
THE JOURNAL OF
MILITARY OPERATIONS

DISCUSSIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF WAR

FEATURING

GERRY LONG

STEVE HART

AARON JACKSON

LEE IL-WOO

IEVA BĒRZIŅA

JIM STORR

The Journal of Military Operations

ISSN 2312-5926

All Rights Reserved ©

The IJ Infinity Group, Ltd.

Company number: 514895630

Ha'Neviim 26

Number 11

64071

Tel Aviv, Israel

Website: <http://www.tjomo.com>

Email: info@tjomo.com

Editor Dr Jim Storr
editor@tjomo.com

Deputy Editor William F. Owen
william@tjomo.com

Publisher A.E. Stahl
aestahl@tjomo.com

General Sir Rupert Smith
Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely

Editorial Advisory Panel

Major General Julian Thompson
Brigadier Justin Kelly
Professor Karen Carr
Colonel Clint Ancker
Colonel Mike Crawshaw
Colonel John Wilson

Lieutenant Colonel Egil Daltveit
Lieutenant Colonel Jan Frederik Geiner
Dr Eado Hecht
Major Gerry Long
Dermot Rooney

Subscribe For Free

Military Operations is distributed via <http://www.tjomo.com>

Additional Information

If you'd like to contact an editor regarding submission of articles or Letters to the Editor, see our **contact page**.

If you're interested in advertising with Military Operations, email us at: **adverts@tjomo.com**

If you are experiencing any technical issues, contact technical support: **tech@tjomo.com**

If you'd like to submit a comment or question or any other query, send an email to customer service: **cs@tjomo.com**

The Journal of Military Operations is solely distributed through its official website. It may not be shared through other websites as a whole or in any part unless express consent is given by The Journal of Military Operations. As a free publication, this is key to maintaining the journal. Membership, which is free, is required. Explicit permission by The Journal of Military Operations must be granted to the author for the republication of any article. The decision for republication is solely left to the discretion of The Journal of Military Operations.

Moreover, if quoting from an article in The Journal of Military Operations, please ensure that The Journal of Military Operations is properly sourced.

Any publication included in The Journal of Military Operations and/or opinions expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views of The Journal of Military Operations or the The Journal of Military Operations Editorial Advisory Panel. Such publications and all information within the publications (e.g. titles, dates, statistics, conclusions, sources, opinions, etc.) are solely the responsibility of the author of the article, not The Journal of Military Operations or the The Journal of Military Operations Editorial Advisory Panel.Group. Such publications and all information within the publications (e.g. titles, dates, statistics, conclusions, sources, opinions, etc) are solely the responsibility of the author of the article, not The Journal of Military Operations or the IJ Group.

DISCUSSIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF WAR

THE JOURNAL OF
MILITARY OPERATIONS

Volume 3 / Issue 1 / Spring 2015

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the ninth edition of Military Operations (MO).

Thousands of people read MO. Hundreds of thousands of people have served in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002 and 2003. Many of MO's readers will have served in Afghanistan, Iraq, or both; for some this included several tours. Some of them will have important insights into how land forces do, can or should fight.

Yet MO has only ever received a tiny number of articles about operations in Afghanistan or Iraq. We have published almost every article on operations in Afghanistan or Iraq that we received.

So, in simple terms, virtually none of the hundreds of thousands of people who served in Afghanistan, Iraq or both have written for MO. That's a great pity, and a loss for everyone us who reads MO.

When we set up MO, we had that huge body of first-hand experience in mind. Here, surely, was a great opportunity to capture all that knowledge, and make it available to a wide audience at no cost to the reader. **We really want to publish that experience.** We want to build an understanding of what worked; what didn't work; what was good; what was bad; and what was a total waste of public time and money.

Do you have experience that you can share? We are looking mostly for insight from platoon, company and battalion levels, although we're happy to look at higher-level inputs as well. We won't publish everything: articles have to be relevant, and provide insight. But if you have something that you think is worth sharing, please capture it and send it to me at editor@tjomo.com. We do have editorial guidelines: they're fairly straightforward and you'll find them on our website (<https://www.tjomo.com/submission-guidelines/>). 'Short' is good: please don't try to write 3,000 words if a thousand or so says all you need to say.

In 2013 and 2014 Infinity Journal and MO ran Masterclasses at St John's College at the University of Cambridge. We're repeating the Graduate Warfare Class this year, from 17 to 19 July. We're also conducting another Seminar Wargame from 14 to 16 August. Last year's wargame provided fascinating insights into both the dynamics of land force operations and the human dynamics of planning in ad-hoc, adversarial groups. Further information on both events, and application forms, are available at: <https://www.tjomo.com/masterclass>

The US Army and Marine Corps entered the First World War in the late spring of 1918. Their infantry tactics had been shaped by the Baker Board, which had toured the French and British Armies on the Western Front in May 1917. What the US armed forces learnt from the First World War shaped their infantry organisations and tactics right down to the present day. Almost uniquely, the US forces did not adopt a light machinegun as the core of each rifle section. The US Army reconsidered the issue after the Second World War in the Infantry Conference of 1946. MO is not a history journal, but takes the view that history is our best guide to how land forces can, should, or do fight. Gerry Long's article in this edition of MO looks at the 1946 Conference; what it tells us about both the issue of section (or squad) tactics; and how armies develop their doctrine and organisations.

Also in this edition of MO:

Do influence operations actually work, or are they simply the 'flavour of the month'? See Lee Il-Woo's article.

Further insights into the operational level and operational art, particularly in smaller nations, are provided by Aaron Jackson's and Steve Hart's articles.

Ieva Berzina's article gives us a useful and timely introduction to contrasting Russian and Western perspectives on 'Colour Revolutions'.

My own observations, and comments, on the command of land forces over the last decade or so are contained in 'Ten Years Observing Command and Control'.

For the next edition of MO I would like to concentrate exclusively on recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. To do that, some of the hundreds of thousands of people who served there will need to write down their insights and send them in. If you have something worth sharing, please capture it in words and send it to us.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Storr

Editor, Military Operations

April 2015

CONTENTS

ORGANISING INFANTRY PART 2: THE EFFECT OF THE 1946 INFANTRY CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE US ARMY SQUAD GERRY LONG	4
AN OMNIPOTENT ABSTRACTION: WHAT LESSONS DOES THE FALKLANDS WAR HAVE FOR THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR? STEVE HART	9
THE PRACTICE OF OPERATIONAL ART BY SMALL MILITARIES: WHY AND HOW AARON JACKSON	14
PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: TRUE COERCION, OR A BYPRODUCT THAT HAS YET TO BE MASTERED? LEE IL-WOO	19
THE RUSSIAN 'COLOUR COUNTERREVOLUTION' MODEL FOR CONTAINING GEOPOLITICAL EXPANSION BY THE WEST Ieva Bērziņa	23
TEN YEARS OBSERVING COMMAND AND CONTROL JIM STORR	28

ORGANISING INFANTRY PART 2:^[i] THE EFFECT OF THE 1946 INFANTRY CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE US ARMY SQUAD^[ii]



By U.S. Marines [Official Marine Corps Photo # 371490] Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Gerry Long

When the line wheeled and charged across the clearing, the bullets whining past them, wheeled and charged almost with drill field precision, an ache as profound as the ache of orgasm passed through me. And perhaps that is why some officers make careers of the infantry, why they endure the petty regulations, the discomforts and degradations, the dull years of peacetime duty in dreary posts: just to experience a single moment when a group of soldiers under your command and extreme stress of combat do exactly what you want them to do, as if they are an extension of yourself.

Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War*

The Great & the Good!

Since the infantry rifle squad is the basic building block for platoons, companies, and eventually battalions, it is important to determine its optimum squad organisation. Since the end of World War II, with the demise of the German Wehrmacht the US Army led the analysis in order to achieve the optimal capability for the infantry rifle squad to conduct fire and manoeuvre. The US Army's 1946 Infantry Conference provided the first modern definition of the infantry rifle squad. That conference perhaps produced the best post-operational validation of tactics, techniques and procedures. Its findings resonate to this day. At Fort Benning the great and the good of the tactical combat sphere were gathered together to discuss the lessons learned and deliver a view to the future. What was probably

the most qualified and experienced group of infantry officers that the US Army ever assembled came together. Most of those men had survived extensive combat in northwest Europe or the Pacific, and were awaiting discharge and return to normal civilian life. Although they discussed many issues, one of their more important conclusions was the ideal organisation for the future rifle squad (or section).^[iii]

The US Army was late in coming to a formal doctrine for its rifle platoons. Prior to the US Army's entry into the Great War, infantry companies would organise for battle just as they would for parade, by lining up all its privates and corporals in two ranks according to height. Corporals were squad leaders and squads were eight-man units. The first real change to the organisation of the US Army's infantry units was the result of Colonel Chauncey Baker's fact-finding mission in May 1917. What became known as the Baker Board spent six weeks touring France and England to collect as much information as possible on the optimal combat organisation for the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). The AEF's commander, General John J. Pershing, decided to retain the 250-man rifle companies recommended by the Baker Board. The AEF rifle company of six officers and 250 soldiers would be larger than a British rifle company of six officers and 221 men. The AEF rifle platoon's internal organisation was intended more to facilitate training than for tactical use. For battle, the lieutenant was expected to organise his platoon into as many as seven squads of six to eight men each, and then to group those squads into two 'half platoons'. The next changes to the infantry organisation occurred in 1921, when uniformly organised sections and squads supplanted the old AEF 'do-it-yourself' squads. The result was a new multi-purpose rifle squad, composed of a corporal and seven privates, equipped with its own Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) and its own rifle grenadier (with a grenade launcher attached to his rifle). The senior private in the squad was trained to take over if the corporal became a

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: LONG, GERRY, "ORGANISING INFANTRY PART 2: THE EFFECT OF THE 1946 INFANTRY CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE US ARMY SQUAD", *MILITARY OPERATIONS*, VOLUME 3, ISSUE NO. 1, SPRING 2015, PAGES 4-7.



casualty. By the time the US Army entered WWII, the rifle squad comprised of one squad leader, one assistant squad leader, one Browning Automatic Rifleman, and 9 privates (a twelve-man squad). [iv] The conferees of 1946 concluded that the twelve-man squad was too large for a single squad leader to command. In turn, the squad's BAR was completely inadequate as the squad's fire-support platform. However effective the collective firepower of the M1 Garand rifle, this did not compensate for the BAR's shortcomings. The overwhelming call from the conferees was the need for an effective light machine gun along the lines of the German MG-34 or MG-42.

