, and Operational Art

A Theory of Operational Art

Plotted on a Cartesian plane, the two axes of space and time suggest one way to think about the utility of operational art. At one extreme—the upper-right corner of Figure 1—where the strategic time delay and the size of the battlefield are at their theoretical maxima, operational art is the most useful. This is where the character of warfare fairly begs the military commander to arrange tactical actions in a strategically coherent manner, for if he does not then disaster is the likely result. At the other extreme—the lower-left corner—where the strategic time delay and the size of the battlefield are at their theoretical minima, operational art is the least useful. Here, the conditions of the battlefield are decidedly indifferent to the application of operational art. The tactician may apply operational art, but it might not matter a whit.

In between these two theoretical extremes lies the reality of warfare. The types of operations represented in Figure 1 certainly do not constitute an exhaustive list, but two implications of this figure are worth mentioning. The first implication is that, in the last two hundred years, the character of warfare has drifted towards the upper-right corner, coinciding with a prolific expansion in military literature on the application of operational art, as well as the salience of large-scale counterinsurgency and major combat operations. The reasons for this drift are manifold, but have mainly to do with the historical trends already mentioned. It may even be that the technology of warfare has changed so fundamentally that physical space no longer matters on the battlefield; in essence, only one of the two axes—time—may be relevant anymore. This implication might be worth investigating further.

The second implication is that we have no guarantee that future warfare will hang around in the upper-right corner of Figure 1. Major combat operations and large-scale counterinsurgency may have been the province of the last two hundred years, but there are indications that this trend is changing.[xv] Not the least of them is an ever-greater reliance on direct-action capture-kill missions and standoff precision strike using unmanned aerial systems.[xvi] This trend, combined with a general weariness for both large-scale counterinsurgency and major combat operations, suggests that the future soldier could operate in an environment where operational art does not really matter very much.

Conclusion

If this paper has one contribution, it is in specifying conditions under which the application of operational art is likely to be useful. It is not enough to say that the operational level of war does not exist simply because it is a construct created for a different time and place; of course the operational level of war does not exist in and of itself—it changes based on battlefield conditions. At the same time, it is also not enough to defend the inculcation of operational art simply because it has been useful for a specific type of warfare in the past—a past that seems less and less likely to repeat itself—and then use that same anachronistic language to defend operational art's utility. However, since the conditions that originally led military theoreticians to postulate the existence of operational art have receded in importance, it is worth considering which side of this debate is less wrong than the other.

The truth of the matter lies squarely in between these two extremes. There are conditions under which it is much more useful to think of operational art as existing, rather than not. It is for the military theoretician and practitioner to determine what those conditions are, and hopefully thinking about operational art in terms of both time and space will make a positive contribution to this debate.

Nathan W. Toronto is an Associate Professor at the United Arab Emirates National Defense College.

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[i] I am grateful to Tom Bruscino, Robert Davis, Jeff Kubiak, Chris Marsh, Matthew Schmidt, Barry Stentiford, and seminar participants at the School of Advanced Military Studies for helpful written and verbal comments on earlier versions of this project. The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the position of any agency or government.

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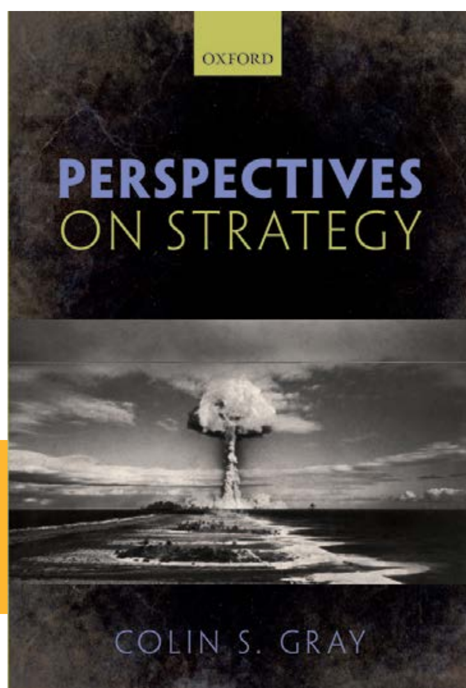

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Out of Balance: Rebalancing Access and Overcoming Denial

Nathan Finney, Brett Friedman and Jon Klug

'A ship's a fool to fight a fort.'

Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson, British Royal Navy

Against a backdrop of shrinking defense budgets and a diminishing military commitment in Afghanistan, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has developed several concepts to address future defense challenges. Among those challenges, the proliferation of anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capabilities has drawn the most attention. Enabled by cheap, easily acquired, yet advanced weapons, potential adversaries are building the capability to contest access to the global commons to a degree not seen since the demise of the Soviet Union and the decline of its navy. To combat this rising A2/AD threat, the U.S. Air-Sea Battle Office has proposed the Air-Sea Battle concept (ASB). This concept is, naturally, primarily focused on the technology and processes that maintain freedom of movement in the air and at sea. Whilst the ability to defeat A2/AD is vital, we argue that DOD should write about and communicate ASB as only one piece of a larger set of concepts. The DOD should also avoid allowing the ASB to drift to become more than a concept for A2/AD. Recent discussion of ASB has included the use of precision strikes to change an opponent's strategic calculus, such as the debate between Harry Kazianis and William Yale in *The Diplomat*.[i] This carries the danger of being conflated with ASB: while related, strategic precision strikes are a separate concept and a separate discussion. The U.S. also needs to demonstrate effort in developing other concepts, such as land operations, to reassure American allies and potential coalition partners that the U.S. military has the capability to do more than remain behind a blockade, which would leave these partners potentially exposed.

Whilst ASB may have been initially intended as an operational concept to defeat Chinese A2/AD efforts, it has expanded beyond its original scope. ASB has been criticized for, among other things, being a justification for more advanced technological systems to solve tactical problems.[ii] In fact, Undersecretary of the Navy Robert Work has described the concept as, 'winning a two-sided guided munitions salvo competition in order to facilitate concurrent and follow on operations.'[iii] Those follow on operations, however, are absent from the concept. Seen from this angle, ASB needs to be limited to only countering A2/AD. To assure this, facilitate other concurrent or follow-on operations, and reassure our potential coalition partners, additional concepts are required.

Before further debating8 ASB, the U.S. needs to recognize and discuss the conceptual gaps left unaddressed, and to discuss the concepts for larger long-range precision strike and other offshore capabilities which are very likely to be required in addition to overcoming A2/AD. Only after developing this array of concepts will there be a set of all the tools necessary. The larger conceptual gap above and around ASB stems from the fact that ASB was originally developed in isolation by services and was not 'born joint' or 'born combined'. ASB's origin, however, can be overcome with additional work. ASB and its associated concepts should take into account the integral littoral and ground capabilities required for assuring access and incorporating likely U.S. coalition partners.

History shows that anti-access capabilities, specifically shore defenses, cannot be overcome with air and naval surface fires alone. Substantial pre-landing bombardments were standard procedure in both the Pacific and European Theatres during World War II. Despite aerial and naval fires, Axis defenders exacted high costs from the Allies on defended beaches, such as Tarawa and Normandy. Given adequate time and resources land forces are able to improve and conceal their positions and defend against amphibious or airborne attacks. Additionally, adversaries will attempt to deceive us into striking false targets while leaving actual combat power largely

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untouched.[iv] As Captain Wayne P. Hughes, Jr. stated in his seminal work *Fleet Tactics*, 'strikes may in all instances be necessary but they will not in all instances be sufficient to achieve a national military purpose…[and] a fleet is incomplete which has no elements that can operate in waters next to the enemy coast.'[v] Joint fires are essential to successfully suppressing or destroying A2/AD capabilities; however, the tactical and operational effects of joint fires are always temporary in nature.

Long-range precision strikes are being touted as a sufficient approach to strategic problems as part of the debate surrounding ASB. While long-range precision strikes intended to have strategic effects are not part of ASB, these strikes can certainly be used in conjunction with ASB. In fact, the tactical, operational, and strategic effects of joint fires should be examined; however, muddling the ASB concept with a concept for long-range precision strikes is hazardous both conceptually and due to the message it sends to potential enemies and coalition partners. Additionally, ASB needs to have a partner concept that addresses projecting land power ashore, thereby avoiding the 'over-investment in strike warfare at the expense of other critical power-projection capabilities.'[vi] Together, ASB and a concept for joint forced entry of land forces need to support the Joint Operational Access Concept.[vii]

Amphibious Operations in Joint Forcible Entry

One of the most important of the capabilities that provide land power for forcible entry is amphibious forces. These forces will typically be introduced due to the fact that enemy defenses ashore must be reduced to a level where shipping can get close enough. The exception to this is the seizure of offshore islands. The importance of such islands is increased by more sophisticated surface-to-air and anti-ship missiles. While these islands can be used to extend the reach of A2/AD systems, they are also a 'chink in the armor' as they can be easily isolated from the rest of the system. Additionally, once seized, they can be turned against the erstwhile defenders by providing the attackers with a location for offshore surface fires, usually in the form of surface missile systems like the multiple launch rocket system or high mobility artillery rocket system.

The key to success in amphibious operations is to transition as much combat power from ship to shore as quickly as possible. Once A2/AD systems are suppressed and reduced by air and naval forces, amphibious forces will need to flood the enemy's defense and 'mop up' dislocated and remaining defensive positions. Since some camouflaged and underground defensive positions will inevitably survive initial air and naval bombardments, these remaining positions will need to be eliminated by boot and bullet. The introduction of amphibious forces also hardens the lodgment against enemy counterattacks from further inland and assists in preparing the lodgment for the introduction of follow-on forces.