The squad also needed to be smaller. Nine men would be the best size. [v] The squad would be easier to control but still large enough to take several casualties while remaining effective. Interestingly the conferees rejected the Marine Corps idea of subdividing squads into fire teams. The conferees concluded that although a fire-team squad might be useful when at full strength, in combat it would remain to brittle. The four man fire-team could not stand casualties and remain effective. After a few losses, the squad would either reorganise into fewer fire-teams or else stop using its fire-team organisational structure. Either way this to-fro with squad organisation in combat would needlessly complicate an already confusing situation, adding to the friction of war. In addition, the squad LMG (the BAR) in its current configuration would negate its usefulness even further in such a small grouping.

Although they discussed the thirteen-man squad used by the Marines in the Pacific, this was dismissed firstly because it was seen as essentially a Marine fad for the Pacific and unsustainable with the manpower available in a peacetime army. The best feature of the USMC squad was the employment of three BARs, each under its own fire-team commander. Thus to some extent compensating for the BARs' failings. Of course when and if the BAR was replaced this advantage would become negated. The 1946 Infantry Conference identified four essential factors which would prove timeless. First, in terms of command and control a commander could physically influence in combat up to nine men (even then assisted by a 2ic). Second, in combat due to attrition an infantry unit was never operated at full strength. Third, despite peacetime expectations, the nature of infantry combat precludes the effective use of subordinate teams. Fourth, to effectively fire and manoeuvre, the infantry needs to be based around a LMG, rifles alone are inadequate.

In testimonials written by three junior committee members, each having a great deal of platoon and company-level experience in the European theatre of operations (ETO), the issue of squad leader capabilities surfaced as a justification why the squad should perform one task or the other. All three officers, a major and two captains, stated that the majority of the World War II squad leaders lacked the training and tactical capability to execute fire and manoeuvre at the squad level (especially as replacements began filling these positions). The recommended rifle squad still maintained the capability to conduct fire and movement, or marching/assault fire only. Thus, the capability of fire and manoeuvre continued to elude the infantry rifle squad. The "minority report" attached to conferees findings agreed that the squad organisation should be changed, but disagreed with the majority as to the optimum organisation. The dissenting opinion focused on formalising the issue of fire and manoeuvre below platoon level. Unlike the recommended nine-man infantry rifle squad envisioned by the majority of the committee, the minority recommended a seven-man rifle squad. This recommended seven-man squad would consist of a squad leader, an assistant squad leader, and five riflemen (no mention of automatic riflemen). This squad would be capable of only establishing a base of fire or assaulting using fire and movement, but a section headquarters

would control two squads, giving the capability of fire and manoeuvre. By a very narrow margin (fifteen to twelve), Committee B recommended the nine-man rifle squad organisation. This nine-man infantry rifle squad was the organisation that the US Army took to battle in Korea. [vi]

This Kind of War: the ROAD from Pentomic to Vietnam

The US Army entered the Korea War still armed with the BAR, due to the constraints of a peacetime budget, but it did adopt the nine-man squad. During the Korea War the nine-man squad proved as effective and resilient as the conferees had said it would thus validating the conference's findings. The BAR continued to be the Achilles heel of the squad and proved no better when the squad received an extra BAR into its organisation later into the war. During the Korean War the distinguished historian SLA Marshall, [vii] got involved. He advocated going to the fire-team organisation in line with the marines. [viii] Marshall, aware that the army could not man a thirteen-man squad, decided on championing the eleven-man squad, two five-man teams, each with its own BAR. Marshall's influence at the time was at its height and his argument won through. The army adopted the eleven man squad based on two fire-teams in the late 1950's as part of the new '*Pentomic Division*'. The '*Old Army*' regiments made way for new look 'battlegroups' each composed of five rifle companies. This battalionless, five sided system, designed for the nuclear battlefield, was the first such major reorganisation at this level since Valley Forge. Always more a public relations exercise than a revolution in military affairs, within five years the Pentomic concept proved completely unworkable (and universally disliked) and the US Army would furtively reorganise once again, [ix] -returning to the regiment-battalion system.

Marshall seems to have no evidence to support his fire-team theory, in fact his own report supported the validity of the 1946 Infantry Conference's squad organisation and tactical employment. Marshall noted that the squad leader in Korea seemed much more effective than had the squad leaders in WWII. Apparently it never occurred to Marshall that the reason the NCOs seemed more effective in the Korean War than they had appeared during WWII might have been due to the organisational and tactical changes the US Army made in the infantry squad since WWII. Based on his own praise of the squad's performance, one is hard pressed to see why the US Army needed to change its squad organisation. In short, nothing in Marshall's report disproved the observations the 1946 Infantry Conference made about the infantry squad's size, organisation or tactics. [x]

Another factor that influenced the US Army away from the nine-man squad was Major General JC Fry's doctrinal input via his *Assault Battle Drill*. [xi] Fry's '*battle drill*' employed an infantry squad organised with two fire-teams. This was based on his experience in Korea. In Fry's drill, one fire-team acted as a base of fire, the other manoeuvred not unlike the British Army '*battle drill*' adopted post the Falklands War. The 1946 Infantry Conference nearly unanimously came out against battle drill. In their opinion it stereotyped tactics. As a result, the conferees recommend the US Army no0074 adopt the concept. [xii] As one can see, the battle drill concept complemented Marshall's recommendations to organise the squad into two fire-teams. [xiii] Together, Marshall and Fry seem to have influenced the US Army's eventual adoption of the eleven man fire team based squad. [xiv]

Despite the adoption of both battle drill and fire-team organisation, nothing post Korean War conclusively proved the validity of such



organisation. As the US Army moved from 'Pentomic Division' to a new concept, ROAD, (Reorganization Objectives Army Division), ROAD reorganisation redressed the imbalance, inherent in the Pentomic concept, between an army division's nuclear and conventional capabilities. Under the ROAD concept the battlegroup was disbanded and the battalion re-introduced. There was no doubt that ROAD was a far more workable organisation than the Pentomic structure.[xv]

At squad level the US Army continued to examine the 'best' squad organisation. First of these was the United States Army Infantry School (USAIS) in 1953. This was followed in 1956 by A Study of the Infantry Rifle Squad, (ARIRS). Then in 1961 the US Army once again evaluated its infantry squads and platoon with the Optimum Composition of the Rifle Squad and Platoon (OCRSP) test. None of these reports did anything to disprove the 1946 Infantry Conference observations and conclusions regarding the squad's essential organisation. However like all bureaucracies when faced with a report it did not like, it simply ignored its findings and continued with the eleven-man squad based around two fire-teams.

When the US Army continued to use the fire-team organisation in combat in Vietnam, combat results corroborated the 1946 Infantry Conference and all the subsequent tests. The basic question would seem to beg: Why did the US Army support a squad organisation that was obviously perishable, probably unnecessary, and certainly unproven in combat? Despite these issues, the US Army retained the fire-team based squad and squad fire and manoeuvre tactics. The US Army's leadership continued to disregard – perhaps unknowingly – the 1946 Infantry Conference's observations and conclusions regarding the infantry squad's organisation and tactical employment.[xvi]

Concurrent to Vietnam specifically from 1966-1972 the US Army conducted The Infantry Rifle Unit Study (IRUS). IRUS examine every aspect of small unit infantry tactics and doctrine. Perhaps the most striking fact the IRUS team sought to determine once and for all, was what the Basic Infantry Element (BIE) was. It appeared from tests and combat that most men could easily control five others. However, a single man could also control up to ten men under certain conditions. [xvii] IRUS noted that once a BIE fell below five men it tended to become combat ineffective. The IRUS test recommended the BIE contain six men (although an analysis of data reveals the nine man BIE actually performed better than the six man).[xviii] Like the 1946 Infantry Conference's conclusions, the IRUS conclusions recognised that one man had difficulty controlling more than eight men.[xix] Perhaps the most interesting observations of IRUS – some would

say counter-intuitive- concerns the number of LMGs per BIE. The testers concluded that two LMGs per BIE would not be as effective in suppressing the target as only one LMG per BIE. This result was attributed to several facts. First, two LMGs were harder to control, and secondly two LMGs used twice as much ammunition. As can be seen, the IRUS arrived at essentially the same conclusions about the BIE as the 1946 Infantry Conference had about the infantry squad.

A window to the future

The US Army was unique in setting up such a forum after the Second World War. The Germans, of course, could not and most of the analysis has been done for them by many scholars since. The British, as always, filed the experience away and cracked on with the real day job of Imperial Policing. So it was left to the US Army to leave a legacy of post operational analysis at the squad (or section) level, and thank God they did. For army officers, as with any other profession, experience is the 'active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill.' [xx] The men of 1946 were at the pinnacle of knowledge and experience. The 1946 Infantry Conference findings have been validated by three or more wars, and decades of exercising and testing. They seem pretty conclusive even to the most fretful observer. Historical analysis of the infantry basic unit since WWII would suggest that its primary shortcoming lies in its organisation rather than its size. Every combat evaluation since has confirmed the recommendations of the wise men of 1946. They seem to be wise men indeed; or, as in fact they were, the most combat-experienced group of infantry commanders ever assembled in one place.

So what can the modern officer draw from their analysis? There seem to be three timeless underlying doctrinal norms. Firstly the squad/section weaponry should be based around one LMG and one grenade launcher. Secondly, eliminate the fire-team structure. Organise the squad (or in the British case, section) around a squad leader (section commander) & 2ic. The 2ic could still command an ad-hoc fire-team if the tactical situation required. Finally, eliminating the fire-team would simplify the light infantryman's tactical employment. The squad (or section) *would either fire or manoeuvre, not both*. Battle drill along with fire-teams should be seen for what they were designed for: a vehicle to train the squad, not a basis for offensive doctrine. This would simplify the low level commander's tactical duties and training.[xxi] In summary, the US Army (and others) would do well to remember and apply its own lessons identified and relearn them with regards the organisation and tactics of the infantry.

Gerry Long is a member of Military Operations' Editorial Advisory Panel



REFERENCES

- [i] Part 1 was written by William Owen in 2003. See Army Doctrine & Training News No 19, Summer 2003, pp 28-30
- [ii] Full transcript of the Conference can be found via the Combined Arms Research Department <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p4013coll8/id/454>.
- [iii] Sayen, J (2001) 'Force Structure and Unit Design in Sprit Blood & Treasure'. Presidio, p 184, see also Sayen, J (2001) 'US Army and Marine Infantry Organization: Structure and Development.'
- [iv] Sayen, John. 'Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry.' Working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001. This study provided succinct background and analysis of the evolving organization of the Infantry battalion, in 'Where are the Infantry Sgts?' Tennant, T (2009) handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA509378.
- [v] The conferees envisioned the recommended nine-man infantry rifle squad conducting operations as part of a larger force. This squad would serve as a base of fire to over-watch the manoeuvre of another squad within the platoon, or the squad would manoeuvre while over-watched by another squad within the platoon. According to military analyst John English, in 'On Infantry', the concept of the fire team had its beginnings in World War II, in an attempt to give the rifle squad the capability to conduct fire and manoeuvre similar to the capability provided by the sections of World War I. English, J (1981) 'On Infantry', Praeger, New York p 134.
- [vi] Karcher, T (1989) 'Enhancing Combat Effectiveness, The Evolution of the US Army Infantry Rifle Squad since the end of World War II', dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA407058.
- [vii] Although many of Marshall's findings regarding combat behaviour have come into question in recent years, one must understand that during the 1950s and early 1960s his recommendations carried great weight with the senior US Army Leadership.
- [viii] A fire team is a sub-element of a rifle squad, designed to allow the squad to conduct limited fire and manoeuvre. Typically, two fire teams form a rifle squad.
- [ix] Hackworth D, (1990) About Face, Simon & Schuster, pp 315-6.
- [x] Melody, P (1990) 'The infantry Rifle Squad', School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, pp 13-15; and Marshall, 'Commentary on Infantry Operations and Weapons Usage In Korea; Winter 1950-51', pp 53-54, 72-76.
- [xi] Assault Battle Drill still limited the effectiveness of squad-level fire and manoeuvre by designating a 'fire team' and a 'manoeuvre team,' allowing these teams only limited capability to perform the alternate task. Fry, JC, (1955) 'Assault Battle Drill', Harrisburg, The Military Service Publishing Company, p 54.
- [xii] Fry's Battle Drill was most popular as a means to train infantrymen more than a tactical technique, see Fry 'Battle Drill' Combat Forces Journal 1953, Apr, pp 18-22, May, pp 37-39. Enthusiasm for battle drill can be seen most clearly in the Infantry Instructors Conference in 1956, where it was used more as a 'action on contact' drill; Infantry Instructors' Conference Report, Fort Benning, 1956, pp 70-78, see also Melody op cit, pp 16-17.
- [xiii] Also many within the US Army appear to have been fascinated with the US Marine Corps' thirteen-man infantry rifle squad, organized with three fire teams, each consisting of four men.
- [xiv] Melody op cit, p17
- [xv] Hackworth D, (1990) 'About Face', Simon & Schuster, pp 429-430.
- [xvi] Melody op cit, pp 29-31.
- [xvii] Melody, op cit, p 32
- [xviii] Infantry Rifle Unit Study (IRUS-75), Phase 1, pt 2, Annexes E, Fort Benning, once again there was a push to support the fire-team concept without any justification in the data.
- [xix] IRUS-75, Phase 1, pt 2, Annexes C-D, Fort Benning.
- [xx] www.dnipogo.org/fcs/pdf/lewis_annotated_brief_30_aug_01.pdf · Lewis, M (2001) The Army Transformation.
- [xxi] This is validated by the British Army experience in WWII, most notably the observations of Major Lionel Wigram. A platoon would have 3 sections of 5-9 men in each 15-27 men, with 3 LMG's & 3 grenade launchers. Wigram's platoon was based on 22 men is divided up as follows: 1st group, all the riflemen under the platoon commander; 2nd group, 3 LMG groups (3 men to each gun) commanded by the platoon sgt. 3rd group, two inch mortar team follows up in rear of group 1 (note: no fire-teams there either!). ('Letter to Brigadier, 36 Bde, 16 Aug 43').

WARFARE MASTERCLASSES 2015

St John's College, Cambridge

Building on the success of Warfare Masterclasses run in 2013 and 2014, Military Operations and Infinity Journal will conduct two further Masterclasses in 2015.

17th to 19th July 2015

The Graduate Warfare Class will be another opportunity to experience last year's highly successful event.

Application Form available from:
https://tjomo.com/graduate_masterclass

14th to 16th August 2015

The Seminar Wargame will be an adversarial, free-play event designed to expose and analyse some of the dynamics of modern land warfare.

Application Form available from:
https://www.tjomo.com/seminar_wargame

FIND OUT MORE, DOWNLOAD THE FLYER FROM

<https://www.tjomo.com/masterclass>

presented by

THE JOURNAL OF
MILITARY OPERATIONS



Infinity
Journal

AN OMNIPOTENT ABSTRACTION: WHAT LESSONS DOES THE FALKLANDS WAR HAVE FOR THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR?



By Camera Operator: PH2 DIDAS [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Steve Hart

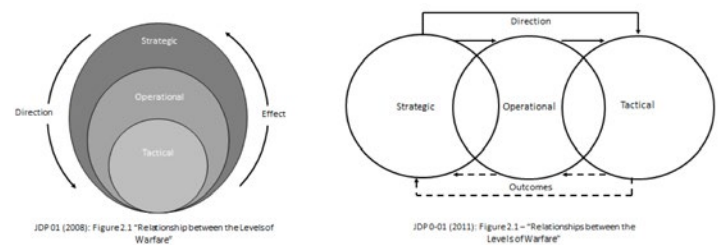
"The Falklands War demonstrates some characteristics of modern war that need to be accommodated in the further evolution of operational art."^[i]

Using the case study of the Falklands War, this article will argue that the operational level of war is a confusing concept that hinders rather than supports the link between strategy and tactics. While the operational level of war may have had utility for the specific character for which it was constructed, it is now time for British Defence Doctrine to discard the concept. British Defence Doctrine should instead recast discussions of war using a framework that accepts the totality of war rather than attempting to compartmentalise war into levels. The argument will begin with describing how the operational level is a poorly explained concept within British Defence Doctrine. It will then go on to outline what the operational purports to do and test those claims against the case of the Falklands War.

The operational level falls into a trap that Basil Liddell Hart described: *"The modern tendency has been to search for principles which can be expressed in a single word – and then need several thousand words to explain them... The longer one continues the search for such omnipotent abstractions, the more do they appear a mirage, neither attainable nor useful – except as an intellectual exercise."*^[ii] At the outset a clear distinction must be drawn between operational level and operational art. The operational level is defined in British military doctrine as: *"the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained, within theatres or areas of operation, to achieve strategic objectives."*^[iii] It is further

described as providing "...the 2-way bridge between the strategic and tactical levels." Operational art is defined as: *"the orchestration of a campaign, in concert with other agencies, involved in converting strategic objectives into tactical activity in order to achieve a desired outcome."*^[iv] Operational art is the skill required of the military, and the operational level is the enabling construct.

These definitions would suggest that there is clarity in what the operational level is, what its purpose is, and how this purpose should be realised. However, the operational level of war falls into the trap of superficial simplicity; masking a confusing and contradictory concept that is interpreted in different way by different groups. The loose doctrinal interpretation of the operational level is best shown using two diagrams, both drawn from current British Defence Doctrine:



The two diagrams, while sharing the same title, demonstrate a starkly different interpretation of the relationship between the three levels of war. The representation in JDP 01 (2011) suggests that the three levels of war each have areas of exclusivity. That is there are unique spheres of responsibility for each level. Conversely JDP 01: Campaigning draws the relationship in such a way as there are no areas of exclusive tactical or operational responsibility. Instead each

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: HART, STEVE, "AN OMNIPOTENT ABSTRACTION: WHAT LESSONS DOES THE FALKLANDS WAR HAVE FOR THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR?", *MILITARY OPERATIONS*, VOLUME 3, ISSUE NO. 1, SPRING 2015, PAGES 9-12.



subordinate level of war is nested within the strategic level. British Defence Doctrine therefore does not present a clear understanding of the levels of war.

Operational Art and The Emergence of the Operational Level.

A defined operational level was a late addition to the US Army doctrine publication FM100-5 published in 1982. The original purpose of the operational level was to enable three things: the command and control of the large scale land battles envisaged to defeat the Soviet threat; to delineate a sphere of responsibility for the profession of arms; and to enable the conversation between tactics and strategy.

Within Soviet military doctrine the concept of 'operational art' was coined between World War One and World War Two. For Soviet theory, operational art was the sequencing of a series of battles that enabled deep penetration into an enemy's rear area leading to encirclement and subsequent physical destruction (annihilation) of the enemy force. This doctrinal concept was an effort to overcome the stagnation apparent in the First World War and to harness manoeuvre and mobility in order to achieve strategic objectives.[v] For the Soviets operational art was the bridge between tactics and strategy. In the Soviet construct, operational art was associated with a large scale of operations. There was no 'level of war' that was solely responsible for this function. While operational art is required, there is no requirement to construct a 'level of war' to carry out this artistic function.

The operational level did not therefore stem from Soviet military thought. The level came from American doctrine, and was subsequently adopted by the British. The American Doctrine FM100-5, where the operational level was first codified, compartmentalised the battles required to counter advancing and echeloning Soviet forces. Divisions, brigades and battalions had the responsibility for the 'close battle' with the Soviet first echelons; while, at Corps level, organic artillery and air assets would enable prosecution of a 'deep battle' focussed against subsequent echelons.[vi] The coordination of this campaign was to be achieved through an 'operational level of war'. This then was the central purpose of the original operational level, as described in the original document: "most simply, it is the theory of larger unit operations." [vii] It was doctrine designed to facilitate NATO operations against the Soviet Union in the European land environment.

A further purpose of the operational level was to delineate a sphere of responsibility for military commanders. By dividing war into 'levels' each of these levels become the responsibility of a different group of decision makers. The strategic level is the responsibility of politicians, the operational level is the responsibility of Generals, Admirals and Air Marshalls and the tactical level is the responsibility of subordinate military commanders. With the errors of Vietnam fresh in their minds American doctrine writers in the early 1980s must have found appealing the idea of describing a sphere of responsibility for the military that effectively insulated military decisions from political 'interference'.