Amphibious forces are ideal for building up mass ashore as quickly as possible. The key to this ability is not the amphibious forces themselves, as specially trained troops are not necessarily required. Rather, the key is the availability of sufficient amphibious shipping and ship-to-shore connectors. While protection is important, it is far more important to have enough simple, reliable connectors to get as many troops ashore as possible. For acquisitions, planners should shy away from attempts to acquire 'leap ahead' technology in ship-to-shore connectors, such as the U.S. Marine Corps' recent disastrous attempt to acquire the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV), and instead seek more cost-effective connectors that can be purchased in sufficient numbers to fulfil their primary purpose: rapid build-up ashore.

Most professional militaries maintain troops dedicated to certain environments or specific types of operation, like mountain or airborne units. Amphibious troops have been an essential component of maritime powers since ancient Greece; this remains true today. As Major General McKenzie mentioned in a recent article in the *Armed Forces Journal*, 'Amphibious ships and expeditionary operations should no longer be considered a class apart. All battle force ships and all naval operations should be approached as components of a single naval battle.'[vii] This applies to operations that may occur simultaneously or sequentially with ASB. Similarly, the ability to transport troops from any service ashore is the central purpose and task in overcoming A2/AD systems and exploiting the access gained. It is also arguably the most important critical vulnerability for the joint force during the operation: if troops are unable to seize a lodgment ashore, the mission is not and will not be accomplished. Therefore, the ship-to-shore connection is the single point of failure for any operation that means to overcome A2/AD systems.

Unfortunately, the United States and many other nations can only boast ageing technical capabilities in this area. The cancellation of the botched EFV, while appropriate due to mismanagement of the program, has left a vacuum that risks access around the world. The EFV was to replace the Marine Corps' obsolescent Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV). The U.S. Navy can utilize the Landing Craft, Air Cushioned (LCAC) vehicle and the future Ship-to-Shore Connector (SSC), but the hovercraft offer little protection to troops embarked. Similar drawbacks plus more limited range plague the Landing Craft Utility (LCU). Other options like small boat teams and troops delivered ashore via submersibles are more clandestine, but can deliver few troops with limited firepower. The Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV) is promising but will not be capable of extending ashore like the existing AAV and is not designed for contested areas of operation. The vital need for a modern amphibious assault platform was recognized by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the intellectual grandfather of the ASB concept, and they recommended the development of such a vehicle.[ix] While any amphibious effort linked to A2/AD could involve all of these assets, they are insufficient to guarantee a timely buildup of combat power ashore.

While the United States Marine Corps is one of the largest amphibious forces in the world, it is not large enough to overcome significant A2/AD defenses by itself. Indeed, this has historically been the case. Marine Corps-led amphibious operations usually involved U.S. Army support or combat units. For example, the Army's Americal division replaced the First Marine Division on Guadalcanal after the Marines had fought the Japanese for several brutal months. The battle for Okinawa is another example as both Army and Marine divisions conducted an amphibious landing and fought throughout the campaign. Additionally, the Marine Corps is the smallest U.S. military service and is dependent on support from other services. NATO and coalition partner forces involved in amphibious operations would be in a similar situation. The support of ground troops ashore will be an essential task for the naval and the air forces for operations that may be associated with ASB. Additionally, if an operation lasts longer than a few weeks, the size and robustness of army forces and their logistical systems are required. From setting the theater to expanding lodgments for follow-on forces, army capabilities will be required.

Recommendations

There are three main areas necessary to maintain the capability

to conduct joint forcible entry operations and, at the same time, demonstrate commitment to allies and potential partners, in support of an ASB concept focused on defeating A2/AD. These include equipment and technological solutions, dual-service concept development, and greater inclusion of land power in future joint access programs.

Acquisitions

First, it is in the vital interest of land forces to have technological assets that can get their troops from ship to contested shore in a quick and safe manner. While marine forces in most Western nations, whose core competency is amphibious operations, would typically lead the development of a new amphibious assault vehicle, army forces must contribute both ideas and resources to their development. The resultant program would not be wed to an EFV-like vehicle but should examine a multitude of options to address technological and conceptual gaps. To conduct this development, an example working group could include the fusion of the U.S. Marine Corps' Ellis Group and the U.S. Chief of Staff of the Army's Strategic Studies Group. These internal think tanks, which have counterparts in most Allied militaries, could be convened to work on the strategic requirements of such capabilities and then oversee their development through the acquisitions and testing processes. Additionally, any U.S. efforts in this area could consult similar groups in potential coalition partners, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations and the America, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand Armies Program, or ABCA, which includes the U.S. and Royal Marines.

However, it is less important to have the most technologically advanced equipment money can provide than it is to be able to purchase amphibious ships and ship-to-shore connectors, both surface and aerial, in sufficient numbers to arrive at lodgment points and deliver sizable land forces ashore. Leap-ahead technology is necessarily expensive, and a fiscally constrained environment around the globe will necessitate the purchase of fewer assets; however, the delivery of ground forces ashore is not a capability where less can equal more. The most important factor in amphibious joint forcible entry is the rapid buildup of combat power ashore. Minimalism is incompatible with achieving access; quality is important, but it must be balanced with quantity.

Dual-service concepts

In addition to acquisitions, the development of dual-service concepts on transitioning from securing a beachhead to supporting the in-flow of additional land forces for deeper penetration is required. Historically for the U.S., securing lodgments ashore has been the Marine Corps' mission, although the U.S. Army has trained for the task as well. The development and training of marine and army forces together, particularly for the subsequent exploitation by both forces of an amphibious landing, has been underdeveloped in recent years. This is also true with respect to large combined amphibious training with likely partner nations.

In the future, should coalition forces be required to directly overcome an A2/AD system, the sole mission for U.S. and partner marine forces may be to gain and maintain a beachhead to allow heavier army forces access to the interior of the country, exploiting success that can then be translated into deeper operational objectives by both marine and army forces. In operations to gain access, the Marine Corps and partner nation marine forces could be required to provide the vital bridging mission between initial access on shore and the reaching of strategic objectives farther inland by heavier army forces with marine support.

In the U.S., the Gaining and Maintaining Access Concept developed jointly between the Marine Corps and the Army is a good first step in the direction of developing these capabilities, but much work remains.[x] The two services must foster more conversations, concept development, wargaming, and dual-service capability requirements. Additionally, the U.S. must reach out to allies and potential coalition partners to build combined capabilities and confidence.

Joint Concepts

Development of amphibious entry concepts that take into account contemporary A2/AD threats and tie in with ASB, including the sequencing or simultaneous use of complementary operations, is necessary. The current tranche of concepts was developed without enough consideration of, and concern for, the realities of joint entry, amphibious or otherwise. These concepts and the ASB concept should be subsumed into a future, truly joint strategic concept that ties together the Joint Operational Access Concept, Air-Sea Battle, Gaining and Maintaining Access, joint forcible entry, and the new requirements determined by the above recommendations. Concurrent similar efforts in NATO and organizations such as ABCA are also required.

The current U.S. Air-Sea Battle Office, joined together with elements of the USMC Ellis Group and the Army Chief of Staff's Strategic Studies Group, could be used as a nucleus to form the development team under the auspices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to redesign a 21st Century access concept. Using Joint Publication 3-18 *Joint Forcible Entry* as a point of departure, this effort should design a new, truly joint concept that utilizes assets from every branch of service, leveraging expertise on land power and amphibious operations as well as air and naval power. Again, multinational fora should be involved in these ongoing efforts.

Additionally, rather than working under a shroud of secrecy as has been the norm for ASB, the development team should also seek to collaborate with applicable schools. For example, in the 1930s, the amphibious doctrine that helped US forces advance to victory in the Central Pacific Operations Area during WWII was written by the students of Marine Corps University – which shut down for a year to complete the task – and wargamed by the Naval War College.[xi] The intellectual capital needed to tackle these issues is resident in DOD, but it has thus far gone untapped.

One Way Forward

The U.S. Navy and Air Force are correct that a new scheme for gaining and maintaining access and combatting area-denial threats is necessary in the current and future operating environment, for our allies as well as solely U.S. forces. That being said, there are larger concerns that must be addressed in addition to ASB. First, other concepts are required, including concepts that include allied and possible coalition partner forces. Separate concepts are needed for precision strikes intended to have strategic effects and for combined joint forced entry operations. Changes in technology alone demand new conceptual work for amphibious operations. It is up to land-centric forces to create the concepts needed to balance the concepts related to ASB, building the additional intellectual framework for potential broader requirements. It takes little pressure for marines to focus on forcible entry as a concept of maneuver, but the mishandling of the EFV program has created a critical vulnerability for the entire joint force in terms of technical capability. History shows that soldiers may also be called upon to fight for access.

Despite the current budgetary challenges to DOD and other nations' defense establishments, the U.S. joint force and likely coalition partners must address the problem of A2/AD and incorporating ASB with other operations in a more integrated and cooperative manner. No concept or investment in our Armed Services is worthwhile if it does not address key strategic issues of today and the future. This must be done through a better prioritization of material acquisition, joint training and doctrine development, and an integrated development of concepts for joint forcible entry operations tied to the ASB concept. Additionally, all aspects of these issues need to be discussed in appropriate multinational groups and fora. In short, we must rebalance our approach to access.