Levels of war therefore provide an essential concept of not only what commanders are responsible for, but also for what they are not

responsible. As long as strategy, operations and tactics are viewed as separate parts of the whole of war, there is no responsibility for the totality of war at any level. Each 'level' is compartmentalised from the whole, able to abdicate responsibility for decisions that lie outside their area of responsibility. This concept of military decision makers at the operational level shielding themselves from political strategy has resonance in the contemporary environment. As the former US commander of forces in Iraq, General Tommy Franks, said: "Keep Washington focused on policy and strategy. Leave me the hell alone to run the war." [viii]

The third reason for an operational level is to link tactical action with strategic aims. The operational level describes a clear sphere of responsibility for the military, and also creates a single bridge between military activity and strategic decision-making. This 'bridging' between strategy and tactics is, by definition, the purpose of operational art. The operational level is therefore where operational art is practised. Imposing a 'level of war' between tactics and strategy, it is argued, enables the conversation between the two. The risk is clear: tactical victories which are not aligned to purpose are 'strategically barren'. This is most clearly demonstrated in the anecdote of an American General speaking to the commander of the North Vietnamese Army: The American asserts to General Giap that the NVA had never defeated the US Army on the battlefield, General Giap's response was: 'That is true but also irrelevant.' [ix]

It is, however, a strange conceit to require a new level of war in order to enable the expression operational art. The military works, and indeed has always worked, through levels of command. Each level of command should understand the requirements of the levels of command above, and thereby ensure coherent action within the whole. One could reasonably ask at what stage does a level of command become a level of war? It is a mighty hubris on the part of any level of command that takes unto itself such authority that it not merely superior in terms of command, it is also superior in terms of fighting at a discrete level of war.

The Operational Level in the Falklands Campaign.

There are three clear purposes for an operational level of war: to address the challenges of large scale land operations; to delineate a sphere of military responsibility; and to bridge between tactics and strategy. Each of these justifications can be debunked using the case study of the Falklands War. While there is no argument that the Falklands is a perfect analogy for future war, the conflict has characteristics that make it a suitable allegory for discussion of the operational level. It was an expeditionary conflict carried out thousands of miles from the UK, it was a joint campaign requiring the coordination of all three services, and it was completely successful. It was also carried out without any doctrine that required the imposition of an operational level of war; yet nonetheless operational art was successfully practised.

Whilst there was no operational level in the Falklands War, there was an overall 'operational commander'. This commander was Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse and the primary responsibility for planning and conducting the campaign fell to his headquarters. [x] One possible interpretation of this arrangement is that Admiral Fieldhouse's command in Northwood was the de-facto 'operational-level'. However the argument that the highest military commander



is necessarily a commander at the 'operational-level' is one that misunderstands the nature of a *level of war* as opposed to a *level of command*. Admiral Fieldhouse had military command, but he did not preside over a 'level' of war that had *autonomy* for campaign planning and therefore operational art. Above him British political leadership were closely involved in campaign planning and execution, and below him his subordinate commanders at sea and on the land were equally responsible for the expression of operational art. Admiral Fieldhouse did not have autonomy over campaign planning: he facilitated the political-strategic control of it; therefore there was no 'operational level' in the Falklands campaign.

The Argentinean enemy faced by the British in the Falklands campaign did not match either the scale or the doctrinal sophistication of the Soviet threat. The British did, however, still have to manage scale and complexity. Contemporary justifications of the operational level have moved away from justifications that rest on scale, and towards explanations that lean on complexity. The planning and conduct of the Falklands Campaign, however, demonstrates that management of scale and complexity does not require a separate 'level of war': it requires clearly delineated levels of command. An operational level commander was not required in order to enable the British Task Force to counter the enemy threat or manage the scale and complexity of the Task Force. Indeed such a level would have interfered with the ad-hoc, systems that were in place during the campaign. After the campaign, British military commanders reflected that a deployed 'Joint Task Force Commander' would have assisted in coordinating the activities of the disparate elements. That is not to suggest they wanted an operational level, just that they wanted an additional level of command.

During the Falklands campaign there was no delineated sphere of exclusive military responsibility; indeed, at times British strategic leadership directed the actions of individual planes, single ships and individual battle groups in order to achieve strategic purpose. [xi] Throughout the campaign, strategy and tactics were free to mix; with the former being the master of the latter. There was a clear and constant conversation between tactics and strategy unencumbered by the doctrinal construct of levels.

The attack on Goose Green provides a clear example of the fluid relationship between strategy and tactics in the Falklands Campaign. Max Hastings observed: *"After four days of almost unbroken bad news, London needed a tangible victory. If ever there was a politicians' battle then Goose Green was to be it."* [xii] London needed a victory on land soon after the landing force had been put ashore to bolster the popular support in the UK. At the tactical level, Brigadier Julian Thompson did not want to be distracted from the main objective of Port Stanley by fighting battles on his flanks. It was, quite rightly, the strategic purpose that took primacy. There is some confusion over who initiated the direction to 3 Cdo Bde to make the attack. *There is, however, no doubt that such direction reflected the will of the War Cabinet.* Despite the resistance of Brigadier Julian Thompson to launching the attack, the fact that he was directed to, indicates the way that during the Falklands Campaign tactical action was subordinated to strategy and there was no sphere of military autonomy. It is this 'level-free' nature of war that modern British doctrine must seek to ape.

The third reason for the creation of an operational level was that it is required in order to act as a bridge between tactics and strategy. Superficial consideration of the strategic purpose of the Falklands campaign could suggest that the aim was repossession of those lands that had been conquered by Argentina. However there was a more significant issue at play than the ownership of rocks in the Southern Atlantic. It was Admiral Sir Henry Leach who put his finger most clearly on the British strategic end-state. In a meeting with the Prime Minister and her Defence Secretary – a meeting to which Admiral Leach had not been invited but through happenstance found himself attending – he stated: "If we do not [recapture the Falkland Islands], if we muck about, if we pussyfoot, if we don't move very fast and are not entirely successful, in a very few months' time we shall be living in a different country whose word will count for little." [xiv] For her part, the Prime Minister: "cracked into a grin, because it was exactly... what she wanted to hear." [xv] Despite being the First Sea Lord at the time and not a politician, Admiral Leach's understanding of Britain's strategic reality was prescient. He understood that Britain was a dwindling force in the world. A series of major economic and social challenges during the 1970s had left the British lion far from the roaring colonial power she had been in the first half of the century. The strategic aim was therefore not simply taking back possession of the Islands, but doing so emphatically; and in doing so going some way to restoring Britain's reputation as a continuing world power.

At the tactical level the limitations of the Task Force were considerable. Despite the expressed confidence of the Royal Navy Service in their ability to defend a Task Force against a modern, capable surface, sub-surface and air threat in the Southern Ocean, that fact was far from certain. As Max Hastings states: 'The Royal Navy in 1982 was overwhelmingly an anti-submarine force designed for war in the [North] Atlantic against the Soviet Union.' [xvi] They were not trained or equipped for an out of area operation. However, the Royal Navy of the early eighties retained a 'Nelsonian' bellicose streak; [xvii] so when pressed by the Prime Minister on what his reaction would be to the arrival of a Royal Naval Task Force; Admiral Leach responded that if he had been in command of the Argentinean forces: "I would return to harbour immediately." [xviii] A clear line of communication between tactics and strategy was established at the outset. The key strategic, and tactical message, was that British political leadership and the British military had the *will* to fight.

Understanding that the two-way dialogue between tactics and strategy was effective in the Falklands campaign is clearly only part of the issue. An understanding of why it was so effective is essential in taking the lessons forward. Sir John Nott has stated that it was the presence of Admiral Lewin, the British CDS, in the war cabinet that enabled strategic leadership to understand tactical limitations, and communicate strategic purpose: "It was Lewin's presence in the War Cabinet that was the most important thing about the whole affair. He understood the political pressures we were under and Lewin was the man who discussed it with Fieldhouse." [xix] Another member of the War Cabinet, Cecil Parkinson, similarly recalls the military focus in the War Cabinet: "One of the features of the way the War Cabinet worked was that the military did make the pace ... it was the military members of the War Cabinet who set the pace and told us what was possible." [xx] The cohesion between tactics and strategy was driven, therefore, not by separating out the levels of war, but by the reverse: by including the military in strategic discussions and



politicians in tactical ones. There was no single bridge between tactics and strategy; instead the link between the two was formed through the proper cascade of levels of command.

Conclusion

Current British doctrine hypothesises a 'strategically barren victory' in the absence of an effective operational level.^[xi] The planning and conduct of the Falklands campaign refutes that assertion. There was no defined operational level; the military did not have autonomy over campaign planning or campaign prosecution; yet despite this, the tactical actions were effectively fused into a strategically

coherent whole. The influence of the strategic level of command was present in the actions of battalions, of ships and of individual aircraft; and, throughout, the limitations of tactical actions were understood by the strategists who adjusted their decisions based on that advice. The link was formed not by the creation and resourcing of a giant 'operational level headquarters', but rather by the normal progression of a chain of command. No link in the chain was more important than any other, and every link had its part to play in understanding the intentions of the links above, and the capabilities of the links below. Even without an operational level, victory in the Falklands campaign was not strategically barren. Quite the reverse; it was a victory that achieved not only the immediate military objective of recapturing the Islands, but also the wider strategic purpose of retaining Britain's global status.