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The Edge of Glory: The Western Way of Combat and the Search for the Elusive Decisive Battle in an Age of Terror

Gerry Long

> *'Strategy' has always lacked something in precision of meaning. Clausewitz defined tactics as 'the theory of the use of military forces in combat,' strategy as 'the theory of the use of combats for the object of war.' This definition of strategy is too exclusively military.[i]*

> *'Were Socrates and Charles XII of Sweden both present in any company and Socrates were to say 'Follow me and hear a lecture on philosophy'; and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, were to say, 'Follow me and dethrone the Czar'; a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. The impression is universal; yet it is strange. But the profession of soldiers…has the dignity of danger. Mankind reverences those who have got over fear…'[ii]*

Our strategy for combat in the first two decades of the twenty first century has been fuelled as much by the momentum of events as by any strategic view of the West's place in the world. As we now extract ourselves from the quagmire of Afghanistan, is it not time to revaluate why we have struggled to impose our style of war on the battlefields since the Fall of Berlin? During World War Two and, to a certain extent the Cold War, the rapid rise from the poverty in military resources before World War Two and the plenty that followed has stifled strategic evolution. The unconventional wars that followed the titanic battles of 1939-45 have left us unfulfilled, less a few exceptions,[iii] and left us searching for that elusive decisive battle.

Whether we like it or not, our view of battle and how it should be fought is still viewed through the prism of classical civilisation. We are all prisoners of a collective thought process that envisages us in the role of either Achilles or Hector; even if your only direct experience of Homer is through 'the Simpsons'! The idea that true battle is fought by real warriors who are only to be found within the confines of a large battlefield is deeply engrained in the Western-educated soldier's mind-set. One side is defeated and the other goes home with the trophies; followed by a victory parade and commemoration of those who died in the campaign.

Firepower and heavy defensive armament have always been the trademark of Western armies. It was through 'hammer blows', thought Clausewitz, that the real purpose of any conflict could be achieved; the absolute destruction of the enemy's armed forces in the field. Here, too, can be found the legacy of Alexander and later Napoleon; who saw, as Jomini conceded, 'that the first means of effecting results was to concentrate above all on cutting up and destroying the enemy army, being certain that states or provinces fall of themselves when they no longer have organised forces to defend them.'[iv] It is this Western desire for a single, magnificent collision on the battlefield which has been the basis of Western War for over 2,500 years.[v] In short, the Greek city state invented not only the central idea of Western politics (that power in a state should reside in the vote of the majority) but also the central act of Western warfare; the decisive battle.[vi] And like our classical forebears, we have developed an inbuilt distaste for those who pursue war in a different manner. The insurgent, terrorist, guerrilla, or irregular who is unwilling to fight and die on the battlefield face to face with his adversary dressed in a distinctive uniform of the nation state is

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thought of as a lesser combatant; and often a lesser human being.

The reason for our failure since the great battles of 1945 to find just such a decisive victory is that the enemies we are now engaged with do not have the same cultural history, or baggage. Therefore they view war and the root to a successful outcome of war very differently. Our basis of warfare is that bequeathed to us by classical Greece; a brief, direct encounter between bodies politic; the point of which was to spare families and property from destructive involvement.[vii] The draining uncertainties of guerrilla war were to be avoided at all cost. That inner craving for a clear decisive decision, regardless of the carnage involved, has not faded. It cannot; since, as the Greeks discovered, it resides in the dark hearts of us all.[viii]

From Saigon to Kabul via Baghdad - a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)

Despite many claims before and since, the real RMA in the Western Way of War was Vietnam. First it defeated one of the premier military nations of the Old World; then it promptly dealt a similar blow to the premier military nation of the New World. It was predominantly fought by men at the strategic level who had cut their teeth in World War Two; men who had run with Patton, Bradley and Clark; who saw war as one of 'the big battalions', and fought in decisive battles.

It is not that General Westmorland did not adapt his command in the style of his WW2 predecessors; but that, by the end of his tenure (not unlike General's McKiernan and Sanchez in later American excursions to hell), he had little control over the war itself. It had run beyond him intellectually. Westmorland had gone to Vietnam believing the answer waiting to be found in the jungle was a conventional one. What he found was only more questions. He, like all his kind, became largely irrelevant; as did his successors in later wars. It was not just that Westmorland's, and the US Army's, idea of war was wrong. Linked as it was to the US Army's 'can do' attitude, it was obsolete. Westmorland and those around him probably privately remembered their Clausewitz, teaching them that the whole enterprise was doomed. But as US troops and helicopters flowed into the country, they forgot about 'politics by other means' and set out to defeat the Wehrmacht all over again. But the NVA were not the Das Reich Division. The big 'search-and destroy' operations[ix] did not result in the much hoped-for tens of thousands of enemy dead and the subsequent cracks in the enemy fighting spirit.

In fact the military situation was abysmal, U.S. military efforts rested on the mistaken assumption that fighting in Vietnam would be similar to a straightforward military offensive.[x] The battle was not so much lost as misunderstood. '[T]his was not a military war but a political war'[xi], in which the U.S. was employing unprecedented amounts of firepower but little unifying tactical doctrine to pull it together for a strategic victory.

Vietnam was not a war of classical engagement between equals intent on battle by conventional means. The relationship was a complex game of 'cat and mouse'. If the enemy was fixed, then he could be encircled by firepower provided by the numerous platforms available to the U.S. Army. Then attrition could take place. If the right tactics were also employed ('guerrilla tactics augmented by U.S. firepower'[xii]) tactical victory was assured. However, away from those well versed in 'out foxing the fox', the majority of U.S. infantry units lacked the ability to get to grips with the guerrilla. More often than not the enemy simply slipped away to fight another day. This failure to lure the North Vietnamese army into a Western-style shootout is what paralysed the huge land army of the United States and forced it to abandon the entire theatre.[xiii] It has haunted the US Army and all other Western armies, political classes, and media outlets ever since.

Although we did not know it at the time or failed to address the change, for the first time an enemy which was defeated nearly every time it stepped into the field of battle achieved its aim. Since Vietnam, most successful enemies of Western-educated armies have aped the tactics of North Vietnamese. In their 'Back to the Future' moment, Western armies fell foul of some very unsophisticated guerrillas in Somalia in the 1990's, and their not too distant cousins in Baghdad and Helmand in the twenty first century.

The West's failures in Iraq and Afghanistan are down to a deep-rooted inertia in military thinking. Firstly there seemed to be no strategy for the war, beyond general agreement that there should be an attack. Secondly, once battle was joined, instead of doing a better estimate the default mind-set kicked in: 'we are already there - let's just fortify the camp a little more; or send more troops; or do both!' That may be fine way to go about establishing, say, a new Starbucks in a dodgy neighbourhood; but it is beyond glib in the context of an overarching strategic plan. Armies are always more interested in moving men forward to the enemy; less interested in pulling them back. Most military textbooks invariably endorse what the twentieth century called the 'principle of the offensive', the notion that to achieve decisive results in war it is necessary to seize the initiative and to strike the enemy aggressively.[xiv] Such thinking is burned deep into the educated military's DNA, not just that of the US and Britain; it is always better to advance than retreat. But, by definition, naming outposts in Iraq and Afghanistan after soldiers whose death exemplified why the outposts should not have been there in the first place does not seem to have registered. That irony is often lost on Western armies' collective thinking. The soldiers of the 'coalition of the willing' have been sacrificed at the altar of a flawed doctrinal mind-set.

There is an argument that *all* grand strategy of the 20th & early 21st Centuries failed to deliver real decisive battles. What was seen as decisive in the desert of Kuwait in 1991 was in fact a mirage, and the decisive victories of 1918 & 1945 were in fact, in Philip Bobbit's prose, all part of the same war, 'The Long War'[xv] that did not end until the Berlin Wall came down. And as Geoffrey Parker observed when describing early modern warfare, 'Success is Never Final'.[xvi] Our template for decisive battle is built upon a classical education which itself saw the Greek City States go to war on numerous occasions over the same ground; none of which brought about lasting victory. Our template therefore is as derisory as those who seek to emulate it.

Training (& re-training the mind-set)

How do we train the soldier of the future in an era without Cannae and Austerlitz? All armies are prisoners of their past experience. We have failed to recognise the classical heritage in the baggage that we

carry, and the stark simplicity of its direct form of combat. Warriors eyeing each other across the battlefield and coming together face to face is a burden all Western armies carry. So how should we educate and train the future soldiers and officers in practical terms? This of course will be contentious. Change in such a conservative intuition as an army, and the many layers of bureaucracy involved in training the modern soldier, means that progress is often at a snail's pace.

Training of soldiers, and we are talking about the future 'strategic corporal' here (and notably the infantry for future contingency operations), should start with the individual at the tactical level focusing on the use of ground and employment of weapon systems. The parade ground 'square bashing' can wait, so as not to undermine the building up of the soldier's fieldcraft skills. The value is in the soldier's skill as an individual fighter rather than his employment in close order.[xvii] It is as much a fallacy today as it was when Liddell Hart wrote that the infantry is not the easiest arm to train:

> 'None needs more thought or more skill, if it is adequately to play its part. The reason why it is difficult to train is because it is less concerned with material elements than other arms. The infantry soldier's use of his weapon is but complementary to the use he makes of tactics and ground in the approach to his objective and his opponent. To train infantry, which is essentially the tactical arm, is to exercise an art, whereas to train the technical arms is to apply a science. The infantry soldier is less of a technician, but he is a field-craftsman - this is the title of honour to which he may aspire in the profession of arms.'[xviii]

It was identified as far back as 1916 that soldiers needed to be trained intelligently. The post-conscript training doctrines prevalent today are not suited to train the modern soldier. The drill, boot and bayonet approach is already at the limits of what it can usefully contribute. Training for complex situations demand a thinking soldier. The soldier may well have to prosecute a three-block war which has none of the clear distinction that General Krulak's legendary analogy suggested.

So how do we train the leader of the future? As observed many years ago, 'nine-tenths of tactics are certain, and taught…but the irrational tenth…can only be ensured by instinct, sharpened by… practicing…so often it is as natural as a reflex'.[xix] Training the leaders for the future fight should be reinforced by group dynamics, through what is commonly known as the 'Band of Brothers' effect; training officer candidates and soldiers together throughout basic training. At best they will come together to reflect the highest core values of soldering: professionalism, teamwork, physical stamina, self-discipline, duty, loyalty and respect. Leaders should be trained to deliver decisive tactical advantage in a vacuum with regards strategic direction. This follows the Israeli commander Yigael Allon's views; 'All levels of command must therefore be trained to think and act independently whenever circumstances demand that they should, and [there] are no exceptions to this rule.'[xx] This is not unlike the situation in the German Army between the World Wars, where the innovation of Hans Von Seeckt led to the creation of the 'Fuhrerheer'; an army of leaders.[xxi] The payoff is that those who are fit in mind and body, and have pride in their unit, historically have also been the most successful in battle.

Afghanistan has been a great leveller for the British. All British battalions have had pretty well the same experience for the last eight years and have delivered the same capability on the ground, regardless of cap-badge, so raising the bar should be no problem. If anything it should aid as a retention tool. Both Slim and Wavell were sceptical about Special Forces; believing that most soldiers, given the right training and the right resources, could accomplish most missions and tasks.[xxii] Perhaps the Chindits of the Second World War are the best example; basically conventional infantry battalions which were trained and adapted to perform a very special task. Some, of course, fell during training; but most men accepted the challenge and performed accordingly. As for the training of officers, this is perhaps the most radical change. After the first term at a military academy, subsequent terms should perhaps include how to train indigenous forces as much as how to kill them. Officer training could also include a term in the Middle East or Asia Minor, engraining cultural as well as military education.

In the war of the FOB (Forward Operating Base), which replaced 'Manoeuvre Warfare' as the doctrinal term of Western Armies faster than you could say 'Staff Officers Handbook,' the advantage the West holds in firepower and technology was rendered all but obsolete by the need to hold everything; therefore holding very little. Our influence in any given area was not unlike that of a Greek city state; it lasted as long as the fighting season in that area, and within the range of the weaponry available to the soldiers occupying the FOB. It had little lasting effect. With the absence of all-out decisive battle, casualty aversion set in. The professional armies of the West have hastened to a position of husbanding the lives of their forces; substituting the *image* of manoeuvre for combat, with all the frugality of a general of the *ancien regime*.

Conclusion

For the insurgent of Afghanistan to have emerged from over twelve years of combat against the premier military forces of the world with the *status quo ante bellum* preserved is not a bad result; they fought a war without a General Staff or a military academic tradition. The fact that it has brought the Western World to the negotiating table shows the power of their strategic vision and weakness of ours. The modern infantryman with his extensive body armour and desire to meet the enemy on equal terms is the direct descendant of the Greek hoplite and Swiss pikeman. Like his phalanx predecessor, the modern infantry craves less cumbersome armament and thinking, based on his desire for manoeuvre to bring his vast array of technology and firepower to the point of advantage. That advantage must be channelled into a re-evaluation of how we instruct soldiers to fight and how we educate officers at all levels to think of combat and war.

As we 'Stand in the Trench, [with] Achilles'[xxiii] and view the future battlefield, the possibility of war between the states of Western Europe has all but been abolished. We must look to where we are likely to be deployed on operations, and educate ourselves in the cultural understanding of war and how it is conducted by our likely enemies. We have inherited the idea of classical heroic battle, and we have detached it from the reality of the contemporary operational environment. War today is not so much about winning as maintaining the political and public high moral ground along with the media focus. All our recent conflicts have been viewed as relative

failures with the corresponding 'push back' from the general public, since no-one articulated the idea that there will not be a decisive battle. There will not be a surrender; neither at a designated plain in Germany, nor onboard the USS Missouri. We must manage the expectation of those who supposedly serve and educate them in the realities of limited 'no-win' wars. This will not be easy, but it is just as important as getting your tactics, techniques and procedures sorted out at platoon level. We have ignored the deeper lessons of recent conflicts beyond the tactical level, transferring our conventional view of war onto a whole different and more dangerous set of circumstances. We need to break the shackles of the Homeric view of war to enable our soldiers to be able to meet our future enemies on a level battlefield unlike Epaminondas' 'dancing floor of war'. The modern battlefield will be very unlike the plains of Plataia or Leuktra; or, for that matter, the beaches of Normandy.

Gerry Long is a member of Military Operations' editorial advisory panel

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The Tactics Gap: Why We Wrestle With The Basics

William F. Owen

This article is designed to promote discussion, and that discussion is about tactics. What tactics actually are will form part of that discussion. More to the point, this article will assert that Western armies have become confused about tactics, to the detriment of all else.

Tactics are not (quite) a discrete subject. 'How you fight' has to cover a multitude of conditions and contexts. Arguably that makes tactics 'complicated' but not necessarily 'complex.' The problem is that today we seem to have lost the desire to discuss tactics – or it may be more accurate to say that the desire remains, but the ability is lacking. For example, all too often what tactical discussion does occur is a subset of an equipment debate which is strongly coloured by budget and policy considerations. No one can deny that money is extremely important, but surely how you fight should drive what you use, and most critically what you can afford to train with. If anyone is inclined to doubt this, then the emergence of armed groups which employ large numbers of 4x4 SUVs equipped with HMGs and ATGM posts, in preference to heavy armour, may serve as an example. That preference occurs because five hundred Toyota Hilux's mounting AT-14s costs a fraction, in every respect, of that of five hundred (or even two hundred) MBTs. They are cheap, simple, and easy to conceal and sustain in comparison with AFVs. Critically any discussion about the efficacy of that choice resides far more in tactics than equipment.

Thus it is fair to ask: could most serving officers formulate the tactical doctrine needed to apply such a force effectively? I would contend that most serving officers would find that extremely challenging, if not impossible. It should not be. Essentially we seem to have forgotten that tactics is about fighting, and fighting in ways that are simple and easy to achieve with the means and resources to hand. Most Western armies are now strongly inclined to seek equipment solutions, rather than training solutions. In many ways this strikes at the heart of the argument.

Strategy is done as Tactics

No matter who or where on the planet the armed force is, the enduring and immutable fact is that war is a political activity conducted for a political purpose. This remains as true as it ever was. War does not change; but warfare is an expression of politics, and politics is in constant flux. As warfare is the conduct of war, then at the point of application it is tactics that decide the issue. The reason why Clausewitz (possibly unconsciously) developed an understanding of war as an exclusively political activity was that he lived in a very politically complicated and unstable Europe. That Europe was far more politically (thus militarily) unstable, and complicated, than anything we see today.

Back when NATO was facing the Warsaw Pact, it was fairly obvious that it would be an existential fight for which all and any means were permissible. Simply put, because of the politics of Communism versus Democracy, there were no virtually restrictions on the use of force. Any amount of casualties and weapons usage was permissible as long as the total carnage of such a war would eventually exhaust one or both parties.

While the Gulf War of 1991 played entirely to NATO's strengths (and were combined with an almost fantastically incompetent enemy), the Balkan Wars provided a nasty shock. Suddenly, tactics demonstrated their true political dimension in sometimes horrific ways. Politics does dictate tactics. The Israelis were likewise surprised when tactical conduct came under international political scrutiny during the various Palestinian rebellions on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Amazingly, almost the same issue came to haunt the British Army in Basra. That was despite the wealth of its Northern Ireland experience, which had displayed the strategic and political consequences of tactical action writ large.

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This seems to have led to a collective tactical paralysis where tactical thinking has become highly defined by the political nuances of specific theatres, such as Afghanistan or Iraq. This means that if you give junior or even middle ranking officers of today a specific tactical problem (and I have direct and recent experience of doing so), they tend to flounder in a sea of Rules of Engagement (ROE), 'legitimacy' and equipment capabilities – almost always to the detriment of the mission. This may not be the experience of other people, but what this clearly shows is that officers now do have an intuitive understanding that war is conducted for political purposes. Therefore how you fight has to reflect why, and for what political purpose, you are fighting. The problem is that this has become an impediment, and not the enabler it should be.

Basics

Very, very few Western armies (including the Israeli Defence Forces) can foretell when, where, why, or against whom they will fight. Yet you have to be prepared to fight, which means that '*how* you will fight' must be clearly understood and rehearsed. As the Israelis learned in 2006, no one can do in war what they have not learned to do very well in training. Explicitly this means you have to train for '*a* war', not '*the* war.' Unless combat formations continually and systematically exercise for combat, they will always be found wanting come the day. This is actually a simple and achievable task, but confusion as to what we are training for seems to have created a collective tactical paralysis via overly-nuanced political considerations that are largely imagined and self-inflicted.

The first thing to understand is that you cannot train to restrict military force into irrelevance. This merely enables a delusional belief in a highly nuanced form of fighting which cannot actually be carried out on the ground. The idea that you can fight an enemy amongst, or close to, a civilian population without accidently killing some civilians is frankly stupid and ill-informed. Moreover, the extant Law of Armed Conflict only takes a view on the killing of civilians when it is completely removed from military necessity. If the enemy Divisional HQ is in the basement of a hospital or an old people's home, you can strike it with whatever force you deem reasonable to destroy it, regardless of the civilian cost. For modern Western armies, politics restricts force far more than law in allowing enemies to shield themselves with civilians.