Lieutenant Colonel Steve Hart, Royal Marines, is an instructor on the Initial Command and Staff Course (Land) at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom

REFERENCES

- [i] Kelly, Justin and Brennan, Mike, 'Alien: How operational art devoured strategy.' (Strategic Studies Institute of the United States Army War College, 2009). <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=939> Accessed on Jan 23 2014. P73.
- [ii] Liddell-Hart, Basil 'Strategy' (London, Meridian, 1954, second revised edition) P334.
- [iii] British Defence Doctrine Joint Doctrine Publication 01, 'Campaigning' second edition, Lexicon-11.
- [iv] Ibid.
- [v] Glantz, David M 'The Intellectual Dimension of Soviet (Russian) Operational Art' in McKercher and Hennessy [eds] 'The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War' (Royal Military College Canada, 1996) p128.
- [vi] Swain, Richard M 'Filling the void: The operational art and the US Army' in McKercher and Hennessy, op cit, p157.
- [vii] FM100-5 (1983) P2-3.
- [viii] Franks, Tommy R 'American Soldier' (New York, Harper Collins, 2004), P440.
- [ix] Griffin, Stuart, 'Joint Operations: A short History' (Defence Academy Library, 2005) P16.
- [x] Griffin. P139.
- [xi] 2 PARA at Goose Green, HMS CONQUEROR sinking the Belgrano and a Vulcan bomber on the BLACKBUCK raids.
- [xii] Hastings, Max, P231
- [xiii] For a detail on the process for ordering the attack on Goose Green see the discussions in the 'The Falklands Witness Seminar' (The Occasional, Number 46.) P39-50.
- [xiv] Leach, Admiral Sir Henry, as quoted in Ibid, P19.
- [xv] Ibid, P19.
- [xvi] Hastings, Max and Jenkins, Simon, 'The Battle for the Falklands' (Michael Joseph Ltd, London, 1983), P83.
- [xvii] See Griffin for further discussion of the Royal Navy's 'offensive' spirit.
- [xviii] 'The Falklands Witness Seminar' (The Occasional, Number 46.) P67.
- [xix] Nott, Sir John as quoted in Ibid, P44.
- [xx] Lord Parkinson of Carnforth, as quoted in Ibid. P44.
- [xxi] British Defence Doctrine, JDP 01, "Campaigning", P2-3.

Interested in strategy? Don't miss Military Operations' sister publication, Infinity Journal.

Infinity Journal

Because Strategy Never Stops



<https://www.infinityjournal.com>

THE PRACTICE OF OPERATIONAL ART BY SMALL MILITARIES: WHY AND HOW



Aaron Jackson

During development of the next edition of Australian Defence Force Publication 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process* (Australia's equivalent to the US' Joint Operations Planning Process), questions arose about whether or not Australia is able to practice operational art. The issue underlying these questions is one of scale: operational art, traditionally understood, is the sequencing of tactical actions to form a campaign in pursuit of overarching strategic objectives. The term itself has its origins in inter-war Soviet military theory and it was developed to cope with very large scale military activities.[i]

Small militaries such as the Australian Defence Force (ADF) are unlikely to ever be able to muster large enough forces to employ operational art the way it has traditionally been conceived. Yet the concept remains in ADF doctrine, and for that matter it can also be found in the doctrine of several other small militaries. This situation prompts two questions. First, why has operational art been adopted for use by militaries that are unlikely to ever deploy the scale of forces for which the concept was designed? And second, how has this adoption occurred? This article addresses these questions using Australia as a case study, and concludes that overall the adoption of operational art by small militaries has been beneficial despite the awkward conceptual fit.

Small militaries

One thing this article does not attempt to do is define precisely what constitutes a small military—something that could easily comprise an article in itself. Suffice to say, there are several possible criteria that could be used to assess whether or not a military is small, including:

- active duty personnel numbers, or totalling the numbers of active duty, reserve and paramilitary personnel;
- including not just personnel but also the amount of materiel (tanks, planes, ships, etc) in the total force size;
- measuring the percentage of a state's population serving in the military, or the number of people serving per 1,000 of the overall population;
- measuring the amount spent annually on the armed forces, either overall, per capita, relative to government expenditure in other areas (health, welfare, education, etc.), or in terms of gross domestic product;
- making an assessment of 'military effectiveness', or in other words a combination of personnel and equipment numbers plus the ability to effectively employ them together[ii]; or
- taking some kind of combination of the above.

Each of these possible methods of measurement has pros and cons, and none negates the need to ultimately make a subjective assessment about where exactly to draw the lines between small, medium and large militaries once the measurement has been made.

Whichever measure is used, several militaries are likely to be categorised as small. For example, an arbitrary examination reveals that there are 115 national militaries with less than 100,000 active duty personnel. All of these militaries might justifiably be considered small—and it must be noted that this number only takes into account the militaries of states (it excludes non-state military forces).[iii] Applying this number again only to NATO militaries, the bulk of alliance member states (20 out of 28) would be considered as having small militaries. The point of this brief comparison is not to offer a definitive judgement of which militaries are small and which are not.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: JACKSON, AARON, "THE PRACTICE OF OPERATIONAL ART BY SMALL MILITARIES: WHY AND HOW", *MILITARY OPERATIONS*, VOLUME 3, ISSUE NO. 1, SPRING 2015, PAGES 14-17.



But the comparison nevertheless reveals that there are potentially several small militaries with similar problems to Australia, assuming that they attempt to apply operational art.

In the case of the ADF, it is considered small for the purposes of discussion herein. The ADF's total personnel number 84,750, of which 56,200 are active duty and the remaining 28,550 are reserves. Of the active duty component, 28,600 are Army, 13,550 are Navy and 14,050 are Air Force; of the reserve component, 16,200 are Army, 8,200 are Navy and 4,150 are Air Force. Australia maintains limited numbers of technologically advanced platforms, for instance the Army includes 59 M1A1 Abrams tanks and the Air Force two squadrons of F/A-18F *Super Hornets*.^[iv] As a result, the ADF is able to deploy a technologically capable military force but only of very limited size. For example, it maintained a national contingent as part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan continuously from 2005 to 2015, which varied between 400 and 1,550 personnel in strength, while concurrently conducting several much smaller operations elsewhere.^[v] Thus, for the purposes of this article the ADF qualifies as a small military.

Why operational art?

If the question of motive had to be answered in one word, that word would be *interoperability*. 'It should be clear that, in any military alliance, interoperability is primarily an issue for the lesser powers', note Danford Middlemiss and Denis Stairs:

'This is because it is the lesser powers that must deal with the military equivalent of 'keeping up with the Joneses.' Nowhere has this been more starkly revealed than in NATO, where all the members, save in some degree the United Kingdom and France, have found it a perennially daunting challenge to maintain military forces that can operate effectively with the vastly superior military establishment of the United States.^[vi]

To a large degree Australia's adoption of operational art (and for that matter its adoption by several NATO members that also possess small militaries) has been driven by the need to remain interoperable with the US military.

It should therefore be unsurprising that operational art entered the Australian military vernacular via Army doctrine during the 1980s—the same way it entered the US military vernacular and at about the same time. Specifically the term 'operational level of war', defined as 'the planning and conduct of campaigns', was included in the 1985 edition of the Australian Army's keystone doctrine *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations*. Just as there was a time-lag between the introduction of the terms 'operational level of war' into US Army doctrine in 1982 and 'operational art' in 1986, so too was there a time lag in the case of Australia, where the term 'operational art' was not introduced until the 1992 edition of the re-named *Fundamentals of Land Warfare*.^[vii]

Operational art subsequently filtered into the doctrine of the other Services—Air Force in the 1990 edition of the *Air Power Manual* and Navy in the 2000 edition of *Australian Maritime Doctrine*. The concept also appeared in various joint doctrine publications beginning around 1993. This paralleled developments in the US services, which also adopted the concepts of operational art and/or the operational level of war during the late 1980s and early 1990s.^[viii] In the case of Australian joint doctrine it is more likely that a mixture of interoperability concerns and input from the three services was responsible for the concepts inclusion.^[ix] Regardless of

this, interoperability with Australia's US ally was clearly a significant issue for each of the Australian services and for the ADF jointly.

Despite interoperability concerns being the primary motivator, another more subtle influence is also likely to have been at work. This influence is primarily one of *culture*. Discussing the Canadian Forces' reasons for adopting the operational level of war within its own doctrine, Howard Coombs applied Ludwig Fleck's concept of 'thought collectives' to explain why this 'paradigm shift', which generated intense intellectual debate in the US, was virtually unquestioned in Canada. Describing a thought collective as 'participants in a definable and collective structure of thought generated by an esoteric circle of authorities, or experts', Coombs observed that:

'One must situate the paradigm shift within the context of a single group of military professionals defined by a common purpose rather than locating it in two distinct groups separated by nationality...The experts within the larger collective were the doctrine writers and then the practitioners of the United States Army...None of the hallmarks of the paradigm shift [that could be] attributed to professional discourse took place in Canada because it had already occurred in the United States; the Canadian military implicitly viewed itself as part of a single community of practice that extended across the continent and followed the paradigm shift that had taken place.^[x]

In other words, the two militaries shared a common cultural bond that resulted in members of the smaller perceiving themselves as being in the same professional community as the larger. Hence when the US military changed the content of its doctrine, Canada followed suit by default. To an extent a similar observation could be made about most other US allies. This should come as no surprise to students of military history: Azar Gat, for example, examined military thought in Europe over a four-hundred year period and determined that 'the centre of military thought has normally tended to follow the centre of military power'.^[xi] It is likely that a similar cultural linkage to that which Coombs identified between the US and Canada also subtly influenced the ADF's decision to embrace operational art (and the operational level of war).

Conceiving operational art: a functionalist understanding

Having decided to include operational art in their doctrine, small militaries face a serious challenge of scale. Regarding operational art, Philip Jones rightly highlights that 'what the Soviets handed down was an approach that mirrored tactics but on a larger scale'.^[xii] Operational art was originally considered to be the realm of the front or theatre commander and is often linked to the activities of army groups, armies or perhaps sometimes divisions. Yet in places like Afghanistan modern small militaries have not fielded units of this size—on the contrary, even brigade-sized deployments have been relatively rare; battalion groups or even smaller national contingents have been common. So how do small militaries apply operational art without meeting the scale requirements that are central to traditional understandings of the concept?

The ADF's answer to this question has been to take an alternative conceptual approach that emphasises functionality over scale. In this approach, what makes an action operational art is the linking of strategic aims with tactical actions, the synchronisation of operations in depth and the linking of multiple tactical engagements to form a campaign, regardless of scale.^[xiii] Two comparatively recent Australian examples are illustrative: the peace enforcement campaign



undertaken by the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) from August 1999 to February 2000; and ADF operations in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) since the early 2000s.