Needlessly or deliberately killing civilians is often bad for the political objective for which you fight. So as a general rule, avoiding civilian casualties to the extent that they undermine your political posture is usually something which you would seek to do. Sparing civilian lives is not a new aspect of warfare. It dates back to the Middle Ages or even Biblical times, in terms of a general realisation that killing innocent people may not reflect well on your political legitimacy. Admittedly those eras saw some truly horrendous massacres of civilian populations, such as those of Biblical Jericho and Syracuse (in 878 AD), orchestrated by people remarkable unconcerned about how those civilians viewed their policy. However, more recent times have seen even greater excesses.

It is critical to understand that ROE exists to align violence with policy, not to protect civilians. Violence needs to be applied with precision, proportion and discrimination because that makes it more politically effective, not because you want to restrict force into irrelevance. Overly restrictive ROE would mean that the enemy could kill you but not vice versa.

The second thing to understand is that killing the enemy is the best way to collectively break his will to fight. The utterly false and intellectually vacuous distinction between 'manoeuvre' and 'attrition' forms of warfare has largely corrupted modern understanding of tactics. All armed forces should seek to inflict attrition while avoiding mutual attrition. At a mechanistic level this is expressed as the loss exchange ratio (LER), that shows comparative loss between two parties. For example, a LER of 30:1 simply means 30 enemy Killed in Action (KIA) for each KIA of your own. The simple guidance that you should seek to kill the enemy and break his equipment should not be disputed, yet today it *is* disputed and over-intellectualised because of the fallacies discussed above. This gets simplistically expressed as 'killing the enemy does not win the war', because modern officers fallaciously extrapolate the rapid defeats of the Taliban in 2001 and Iraqi Army in 2003 with the conditions of the subsequent insurgencies; combined with the evidence-free belief that you cannot defeat an armed insurgency by military means alone. This flies in the face of logic. An insurgency is an armed force that suffers defeat in exactly the same way as any other armed force. Defeat flows from a collective desire to cease engaging in combat. Killing and capture are the two mechanisms which create that effect better than anything else; regardless of whether the enemy is an insurgent or an 'accidental guerrilla.'

The logic is simply that if there is no enemy to defeat via death or capture, then there is no role for military forces. None! All armed groups which seek political conditions via the effects of violence can be, and are, defeated in battle; regardless of whether that defeat occurs in the form of hundreds of burning AFVs or in the arrest of a named individual at a vehicle check point.

Thus two basic conditions obtain: not killing those who do not require killing, and making sure you kill those who you need to kill (because doing so will break the will of others to collectively pursue violence); these are the same two conditions which have dictated the course of the last 5,000 years of warfare. This is not complicated, yet inexplicably many people believe it to be so.

Tactics for THE War

Military forces defeat the enemy via combat. Explicitly, combat is the only means that defeats an enemy. Defeat means the enemy is no longer able and/or willing to fight. Only combat delivers that effect. The Delbrück conjecture of defeat having either the form of exhaustion (as in no longer wishing to fight) or annihilation (of being incapable of fighting) is an extremely good articulation of this. Both are delivered by combat. In extreme conditions that combat may be the discrete killing of an enemy commander, such as in the biblical tale of David and Goliath. It is more likely to be the widespread killing and capture of enemy personnel. It may possibly require the near-complete annihilation of the enemy, as on Iwo Jima in 1945.

There is nothing clever or very sophisticated about this basic fact. What defeated the Japanese in the jungle at the Battle of Kohima in 1944 is what defeated the Egyptian Army in the Sinai desert in 1973. It also defeated the French at Waterloo and, at the other end of the scale, Pablo Escobar in Medellin in 1993. If we understand that the basic requirement is to apply weapons effectively against men and equipment then the whole concept of tactics is greatly simplified.

Essentially, tactics has two basic expressions: organisation and terrain. For example, tactics of organisation can be expressed as 'platoon tactics' or 'armoured battalion tactics'. They may even be equipment-specific, such as 'Warrior Platoon Tactics,' or 'Stryker

Battalion Tactics'. Tactics of terrain are basically those pertaining to mountain, jungle, urban, desert or arctic conditions.

The Enemy gets a vote

Yes he does, but so what? The aim of all tactics is defeat without being defeated. More to the point: if you understand that the enemy is trying to do to you what you are trying to do to him, then there is little basis for confusion. The enemy will either try to annihilate you or exhaust you. This is why tactics matter. One of the major reasons why armies can win all the battles and still lose the wars is because their tactics cost them too much. By 1973 US losses in the Vietnam War were so great that they ceased to persist in combat. Regardless of flawed US strategy, if total US deaths by 1973 had only amounted to 10,000, rather than nearly 57,000, then the political appetite to persist in combat would have been substantially different. Not only do you have to defeat the enemy, but also you have to defeat him at a cost your political masters can withstand.

Given the enemy's need to defeat you, how he will fight (given equipment, numbers, training and terrain) is not hard to work out. If you cannot work it out, you cannot work out how to fight him. Military education is major part of this. If you are a combat arms officer, you should be familiar with most common enemy equipment capabilities and have a view on how you would employ them, given combination 'X' of numbers 'Y' under conditions 'Z'. This is markedly different from thinking that you understand a specific enemy's tactical doctrine, because the next force you fight may not have been trained the same way. There are only a limited number of sensible ways to apply given formations and equipment to given tactical problems. This is all information and perspective that can and should be taught; yet clearly it is not.

Talking Tactics

The tired old maxims, which warn us that 'amateurs talk tactics and professionals talk logistics' or that good tactics are 'the opinion of the senior officer present,' seem not to want to deal with the reality of just how objective tactical discussion should be. For example, a dismounted infantry platoon only carries limited amounts of ammunition. It is purely a matter of arithmetic to work out for how long, and at what rate of fire, any part or all of that platoon will be able to suppress or defeat an enemy by fire. Likewise some fairly hard and fast rules of light weapons effect can be used to ascertain just how effective any given infantry weapon should be at any given range. We can, for example, state with some certainty (but in general terms) that the closer we get to the enemy the more effective our weapons become. Thus we should seek to use fire and manoeuvre to gain proximity until the enemy is either dead or unable to continue fighting.

Likewise, for MBTs we can state simply that the number of tank guns which we can rapidly bring to bear in an engagement will generally be the deciding factor. That will probably be best executed as a well-rehearsed drill, just like an infantry contact drill.

Tactics are not the domain of the infinite and the arcane. Tactics are basically how you organise for, and apply violence against, an enemy, given equipment capabilities and factors such as terrain, weather, light, and possibly civilians. All those factors will modify how and why you do things. This is not an attempt to make it sound easy. It is not. It requires training and skill. The real skill is being able to do very hard things in a very simple way. Moreover the simpler and more robust the tactical methods, the wider application they have. Clearing a multi-storey building in city 'X' will be the same basic skill as doing same thing in city 'Y' on the other side of the world. Fighting in a jungle in South America will not differ massively from fighting in a jungle in Borneo.

If we have come to believe that 'tactics' is what is described in 200-page .pdf file then we are failing. Tactics is about doing those things in combat that you have learned to do through training. If doesn't work at two o'clock in the morning, in the cold and rain, when you have not slept for 36 hours and everyone (including you) is very scared, then it is not fit for purpose. Tactics is the art of the possible. It is what you know you can do – and, more importantly, what you can train and teach others to do. You also have to learn and understand what the enemy can do, and what you can do to prevent him being successful. The enemy can only fight you on Friday with the weapons, training and understanding he had on Monday, so there is simply no form of combat or tactical doctrine extant on the planet which we cannot come to understand. That just requires some fairly basic study, or tasking others to gain that information for us, and testing the assumptions that underpin those ideas.

Western armies do not currently face the defeats or challenges on the scale of the Cold War. They do face Dien Bien Phus, Mogadishus and Ia Drang Valleys, where discussions of heroism and sacrifice consistently obscure critical military and tactical analysis. They also seek to forgive bad decisions, and thus do not enable useful learning. Until we recover the discussion of tactics and tear down the self-inflicted veil of complexity, we are likely to make no useful progress.

William F. Owen is Deputy Editor of Military Operations

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Training Observations

Anonymous

These are company and battle group level observed over a two week exercise. Some of these were points that needed to be improved and were while some were points to improve that were never really addressed. Some are points the Battle Group did real well, and it showed. Some are points that were noticeable in some parts of the Battle Group, but not in others. Nonetheless, it was interesting to be able to observe these in a force-on-force environment where both sides paid for mistakes with simulated casualties and the fact that these all came out is a testament to how challenging training can be so effective. I put most of the points to improve into two categories: (1) Afghan practices that are inappropriate for a peer enemy and (2) Junior leaders (Officers and NCOs) that didn't know better (or should have known better) and cut corners.

1. For the Infantry, Armoured Fighting Vehicles seem to at times become a 'disabler' vice an 'enabler'. When more bayonets are tied up in crewing vehicles than getting their boots muddy, it is time to think on the company and battalion employment of vehicles. The infantry is only really effective when it is dismounted.

2. The Battle Group command post was very good - a mobile, fighting command post that can move and fight and stay connected. It was, however, probably a bit too small and could get crowded at times. Careful thought has to go into who needs to be in a CP, who doesn't and what an acceptable size is.

3. What is good in Afghanistan in not good against a peer foe. Open leaguers and troops out in the open make excellent artillery targets.

4. There seems to be a systemic misunderstanding of what the mission and concept of operations parts of orders are for. We do not properly teach leaders about these. Mission statements are very specific as they transmit doctrinal language to subordinates - there should be no need to deviate from the formula. Within a concept of operations, intent is not a restatement of the mission (saying 'I intend to accomplish my mission' is meaningless) rather it is the manner in which the mission will be accomplished. If the intent is the manner, the scheme of manoeuvre is the prescription. Main effort is not a restatement of the mission either (saying 'My main effort is to accomplish the mission' is also useless) but rather a control measure to ensure that if in the highly likely event that things don't go as planned, people know where to push their efforts to.

5. Op Orders can cover too great of a period of time and, as a result, lose impact. At the Battle Group and Company level, saying Op WHATEVER is the occupation of a new AO, engaging the locals in that AO, crossing a river, the destruction of the enemy guard and establishment of a bridgehead line is way too many tasks for a single operation. As a result, a fairly complex task becomes merely Phase I and the essential details of it are glossed over - company level orders needn't cover 7 days of activity. Don't hesitate to take an operation from higher and break it into smaller chunks, issuing new Ops Os or Frag Os as required.

6. Cover of darkness needs to be exploited more. The enemy has night vision capabilities but is still human. Just because we have armoured vehicles doesn't mean we can move in daylight with impunity.

7. Airmobile operations into the teeth of a mechanized defence in daylight will likely fail. This is probably another Afghan-ism where we could land with impunity. There is a big difference between an airlanding operation and an air assault operation.

8. Remember KISS in planning. Too many 'conditions based' events in your plan means too many points of friction (what

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happens if the 'condition' takes too long to, or never, occurs?). Synchronization and tempo will often trump an ideal 'condition' on the battlefield.

9. IEDs in Afghanistan have left us with a significant scar - exploitation vice treating the thing as a point obstacle. Exploitation is only required in unique circumstances and a Battle Group trying to seize the other side of a river is not one of them. A delay of 2.5 hours (under observation and fire) while EOD was brought to neutralize an IED is too long; just send 2 sappers to pull the thing in 5 minutes. Risky to the sappers? Yes, but probably saves you more lives in the long run as you're not sitting in enemy TRP 1001.

10. Pretty much linked to point (9) - crossing points, especially in valleys, are vulnerable and one shouldn't stay on them for very long. A company was reduced to a Platoon+ because it sat on a crossing site and was mortared to pieces. A crossing site isn't really secure until a force has pushed about 4km passed it - this frees the crossing site from enemy observation and, more importantly, enemy mortar range.

11. When you are moving you are most likely on the offence. When you are stationary you are most likely in the defence. Unless there are compelling reasons not to, when one goes stationary one should start conducting hasty defensive tasks. Stationary things tend to attract stuff like mortar bombs and digging in once you halt is the only way to ensure you have some sort of protection. Clearance patrols, siting of weapons, etc, etc, need to happen once a force goes stationary.

12. Combined arms work is essential! Tanks and engineering vehicles are big, but they are vulnerable. The only thing that can protect tanks from tank hunting teams 50m away in woods is infantry clearing through the woods.

13. Woods clearing is a specific type of operation with a few elements that can make or break the operation. Do it wrong, and you miss an enemy position that then sits for 2 days in your rear, calling in fires. Hit the books and understand the essential parts to deliberate and hasty woods clearance operations.

14. The infantry is only really effective when it is dismounted.

15. As with point (13), clearing urban areas (even small villages) is also a specific type of operation. Don't get fixated with the village right away but work to isolate it. Defenders in urban areas are most effective when they have secure routes both in and into the area.

16. Vehicles, like troops on a section attack, tend to converge. Don't be a target for FASCAM. Over a dozen vehicles converging on a half a grid square is a target for FASCAM.

17. Returning to the Main Effort, it is vital to understand when the situation has changed. While securing village X may be the main effort at the start of things, it is not the main effort once an enemy attack is chewing away at your flank and could potentially wipe your entire force out. A simple Frag O that moves the point of Main Effort should be able to reorient a fighting force quite quickly in the face of decisive enemy manoeuvre.

18. There is a difference between speed and tempo. Speed is doing things fast, but often results in a speed wobble (picture the wobble of a kid on his bike going too fast, 1-2 seconds before he wipes out). Tempo is sequencing tactical actions in time and space in a rapid and effective manner. I'd argue, especially after watching a tenacious REDFORCE, that tempo is THE most important factor on the battlefield. Lose tempo and you lose initiative. Lose initiative and the enemy is dictating terms.

19. Probably another Afghan-ism, but there is an over reliance on sensor assets, especially external sensor assets. Awaiting 'conditions' based upon 'ISR soaks' and 'full Red SA' only detracts from tempo (see point (18) above). Your best sensors are probably your forward organic forces in contact; the Americans relearned this in 2003 and I will put money on it still being valid today.

20. Once you gain contact with the enemy, never lose contact with him if at all possible. Even if it means picketing him until you've dealt with other tasks, something on the ground has to have eyes on the enemy. This too is related to point (18) on tempo.

21. Probably the result of battle group focused operations for so long, but battalions do not always get all the assets they need. This means one has to get the most out of one's organic assets. This also highlights the crucial role of things like integral mortars, pioneers, etc, etc. Battle Groups are great, but they were originally created as ad hoc groupings in the field - ideally, units should be built with many of these organic capabilities in mind.

22. Warning orders are an extremely useful command tool to achieve 1/3-2/3 in battle procedure time that we don't seem to use enough. Gone are the old 4 para warning orders that had situation, probable task, timings and admin instructions - I don't know why. Now we wait for coords and issue warning orders that mirror operations orders, loaded with details. Use the old 4 para just to give your subordinates a heads up and throw out a supplementary warning order down the road if you feel the need to.

23. The infantry is only really effective when it is dismounted.

24. Robust echelons work and this exercise proved it. Never let the Army stovepipe supporting assets again. Going with a minimal tail can be a single point of failure.

25. The defence is quite systematic and almost 'checklist' in nature. A successful defensive plan consists of 5 essential sub-plans. A STA plan (Find), an Obstacle Plan (Fix), a Direct Fire Plan (Strike), an Indirect Fire Plan (Strike) and a Countermoves Plan (Exploit). There are little bits to these sub-plans like MG Matrices (direct fire plan), counter penetration plan (countermoves plan), OP placement (STA plan), etc that are essential to pulling it all together.

26. One cannot build these plans if one doesn't have a killzone. Before any defensive planning occurs, figure out where you want to kill the enemy.

27. Orders tend to be too long and wordy, even verbal orders. Company level orders should not take 1.5 hours.

28. Rehearsals at all levels help. Do them if at all possible. When people visually see things playing out, it gives definition to the orders one has just barfed out to tired soldiers.

29. Bringing your second-in-command to orders helps. He may see

the problem differently. If you die, he knows the plan and can take over.

30. Cam and concealment are essential to the defence. Armoured vehicles are not invulnerable or invisible and if you dig holes in the open plains, the enemy sensory assets will see it, template the position and easily fix you.

31. Understand the steps to defensive routine and get at them fast and hard. Disciplined defensive routine means your soldiers are protected and resting faster.

32. Friendly personnel awareness is always an issue. Companies would hit brigade recce. Brigade recce would hit companies. Companies would hit other companies or even themselves. Some form of well understood IFF that doesn't detract from your concealment is essential. Sharp battle tracking by company and battle group command posts also helps.

33. The infantry is only really effective when it is dismounted.

34. Our medical chain of evacuation needs work - this is probably another Afghan-ism. Casualties do not become the mission. Ambulances (air or ground) should not be used to haul dead bodies (that's for the resupply system). Air evac doesn't work when the enemy has AD capability. Our reporting system is too detailed and focused on bureaucratic returns to national headquarters (let the higher command worry about that). We need to remember that field expedient graves serve a purpose, one being to avoid clogging up your lines of communication.

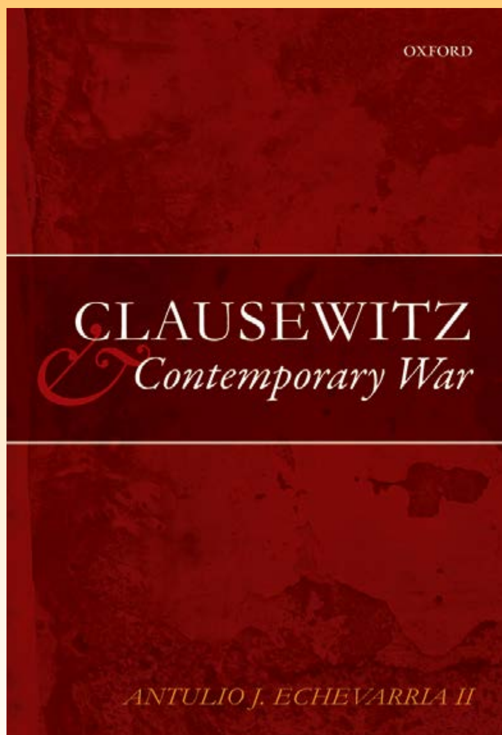
35. Dynamic retasking is a great skill within a force - the Germans were famous for quickly putting together Kampfgruppes of various sub-elements to undertake essential tasks. That being said, dynamic retasking requires some sort of SOPs to avoid sub-elements wandering all over the battlefield wondering what they are supposed to be doing.

36. Armoured vehicles in the woods with engines in high idle are not concealed. We probably require auxiliary power units for all of our armoured vehicles.

37. Deception is great, but only if it works. Figuring out when the opportunity for deception exists is a critical skill and can help avoid non-deceptive deception operations

The author is a serving officer.

Clausewitz & Contemporary War



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The Killing of an Unknown Afghan Fighter in September 2011: A Breakdown in Battlefield Discipline

John Wilson

What Happened

A patrol from 42 Commando operating from Check Point Omar in the Upper Sangin Valley on 15 September 2011 was tasked to search a nearby compound. On their way back from the compound some fighters engaged another checkpoint, Fallander. An Apache AH was ordered to find and destroy those fighters. It saw one fighter and fired 139 rounds of 30mm cannon. The man was seen to fall, apparently wounded. The patrol was re-tasked to conduct battlefield damage assessment. It was after noon on a hot (50°C) day.