Not without a hint of irony, the first example has been chosen for its scale. The INTERFET deployment remains the largest ADF operation since the Vietnam War, peaking at the deployment of over 7,500 personnel (including 5,300 Army personnel). It is also the only operation since Vietnam wherein the Australian Army deployed a brigade-sized force, and it is one of the few ADF deployments wherein Australia has been the lead nation. The operation was short (after five months it transitioned to a UN-led peacekeeping operation), but it nevertheless involved the sequencing of multiple tactical actions. The largest of these was a brigade-level sweep of East Timor's capital, Dili. Multiple sequenced and coordinated battalion-sized activities took place thereafter along the East/West Timorese border. During the entire operation naval and air components supported activities on land, including by conducting amphibious lodgements, adding an additional element of required coordination.[xiv]

The ADF deployed to the MEAO following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, in support of the American military response to those attacks. Since then ADF force elements have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq; have contributed to multinational maritime security operations in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean; and have maintained significant supporting forces in various Gulf states, including Air Force elements that have flown multiple missions over Afghanistan and Iraq. These force elements have conducted several discrete but mutually-supporting operations, including Operation Slipper, Bastille, Falconer, Catalyst, Accordion and Manitou.[xv] Forces deployed on each of these longer-duration operations have also conducted shorter, localised operations within their own areas. For example, elements of the combined Australian and Dutch task force in Afghanistan's Uruzgan province conducted Operation Spin Ghar in 2007 to gain the initiative and clear key areas of the province of Taliban.[xvi]

If campaigning is the linking of discrete tactical actions to form an operation (or operations) in pursuit of strategic objectives, then ADF activities in the MEAO are easily recognisable as a campaign. The strategic objectives of this campaign are to reinvigorate the alliance relationship with America and to enhance the resulting benefits to Australia.[xvii] Interestingly, these strategic objectives can be achieved through a politically-prominent presence in the area of operations, regardless of tactical outcomes. Hence tactical actions as varied as quick impact construction projects in Afghanistan and anti-piracy interdiction of shipping off the African coast are all linked to Australia's strategic goals. This link is at best indirect, however, and ultimately visible tactical presence has been more valuable to achieving Australian strategic objectives than has been tactical success.

The practice of operational art by the ADF is therefore clearly evident, providing that a functionalist understanding of operational art is employed. This understanding has enabled ADF personnel to become familiar with the terminology used by Australia's larger US ally—hence enabling interoperability—while the ADF nevertheless conducts operations on a scale that this larger ally may well regard as tactical or perhaps logistical. This phenomenon has been described by Richard Dickenson as 'the tactification of operational ideas', although it is important to note that Dickenson, writing a decade ago, was criticising an attempt by the Canadian Army to apply the manoeuvrist approach, which he argued is ill-suited to Canada's national circumstances. The remedy he suggested was essentially to

take a functionalist approach to operational art instead—because this is the closest small militaries are likely to come to being able to think operationally (rather than tactically) about the employment of their limited forces.[xviii]

The ADF's structure is also worth highlighting, as it is quite different to the structure of most large militaries, yet it is similar to that of other small militaries such as Canada and New Zealand.[xix] First, all ADF operations are joint. The three services raise, train and sustain forces. Deployment, force elements are assigned under command of Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC), which is Australia's only theatre-level headquarters. Joint task forces may campaign within a theatre, but it is HQJOC that plans and directs all ADF theatre-level campaigns.[xx] Hence HQJOC is generally regarded as the primary ADF organisation responsible for practicing operational art. Second, the ADF regards operational art as applying to both opposed and unopposed operations. The functionalist approach emphasises the linkages between tactics and strategy and the synchronisation of operations in depth, and according to ADF doctrine there need not be an adversary present in an area of operations for these aspects of operational art to be employed.[xxi]

Conclusion

This article has briefly addressed why small militaries adopt operational art, which traditionally focuses on large-scale military activities. It has also examined the ADF as a case study of how one small military has adapted the concept to suit its own limited size and means. Although the ADF is not necessarily representative of all small militaries, there is a good deal of anecdotal evidence to suggest that it is at least similar enough to several small NATO militaries to be useful as a case study. In summary, the ADF has adopted operational art due to a mix of interoperability concerns and strong cultural similarities to its larger US ally, which itself began employing the concept shortly before Australia did. The ADF has conceived of operational art functionally, emphasising the linking of strategic aims with tactical actions, the synchronisation of operations in depth and the linking of multiple tactical engagements to form a campaign, while conveniently ignoring any conceptual linkages between operational art and the scale of military activities.

There will always be a trade-off for small militaries when they adopt operational concepts and ideas initially designed by and for their larger counterparts, but this is only one part of a larger dilemma they face. The dilemma is that when small militaries work to achieve interoperability with larger allies, to some extent they must replicate these allies, becoming analogous to the character 'Mini Me' from the Austin Powers movies (to paraphrase: 'he's identical to you in every way, except one eighth the size'). This replication yields interoperability benefits but at a cost to sovereignty, as small militaries optimised for interoperability are often sub-optimal for pursuing independent national interests on occasions when these diverge from those of their larger allies.[xxii] In the case of operational art, its application by several small militaries (including the ADF) occurred after they had already determined to optimise their forces for interoperability. It has therefore made sense for them to go one step further down the same road, even though they cannot achieve the same scale of operations as their larger allies.

Ultimately the size of small militaries will always be a limitation, even if their conceptual rigour far exceeds that of larger adversaries. Theoretically there is likely to be a threshold of relative size beyond which functionality in operational art no longer matters. As Stalin



famously put it, 'quantity has a quality all of its own'. Even if their practice of operational art is brilliant, small militaries facing much larger adversaries will ultimately have to choose between annihilation, surrender, or resorting to unconventional means (such as waging an insurgency). Up to the point where they reach this

threshold, however, it makes sense for small militaries seeking to enhance their interoperability with larger allies to embrace a functionalist conceptualisation of operational art, due to the interoperability benefits they derive by doing so.

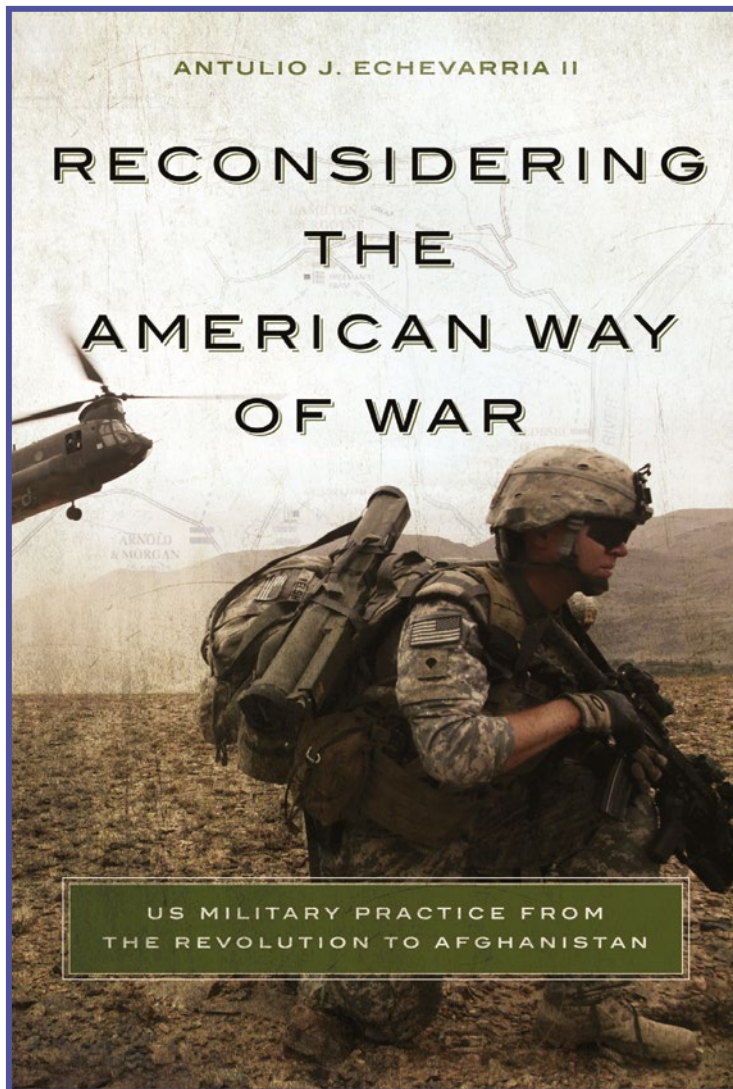
Dr Aaron P. Jackson is a Doctrine Desk Officer at the Australian Defence Force Joint Doctrine Centre and an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and are not necessarily those of the Australian Defence Organisation or any part thereof.

REFERENCES

- [i] Justin Kelly & Mike Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, September 2009), pp. 11-71.
- [ii] Pollack concisely defined military effectiveness as: 'the ability of an armed service to prosecute military operations and employ weaponry in military operations'. Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (USA: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 3.
- [iii] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, Vol. 114 (2014), pp. 486-92.
- [iv] *Ibid*, pp. 223-6.
- [v] Maryanne Kelfon & Aaron P. Jackson, 'Australia: Terrorism, Regional Security and the US Alliance' in: Stephen Grenier & Gale Mattox (Eds.), *The Politics of Alliance: Coalition Challenges in Afghanistan* (Stamford: Stamford University Press, forthcoming).
- [vi] Danford W. Middlemiss & Denis Stairs, 'The Canadian Forces and the Doctrine of Interoperability: The Issues', *Policy Matters*, Vol. 3, No. 7, June 2002, p. 14.
- [vii] Michael Evans, *Forward from the Past: The Development of Australian Army Doctrine 1972-Present* (Canberra: Australian Army Land Warfare Studies Centre, 1999), pp. 24 & 43. Regarding the US experience, see: Kelly & Brennan, *op cit*, pp. 59-71.
- [viii] Aaron P. Jackson, *The Roots of Military Doctrine: Change and Continuity in Understanding the Practice of Warfare* (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), pp. 19-24.
- [ix] Aaron P. Jackson, *Doctrine, Strategy and Military Culture: Military-Strategic Doctrine Development in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, 1987-2007* (Trenton: Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Centre, 2013), pp. 156-60.
- [x] Original emphasis. Howard G. Coombs, 'In the Wake of a Paradigm Shift: The Canadian Forces College and the Operational Level of War (1987-1995)', *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 2, 2010, p. 25.
- [xi] Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 107.
- [xii] Philip Jones, 'The Operational' in the Information Age', *Military Operations*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 2014), p. 14.
- [xiii] Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 5.0—Joint Planning, 2nd ed. (Canberra: Australian Defence Publishing Service, 2014), chap. 2.
- [xiv] John Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 143-168.
- [xv] For details see: Australian Department of Defence, *Global Operations* (available online, <http://www.defence.gov.au/Operations/>, accessed 10 September 2014).
- [xvi] Matt Dupee, 'Operation Spin Ghar: Uruzgan Gets Ugly', *The Long War Journal*, 16 November 2007 (available online: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/11/operation_spin_ghar_1.php, accessed 10 September 2014).
- [xvii] Albert Palazzo, 'The Making of Strategy and the Junior Coalition Partner: Australia and the 2003 Iraq War', *Infinity Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Fall 2012), pp. 27-30; see also Blaxland, *op cit*, chap. 7-9.
- [xviii] Richard N. H. Dickson, *Operational Art in a Middle-Power Context: A Canadian Perspective* (US Army School of Advanced Military Studies, unpublished monograph, academic year 2003-4), quote p. 12.
- [xix] Jackson, *Doctrine, Strategy and Military Culture*, *op cit*, pp. 136-47.
- [xx] David Horner, 'The Higher Command Structure for Joint ADF Operations' in: Ron Huisken & Meredith Thatcher (eds.), *History as Policy: Framing the Debate on the Future of Australia's Defence Policy*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 167 (Canberra: Australian National University EPress, 2007), pp. 158-9.
- [xxi] ADPP 5.0, *op cit*, chap. 2.
- [xxii] A good example is discussed in: Sebastian Langvad, 'Norwegian Swarm: How Unique National Doctrines Contribute to a More Flexible NATO', *Military Operations*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Summer 2014), pp. 13-15.

A NEW BOOK FROM IJ EDITORIAL PANEL MEMBER ANTULIO J. ECHEVARRIA II



Reconsidering the American Way of War

US Military Practice from
the Revolution to Afghanistan
Antulio J. Echevarria II

"Reconsidering the American Way of War is a thoughtful, rich, and convincing examination of how and why the United States has used military force to accomplish national objectives throughout its history. Echevarria dismantles the various proponents of a unique American 'way of war' by proving that US military practice has always been shaped by the politics of the moment. His thesis that there is no unifying theory is refreshing in its clarity and rife with strategic and operational implications. This book demands attention; a must-read for military officers, politicians, academics—and pundits—who all too often ignore the inherently pragmatic nature of the American approach to war in their attempts to shape the policy debate."

—David E. Johnson, director, chief of staff of the Army Strategic Studies Group and author of *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917-1945* and *Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza*

978-1-62616-139-9, hardcover, \$49.95 **\$34.97** / £38.50 **£26.95**

978-1-62616-067-5, paperback \$29.95 **\$20.97** / £24.00 **£16.80**



FOLLOW US @GUPRESS



AVAILABLE AS EBOOKS FROM
SELECT EBOOK RETAILERS.



SPECIAL DISCOUNT OFFER FROM GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PRESS Discount Code TX63

Georgetown University Press is happy to offer IJ subscribers a 30% discount on the purchase of this book.

United States: Order online at www.press.georgetown.edu Phone: 800-537-5487.

US orders please go to the website and order through the online shopping cart or phone the 800 number to reach a customer service specialist who will take your order.

UK, Europe, Near and Middle East, and North Africa: Subscribers outside the US in these areas can place orders through NBNi in the UK. Email your order to: orders@nbninternational.com Phone: +44 (0) 1752 202301.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: TRUE COERCION, OR A BYPRODUCT THAT HAS YET TO BE MASTERED?



By Jeremiah Johnson (Defense Visual Information Center official site) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Lee Il-Woo

Historically, the exploitation of an adversary's mental and emotional state of mind has always been present in the human experience. To put a play on the ancient wisdom that knowledge is key to all successful warfare, the art of deliberately sowing deception has been understood by many and practiced by even more. To mislead, confuse, disrupt, and demoralize the enemy with the aim of weakening his resistance, causing rival forces to surrender, and even forcing contending populations to give in, has been an ancient (if not fundamental) characteristic of human conflict. Truth be told, one need not look further than Adam Elkus' contribution (Continuing Relevance of Military Denial and Deception[i]) for such obvious points to be made clearer.

Yet, apart from classical illustrations, modern descendants of this practice have certainly borrowed much from their forebears, but have modified their delivery systems for today's battlefields. Recent 'memos of submission' have taken the form of mass media, radio broadcasts, and of course the time-honored whispering agent used by the masters of old. In the heyday of WWI, the leaflet, the most widely used form of PSYOPS still in use to this day, was fashioned and disseminated on a striking scale.[ii] This particular form of stratagem conveniently made easy to read and delivered from the skies, was both used by the Allied and Axis forces with the aim of enemy demoralization, if not desertion. Examples of clever messaging included leaflets stating that German POWs would receive the same rations as the American Doughboy, with details of tinned fruit and fresh bread, along with coffee and sweets depicted in particular detail. To let the portrayal sink in even more, 'verifiable' operations were used according to some accounts, staging local 'retreats' and thereby uncovering a treasure chest of US provisions for the other side.[iii]

Still, it was during the Second World War that many innovations, PSYOPS not least among them, truly garnered the Henry Ford flavor of mass production. Though reluctantly at first, theater commanders eventually employed US psy-warriors. For the first time electronic platforms were properly utilized, and American PSYOPS, consisting of mobile broadcasting and mobile printing presses, soon became the latest tools to be projected at the enemy.

Sadly, in the wars that soon followed, US operators departed in some way from this effective trend when engaging Asian adversaries. Nowhere was this felt more than in the tragic rice paddies of Vietnam. Lack of coordination and much duplication of effort, not to mention the literally billions of leaflets that fell like confetti, resulted in nothing more than a strategic defeat. Whilst tactical PSYOPS continually reinforced impressions of communist atrocities committed against innocents, television's depiction of napalmed children running alongside disfigured American troopers would be the definitive (even if unintended) means by which 'hearts and minds' would be decided.[iv]

In the end, although it could be said that the US had a respectable run in the tactical battles of such psywars, a fair verdict might be that it had a dismal one on the strategic front due to uninformed (cultural ignorance) and unanticipated (television) forces not accounted for.

PSYOPS = Propaganda?

Even so, since 9/11, other psychological themes have risen from the ashes of both those who lost their lives on that fateful day, and of those who have given them in the wars that followed. First, that military might, even with the patronage of the most powerful kind (US and Western backing that is), has limits. Second, traditional notions of deterrence are both too limiting and too naive to be applicable to wars against extremism. As a consequence, other forms of 'suasion' have been sought, with the hope of laying down the psychological

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: IL-WOO, LEE, "PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: TRUE COERCION, OR A BYPRODUCT THAT HAS YET TO BE MASTERED?", *MILITARY OPERATIONS*, VOLUME 3, ISSUE No. 1, SPRING 2015, PAGES 19-22.



foundations for long-term success.

Regrettably, information fratricide appears to be a common concern for all those involved in this cerebral scheme. Even though most conventional PSYOPS have used objectively true information in one way or another, the occasional deviation from the truth (or mere *propaganda*) necessary in psychological exploitation, can certainly come at a price.^[v] It should be of no surprise that such potential 'blowbacks' have given life to the definitional debate that still rages as to what PSYOPS actually is; as compared to, say, its more Public Affairs relatives. Seasoned psy-warriors have of late voiced their concern in confusing disinformation (*propaganda*) and what they deem to be more efficient modes of influence; namely reliable facts.^[vi] For disciples of this school, it is precisely *trust* from the target audience that gives way for successful shaping of people's perceptions. Such trust, they argue, can only come with credibility.

Add to this confusion the fact that PSYOPS and other forms of mental maneuver have been branded as everything from influence operations, perception management, military information support operations (MISO), and perhaps worst of all 'strategic communication'. This unceasing splitting of hairs as to what PSYOPS or propaganda ought to be has only obscured the bigger issue.

For sake of focus and lack of space, PSYOPS in this article, *will largely adhere to those operations where selected information is used to influence human perceptions, attitudes, and behavior in combat environments*. Though under such an overarching definition both truth-based operations and deceitful propaganda may result in the likening of the two, the argument here is that by and large it may not even matter. Both fact and fiction to varying degrees have been used in psychological battles of the past, and have certainly been used in recent conflicts for military purposes. Whatever label one chooses to instill, 'PSYOPS', 'propaganda', 'MISO' or otherwise, the sowing of misinformation and the reinforcement of truth will probably go hand in hand when trying to influence particular viewers. This fight over branding may at best only put a friendlier face on a practice that clearly tries to sway people's opinions, using whatever messaging deemed is effective, be it factual or not.

Though the struggle amongst psy-operators as to how and when to lie or even not to lie will probably persist, the sheer presence of such murky jurisdiction is surely no great endorsement for this practice.

Promising But Still Tricky

That is not to say of course that PSYOPS should be considered worthless, or that leaflets are as useless except as 'supplies of toilet paper for the adversary.'^[vii] Truth be told, triumphant PSYOPS have been manufactured and efficiently dispersed by not just Western proponents themselves, but ironically by the antagonists toward the Western ideal. Consider Somali clan leader Mohammad Aideed's use of PSYOPS, which ultimately won him the information war during 'Blackhawk Down'; though he lost more than 15 times the number of US casualties. Aideed's resourceful use of satellite and radio transmissions, bouncing off city walls and thus difficult to pinpoint, was no doubt a demonstration of his public relations understanding.^[viii] However well intentioned and courageous the humanitarian mission may have been, broadcasts of US troops being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu undeniably accelerated the US withdrawal. Similarly, Ayatollah Khomeini's overthrow of the Shah with the assistance of the cassette tape is another prime example of psychological subversion.^[ix] The perfect blending of structural circumstance—an oppressive regime—in flawless sequence with

clever means of communication, all aimed at a community ripe for the taking, is as much as any PSYOPS professional could hope to achieve.

Even when considering radical groups—the fashionable threat these days, often unrestrained by moral boundaries—advocates of this inexact art forever contend that 'PSYOPS is still, in essence, more moral than conventional military methods.'^[x] Given that modern democracies have put a high value in reducing expense whenever possible, an emphasis on winning wars at a discounted price (be it human or material) is undoubtedly an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, to PSYOPS enthusiasts. To this end, psywar fans have continued to suggest that they offer two distinct features not found elsewhere. Firstly, there is a high prospect of a non-lethal and, therefore, politically correct weapons system. Second, a suggestion that the potential force-multiplying and internationally accessible no-boots-on-the-ground option is generally done 'on the cheap'. Compared with multi-billion dollar platforms that may or may not realize the sought after objectives, PSYOPS (with its pamphlets, radios, human agents, and much more) is by most measures reasonably priced.