Marine C[i] spotted the wounded man. C was accompanying the patrol commander (an acting colour sergeant[ii]), Marine A. The wounded man was alive and moving slightly; C had him in the rifle sight and informed Marine A. Marine A approached the man and searched him. He had an AK with two magazines and a grenade in a pocket. He was badly wounded and unconscious. They called for assistance and he was dragged to the corner of the field into cover.

A dressing was applied and the patrol debated whether he was still alive. Eventually, Marine A told his command post over the radio that the man was dead. Bio-metrics were taken and the patrol started to pack up. Marine C, who had been covering the man, walked away to take up a position prior to moving off. Marine A then leant over the man and fired a round from his 9mm pistol into his chest. The man writhed, showing that he was clearly alive; he died shortly after.

Those are the bare details. Marines A, B and C were charged with murder; B and C were acquitted, Marine A was found guilty. In his case it turned on whether he believed that the wounded man was dead or alive at the point of the shooting. The Board[iii] decided he knew the man was alive. It is fair to say that signs of life were fleeting and feeble.

We know all this because Marine B wore a helmet camera (privately owned) and recorded it. The videos were found a year later when civil police arrested another marine on an unrelated case and came across them on his laptop. Other witnesses to part of the activities were the AH crew, and by omission the sensors on the PGSS balloon at the checkpoint. The allegation was that the patrol deliberately moved out of sight of both potential witnesses because they intended to kill the fighter.

I was the only member of the public at the trial who had no link to the case. The others present were family, journalists, police and lawyers.

The Issues

Things Have Changed

Things have changed over the years. In his book *Bugles and a Tiger*, John Masters recorded that the Army recognised that the Pathan fighter wasn't a full-blooded enemy and *'accepted with goodwill most of the limitations placed on us, but we always remembered our **over-riding** duty to the men who trusted us.'* (My emphasis). Words which ought to conclude any orders group given today.

Masters finds the passages to describe this curious warfare. He tells

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of the savage death and mutilation of a British officer, skinned and castrated alive. The local British brigade commander ordered 'no prisoners', and when, to his fury, a wounded tribesman was taken, he ordered that the man should be pegged out, face up in the sun. His body was left where the officer's skin had been found

The fighters in Helmand behave now much as they did in Masters' time. We have changed. They, curiously perhaps, would understand the position taken by the brigadier and accept it. We have to accept that there is an asymmetry in morality. But it is also worth remembering another comment by Masters in a later book about the Second War, 'The Road Past Mandalay': *'I have an unalterable conviction that it is quite enough to wound and kill people, without subjecting them to barbarism and indignity'*. He was writing about his time as a Chindit brigade commander when he had to order the shooting of his own wounded soldiers.[iv]

The Record

The behaviour of the British Army since WW2 has been good by international standards, but by no means perfect. One massacre by soldiers of the Scots Guards was described in the Guardian of 6 May 2012 as follows:

> *'The Batang Kali massacre took place on 12 December 1948, as British troops carried out a counter-insurgency operation against Chinese Malayan communists. The shootings took place after a 16-man patrol group of Scots Guards surrounded a rubber estate at Sunga Rimoh by the Batang Kali river. The bodies of several unarmed villagers were reportedly mutilated and the village was burned to the ground.'*

The case is still the subject of much enquiry.

The campaign in Aden city in the late 1960s has also given rise to allegations of unlawful killings by British soldiers. In his book *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967*, David French cites examples from Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus as well as Aden. In Kenya, for example, security forces reported killing 8,400 Mau-Mau between October 1952 and April 1955, but recovered only 1193 weapons. Such discrepancies also occurred in Malaya at times, leading to speculation that some killings were of innocent people.

The troubles in Northern Ireland are well documented. The Army killed 301 people:

Republican terrorists:	121
Loyalist terrorists:	10
Civilians (Catholic):	138
Civilians (Protestant):	20
Other civilians:	2
Fratricide (Army/UDR/RUC):	10

Republican terrorists murdered 2148 people, of whom 162 were other republican terrorists. The security forces were responsible for only 40% of republican terrorist deaths. Army deaths attributable to terrorists were 700, of which all but six were the responsibility of republican terrorists.

But we still have to explain the 160 civilian deaths. Most were accidents, but by no means all. There is the case of Guardsmen Fisher and Wright who murdered the unarmed Peter McBride (aged 18) in 1992. And the case of Karen Reilly and Martin Peake, who were killed by a patrol from the Parachute Regiment. Private Lee Clegg was found guilty of the murder of Karen Reilly but acquitted at a retrial. He was, however, found guilty of the attempted murder of Martin Peake. Private Ian Thain was convicted of the murder of Thomas Reilly (aged 22, no relation), the road manager of the all-girl group ' Bananarama'. Thain was the first soldier in Northern Ireland to be convicted of murder whilst on duty. I will come back to these cases later. Many cases were those killed by plastic bullets; some were children. The worst and most significant case of killings is of course 'Bloody Sunday' when 14 unarmed people were killed in Londonderry in January 1972.

The 'Pitchfork Murders' represent a different but especially barbaric case. In Fermanagh in 1972, two men Michael Naan and Andrew Murray were murdered in cold blood by two soldiers from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders using the bowie knife of another soldier from the patrol. The two soldiers were a colour sergeant and a sergeant at the time of their arrest. The case came to light in 1979 as part of the 'Yorkshire Ripper' investigation.

A young subaltern, the platoon commander, was not present but withheld the story:

> *'I mulled the whole thing over in my mind and decided that for the good of the army and the regiment it must never go any further'.*

He was sentenced to one year in prison.

More recently, a court martial heard charges against soldiers of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment including the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jorge Mendonça. It is known as the Baha Mousa case. The charges were of brutality and ill-treatment. Baha Mousa was arrested in September 2003 and held at a temporary detention facility ('TDF') in Basra. He died two days later. A post-mortem examination recorded 93 separate injuries to Mr Mousa's body, including a broken nose and fractured ribs:

> 'The Baha Mousa Public Inquiry
>
> Final Submissions on Behalf of Colonel Mendonça:
>
> *1. There is no doubt that these detainees were treated appallingly throughout the time they were in the hands of 1 QLR within the TDF. They were assaulted and beaten by a number of 1 QLR soldiers and others. The death of Baha Mousa resulted from the treatment he received.'*

A corporal was found guilty of ill-treatment. There are further allegations of execution, torture and reckless shooting against the British Army from its time in Basra.

An earlier court martial tried an officer and an NCO from 45 Commando who beat up a detainee in Helmand Province:

> *'The trial heard that Mr Ekhlas was apprehended on suspicion of planting an IED. He was subjected to violence and transported to a nearby base where he was assaulted by Sergeant Leader and Captain Wheelhouse. The trial heard that Leader was seen hitting Mr Ekhlas with a boot. He needed*

four stitches to his lip and two of his teeth were loose.'

Leader claimed he used lawful violence against Mr Ekhlas in self-defence. But the court heard that Leader said of Mr Ekhlas: *'I don't know why they brought him back. They should have killed him'*.

I said that the record is comparatively good, but the history of colonial soldiering would not bear too close an examination and nor, it appears, would the record in Iraq. Before we get carried away, most soldiers (and by 'most' I mean the overwhelming majority) behave decently and properly. And the ratio of killings in Northern Ireland bears that out – only one republican terrorist was killed for every six British soldiers killed by them. And it is as much for the sake of the good soldiers as any others that we should pay attention to the failures and indiscipline. Much of the point of counter-insurgency operations is to protect the population. Killing them is not only not protecting them: it hazards the mission. First, we alienate the people we are there to help. Secondly, such actions almost certainly make the campaign longer because information and intelligence flow less freely: we lose vital cooperation. Thirdly, it deepens and widens the conflict, killing and maiming more: including our own soldiers. Many more soldiers were subsequently killed and wounded because of the behaviour of those soldiers who deliberately shot and killed innocent civilians on Bloody Sunday. In the previous 12 months 45 soldiers were killed. In the 12 months after Bloody Sunday the figure almost trebled to 127.

So, the British Army, indeed any army, has to respond to atrocities and unlawful behaviour on operations. A comparatively minor case such as the recent court-martial requires some introspection on the part of the state and its army.

How to Respond

An analysis of this case would suggest that small breaches of discipline can lead to bigger ones. The exchanges between the marines are notable for the lack of formal address to the patrol commander. I do not doubt that they respected him in the sense of obeying commands and trusting him as an experienced soldier. But there is no use of rank: no 'Colour' or 'Sarge', nor does Marine A refer to his marines by rank: 'Corporal!' And there is plenty of material to show that this extends to junior officers, both in the army and the Royal Marines. So, does the use of nick names and first names between all ranks contribute a loosening of discipline? Yes, it does. Some modern officers have crossed a line and this is one aspect to examine and correct. In the case of Private Clegg, the patrol commander was an officer; he was originally one of those charged although subsequently cleared. The patrol had concocted a story to justify the shootings – the trial judge considered that Clegg's version of events was *'untruthful and incapable of belief'*. In the 'Pitchfork Murders' case, the platoon commander failed to show the leadership required.

So, having officers is no guarantee of proper conduct but it is still a vital part of battlefield discipline.

Culture within the Army and Units

The failures are partly cultural in nature. Certain units seem to be more prone to poor behaviour than others. And as all units undergo very similar preparation for operations, that variation must be down to the culture within units. The old argument might have been that 'robust' behaviour in counter-insurgency by some individuals and units was an inevitable by-product of training for the 'big' war, where such conduct was excusable and even desirable. That argument no longer applies for western armed forces, including Britain's.

Explaining the Geneva Convention for operations on the Central Region of NATO in the Cold War was a small and simple exercise. Dealing with arrestees, detentions, rules of engagement, weapon control orders, responding to changing political nuances and so on requires far more effort today. In large part this is because discretion (responsibility and accountability) is delegated to the lowest level. A single staff officer can no longer determine precise policy for the formation. All soldiers have to exercise judgement to reflect the exact circumstances that they encounter as individuals. Obviously, local commanders carry the greatest burden and regularly exercise that discretion on behalf of their soldiers, but that does not absolve the individual of responsibility as Marines B and C discovered.

These matters are the nuts and bolts of training and preparation for operations. Yet, that preparation will be of limited value if the army and unit culture is not addressed.

Loyalty

Loyalty is a tricky issue. Loyalty goes two ways. It isn't much of a relationship where loyalty only moves in one direction. A commander has loyalties to his superior commander which may sometimes over-ride his loyalty to his own soldiers. It would be nice to state categorically that no commander can go wrong by always being loyal to his soldiers; but it is not always so. We expect that our superior commanders will be more aware of the general situation than those lower down. We also expect them to be well aware of the position of their subordinates: it is one of the duties of a commander to keep his higher headquarters in the picture because strained loyalties are often the result of misunderstandings.

Mistakes happen, and in our world they usually have serious consequences. The honest mistake from a well trained and well led unit is easier to deal with. We expect our superiors to defend us – to put themselves between us and higher authority. Better still, good direction:

> *…I will not tolerate breaches of discipline leading to unfair treatment of anybody … I most strongly disapprove of 'beating up' the inhabitants of this country just because they are the inhabitants … Any indiscipline of this kind would do great damage to the reputation of the Security forces and make our task in settling Mau Mau much more difficult. I therefore order that every officer in the Police and the Army should stamp at once on any conduct which he would be ashamed to see used against his own people …*
>
> *General George Erskine's Orders to the Army in Kenya - 23 June 1953.*

General Erskine backed up his words with deeds: he sacked a brigadier and instituted charges for murder against a major. Firm guidance provides the best education.

And if it is tricky for senior officers, it is even trickier for junior officers and NCOs. They literally live with the soldiers that they might have to offer up for investigation. So, now the issue is becoming one of leadership. So much less simple than leading a rifle platoon in Normandy 1944. To be clear, Normandy was tougher, nastier and simpler – simpler but not easier. This is not the place to discuss officer

selection, preparation, and training; but it is an integral part of the issue.

Armies help their officers and soldiers by establishing the right culture. We can see that the Argyll subaltern had been badly brought up by his regiment to believe that loyalty to the regiment was all. As ever, it ended in tears and an early admission by the officer would have saved some grief. Yet there was a small breach of discipline earlier on, which had knock-on effects. It was common practice for some in that unit to carry a bowie knife. Why was that permitted? No bowie knife, no murders. Could it be that stories from Aden 1967, when the Argylls entered Crater under Lieutenant Colonel Colin Mitchell, became part of the folk lore of the regiment? Myths are dangerous especially when there is some truth in them, however distorted.

Young officers and soldiers hear these stories – which lose nothing in the telling – and think that it how to behave. Myths simply have to be stamped on. It starts from the top but the sergeants' mess plays an especially important role in establishing a healthy culture. There is no one way of doing it; it is a matter of recognising that it is an issue that needs addressing.

Legal Aspects

The public reaction to the Marines' case is similar to the outcries that followed the Clegg and similar cases. It is that these offences are not best dealt with in a conventional court. True, the case at Bulford was heard by a general court-martial. Nevertheless, the procedures were largely those of the crown court, but with a board of officers rather than the usual jury. It is the nature of the charge and subsequent punishment that creates the difficulty. This case was handled impeccably: fair and open. The Ireland cases were held under Diplock rules – a judge sitting alone. Still, the public mood is that somehow soldiers should be given a special deal

Lord Lloyd of Berwick, a former law lord, said in a report from the Daily Telegraph (15 November 2013) that the mandatory life sentence for murder needs to be examined in cases where there are 'extenuating circumstances'. He suggested that exceptions should include when soldiers and police officers kill someone in the 'agony of the moment' as well as for mercy killings. He said:

> *'It is time for the law in this area to be reviewed so that the mandatory life sentence does not apply in these cases. It is a basic error of our law that at the moment when a policeman or a soldier shoots someone in the spur of a moment they are subject to a mandatory life sentence. There should be an element of judicial discretion.'*

The consequences of that indiscipline are truly serious because it imperils the national mission and will inevitably lead to an increase in more casualties to our own troops. That cannot go unpunished. Such a serious breakdown in discipline disqualifies the marine or soldier from further service in the armed forces and requires imprisonment. Such indiscipline is intolerable.

We have to guard against false sentiment. Marine A did wrong. I am sure he was a competent and experienced soldier, but there are many of those in Afghanistan and they were not tempted to do what he did. We respect those soldiers and marines by punishing appropriately those who transgress. And we have to guard against some sort of misguided campaign to reinstate Marine A after he has served his sentence.

A new law which specifically deals with serious breaches of battlefield discipline that endanger the mission such as unlawful killing may be the proper way to deal with the sort of tragic events that unfolded at the Bulford Court Martial Centre.

What Should Have Happened

Marine A should have displayed some humanity to a dying man. He should have organised first aid properly, and it should have been administered with some tenderness. The fighter was dying. Our forces had done their bit – an Apache helicopter had blasted him with 139 rounds of 30mm cannon. Rather than guess whether or not he was dead, Marine A should have checked pulse and/or eyeball. If he was alive, then he just carries out the SOP: and asks for casevac by MERT. Higher HQs might have helped here, knowing that time was getting on and darkness would fall by about 1800hrs, and asked the direct question: *'Is he alive? And if he is, we will order the MERT'.*

As John Masters said, the fighter was entitled to dignity at his death.

So much trouble and anguish – so many tears – could have been saved. I heard the marines giving evidence. Believe me, you would not have wanted to be in their place as the shrewd Mr David Perry QC remorselessly cross-examined. By the end of a day in the box, I could hear the pain as the probing questions produced faltering answers that prompted more uncomfortable questions and shaming admissions. His patent fairness did nothing to ease the distress. Maybe fear of that ordeal would be enough to deter others from doing likewise; in which case one of the reasons for the trial will have served its purpose.

John Wilson is a member of Military Operations' Editorial Advisory Panel

References

[i] On 5 December the Court of Appeal withdrew anonymity from Marine A - Sergeant Alexander Blackman RM - and subsequently also from Marines B and C.

[ii] In British Army and Royal Marine usage, a Colour Sergeant is an infantry staff sergeant. In US usage he would be a Sergeant First Class (E7). Ed.

[iii] Today British court martials are presided over by a civilian judge. The Board of Officers acts as the jury. Ed.

[iv] During the Chindit expeditions in Burma the lack of medical support led to hard decisions. Should the wounded be left to die, left to shoot themselves, shot, or left for the Japanese? Ed.

Letters To The Editor

Military Operations publishes letters to the Editor on relevant subjects. The following two letters were received in connection with the article 'Three Short Pieces' in the 4th Edition of Military Operations. 'Three Short Pieces' addressed three issues: headquarters size, operational parachute capability, and infantry fighting vehicles. They were posted online in November 2013.

'A Snowball's Hope in Hell'

If the description of what goes on now at higher formation HQ is accurate, I can only say 'God help us' if we find ourselves fighting a major war in which our national survival is at stake. As I said in my assessment, the problem seems to me to be that the principal that the commander makes the plan, and then staff put the flesh on it and make it happen (movement, logistics, etc.etc.) appears to be forgotten. I know that the plan for 1st Armd Div in Gulf War One was Rupert Smith's.

If the commander does not make the plan you end up with an 'Irish Parliament'. When I was BM [Brigade Major – now Chief of Staff – Ed] of 3 Commando Brigade, I worked for two commanders. The first always made the plan. The second delegated it to me and the staff. We would serve up plan after plan, which were sent back for changing time after time. It was a lesson I learned by the time I became a brigade commander, and one that I used to tell the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land). I also knew a CO who, whenever he was told of an operational opportunity in Borneo, invariably took so long to make up his mind, dithering and consulting, that the opportunity had disappeared by the time he ordered action to be taken. His concern was not to make a mistake that would affect his career. He became a three-star general!

I suspect that part of the problem is the CMA ('Cover My A**e') syndrome, linked to political interference, and fear of the media. I guess that in these circumstances commanders feel more comfortable if the plan is arrived at by consensus. If it goes wrong they can sack the Chief of Staff!!

As for the size of the HQ and its immobility, I am left speechless.

Julian Thompson
Julian commanded 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines, during the Falklands Conflict

The Airborne Fallacy

We did a study on the need for a conventional parachute capability a few years ago and concluded it was pointless. This proved to be so unpalatable that we were asked to repeat it – several times. It became known as the annual parachute study.

The reality is that parachute operations are so limited by terrain, weather, aircraft availability and their susceptibility to the enemy that the margin between success and failure is paper-thin. This means they have no utility except in those 'Wehrmacht at the door' situations where anything is worth a try. The British 1st Airborne Division was effectively stopped at Arnhem by half of a shot-up armoured recce battalion.

Justin Kelly
Justin was formerly Director General Future Land Warfare for the Australian Army

Discussions On The Conduct Of War

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