Still, beyond the low-cost delivery now made easier via Internet, perhaps the most valuable contribution this enigmatic tool provides is its speed and anonymity. One can easily see how online sensations are just a click away these days, and how financial contagions can leapfrog across continents. The capacity for psychological products to tag along this informational spider-web, in a moment's notice and undetectable, is surely simple to perceive. Indeed, one might say that with the extent of mass-media coverage we find today, much of the groundwork is already done. For psychological devotees, the only thing that is needed is (as one PSYOPS specialist coined it) to 'piggy-back' on what is already there. ^[xi]

By surfing the non-stop (and in all probability inextinguishable) tabloid markets, it may be worthwhile for war-fighters to tap into such potencies to try and make our enemies victims as well. Such enticements might be so much more inviting, given an age in which we, primarily the West, set too high of a standard for success, and where the narrative of the battle matters more than the battle itself.

Always A Catch

Had human beings not been so complex, psychological warfare might appear to be the panacea in this never-ending search for the right ingredients. The allure of using ideas in place of bullets to subjugate dissenters would surely be tempting for any risk-averse politician. Sadly, had such blueprints existed, the unfinished and certainly unsatisfactory developments of Projects 'Iraq' and 'Afghanistan' would probably not have turned out the way they did. Fresh bombings in Iraq, after nearly nine years of US investment, not to mention the steadfast carnage in Afghanistan, have without a doubt been a testament to the limitations of Western charm.

Modern cases aside, one need not look further than the historical episodes previously mentioned to notice such limits. Consider Allison Gilmore's brilliant study of PSYOPS in the Pacific Theater during WWII. In this seminal piece, it is patently clear that, of the four main psychological themes used during the War (Enlightenment, Subversive, Divisive, and Despair), despair proved the most valuable. For Gilmore, attempts at enlightenment only telegraphed to the Japanese a more accurate picture of Allied capabilities. Equally, subversive propaganda pretty much failed in the beginning but grew in value only when the war tipped in favor of the Allies,



which was true of divisive campaigns. Yet, despair, with its notoriety for Japanese misery and anguish, was the one message that hit home for the Allies. According to Gilmore, such gains were possible not because of its distinctiveness as a PSYOPS theme, *but due to its psychological reinforcement of the other applications of pain.* [xii] In summary, fundamental Japanese realities (such as economic hardships and a ceaseless rain of incendiary bombs) were the foundations that allowed for psychological notions to be planted with at least some chance of success.

Measuring Progress

All the same, despite this secondary and more supportive role, the biggest hurdle for PSYOPS may still lie within its own evaluation. Not surprisingly, commanders have admitted to a lack of accurate measurements leading to the production of bland messages for want of adequate information. If PSYOPS backers have endorsed ingenuities such as appraising the tenor of sermons in mosques, the street behavior of the locals (obscene gestures toward US troops, amount of anti-American graffiti, etc.), and trends (either upward or downward) in the number of intelligence tips from the populace, critics have been equally adamant in pointing out the impossibility of knowing whether it was the PSYOPS itself or something unrelated that caused the desired outcome.

Similarly, attempts at attitudinal research, such as target audience analysis or ethnographic investigation, have also been sought after with equally mixed success.[xiii] Based on the conviction that counterinsurgencies would ultimately be won on the loyalty of a people, Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) have been utilized by US forces with the hopes of providing commanders with societal if not psychological telescopes. Using everything from databases of local leaders and tribes to keeping catalogues of economic and social problems in a given area, specialized teams consisting of anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and much more have made efforts to provide soldiers with a better view as to how and why local inhabitants think and operate.[xiv]

Disappointingly, the question of whether better understanding can translate into creating better psychological products is still left largely unanswered. Unlike fixed urban objects or terrain, the human psyche has never been a static target for soldiers to pinpoint; let alone manipulate. Even the most hardcore of psywar loyalists, such as Ron Schleifer, have admitted that classical PSYOPS is toothless when tackling suicidal enemies; the trendy menace these days. Though much of this can be attributed to PSYOPS principles which assume that adversaries will try to survive, such unrelenting predicaments do lend credence to questions of how exactly one combats or dissuades a person already hell-bent on dying?

Considering all of the above, if there is one Achilles heel can be deciphered from such observations, it is this: *psychological gambits only become convincing when the credibility and success of more conventional means are firmly ingrained in people's minds.*

Conclusion

While coercion as a strategy is to persuade the opponent to alter their behavior, like beauty, it is also in the eye of the beholder. The intent of the coercer matters less than the perception of the coerced. Needless to say, the outcome of coercive strategy is also difficult to appraise and even more difficult to predict.

In all likelihood, the debate as to whether the 'shaping' of people's minds is viable or not will continue. The fact that truly dependable classifications and measurements have not yet been developed surely does not bode well for future psy-operators. It may very well be that mass desertion and surrender of enemy combatants, or even the changing of people's perceptions, cannot be accurately predicted or controlled. At a bare minimum, they might just be an unplanned dividend of PSYOPS. This *unintended spin-off*, both the positive and negative sort, may simply be the best we can do when actively seeking to alter people's opinions.

It looks as if for now, successful 'storytelling' belongs more to the novelist than any military personnel.

Lee Il-Woo is an Associate Research Fellow at the Military Studies Program for Nanyang Technological University, in addition to the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute, and in particular the Singapore Command and Staff College



REFERENCES

- [i] Adam Elkus, *The Journal of Military Operations*, volume 1 Edition 1, August 2012, pp 21-4.
- [ii] For a more accurate breakdown of the sheer amount see, http://www.psywar.org/pdf_morris.pdf.
- [iii] Stanley Sandler, "Army Psywarriors: A History of US Army Psychological Operations," *Special Warfare*, no. October (1992): 19.
- [iv] Sandler (1992), p. 22.
- [v] Numerous accounts have been recorded of when PSYOPS did not work and have even backfired. See, Londoño, Ernesto. "Many Iraqis Dismiss High-Priced US Media Campaign as Propaganda." *The Washington Post*, , sec. World, June 07, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/06/AR2009060602144.html> (accessed September 4, 2013); Pincus, Walter. "Fine Print: Contractors' roles in psychological operations raise concerns." *The Washington Post*, , sec. Politics, June 29, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/28/AR2010062804830.html> (accessed September 7, 2013).
- [vi] Boyd, Colonel Curtis. "The Future of MISO." *Small Wars Journal*. February 12, 2011. Accessed April 8, 2014. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/the-future-of-miso>.
- [vii] Wing Commander Kevin Marsh, "The Psychological Use of Air Power: A Growth Area for The Future," *Royal Air Force Air Power Review*, 13, no. Spring (2010): 13-34.
- [viii] Martin C. Libicki, *What Is Information Warfare?*, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995), chap. 6.
- [ix] CAPT Timothy J. Doorey, USN, "Waging an Effective Strategic Communications Campaign in the War on Terror," *IDEAS AS WEAPONS*, ed. G.J. David Jr. and T.R. McKeldin III (Dulles: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009), 147.
- [x] Ron Schleifer, *Perspectives of Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) in Contemporary Conflicts*, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), 7.
- [xi] Lt. Col. Frank J. Stech, "Upheaval in Europe: PSYOPS Communications Lessons Learned," *Special Warfare*, no. October (1992): 16
- [xii] Allison B. Gilmore, *You can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets: Psychological Warfare Against the Japanese Army in the Southwest Pacific*, (Lincoln Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).
- [xiii] For an interesting read as to the problems associated with HTTs see, Lamb, Christopher J., and James Douglas Orton. *Human Terrain Teams: An Organizational Innovation for Sociocultural Knowledge in Irregular Warfare*. Washington, DC: Institute of World Politics Press, 2013.
- [xiv] "The Human Terrain System." *The Human Terrain System*. Accessed January 15, 2015. <http://humanterrainsystem.army.mil/>.

THE RUSSIAN 'COLOUR COUNTERREVOLUTION' MODEL FOR CONTAINING GEOPOLITICAL EXPANSION BY THE WEST



Ieva Bērziņa

Introduction

'Colour revolution' was the term coined to describe the mass protests against the political elite that broke out in the post-Soviet region, a decade after the breakdown of the USSR. One's perspective on 'colour revolutions' and choice of corresponding discourse depends on the observer's value system. The key to the interpretation of 'colour revolutions' is whether they are viewed through the prism of democratization, or not. For instance, one could call it a 'public uprising against an anti-democratic political elite' or 'the 'creation of controlled chaos'; a 'fight for democracy' or 'the destabilization of a country'. Each way of describing events will construct different realities. In the Russian view of 'colour revolutions' the democratic perspective is cast aside, resulting in a narrative that is radically opposite to Western interpretations.

General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, defines 'colour revolutions' as a 'form of non-violent change of power in a country by outside manipulation of the protest potential of the population in conjunction with political, economic, humanitarian and other non-military means'.^[i] Russian academics and experts believe that 'colour revolutions' give the West, particularly the U.S., the ability to manipulate other countries. In their view, an effective mechanism of interference in the domestic politics of foreign countries has been created. It is a network of NGOs, charities, foundations, national and religious movements, and other elements that can be activated to destabilize the domestic policy situation if the local political elite do not pursue the interests of global leaders.^[ii] Put simply, the Russian understanding of 'colour revolutions' is a 'coup d' état' supported by the West. As such, it is

defined as one of the most important dangers to Russian national security.

The new edition of the Russian military doctrine, like the previous one, defines one of the main external military dangers to Russia as 'an attempt to destabilize the situation in various states and regions and undermine strategic stability'.^[iii] Although the danger is not specifically named as a 'colour revolution', its formulation refers to the way in which 'colour revolutions' are carried out. According to the Russian perspective, the destabilization of domestic policy may lead to a change of government in the interests of more influential geopolitical players. Alternatively it can get stuck in a phase of social and political chaos if the government in power does not concede. In the latter case, it may lead to civil war, as in Libya and Syria.

The new military doctrine reinforces the problem of 'colour revolutions', because it contains two new issues relating to this phenomenon. The list of main external military dangers has an addition: the 'establishment of regimes, including the overthrow of the legitimate governments, whose policies threaten the interests of the Russian Federation, in the states contiguous with the Russian Federation'^[iv]. This is primarily a reference to the Euromaidan events in Ukraine, because the change of the political elite without democratic elections is one of the reasons why Russia considers the post-Euromaidan government in Ukraine illegitimate. This argument goes hand in hand with the belief that the illegitimate change of government took place with the support, and in the interests, of the West.

There is also a new characteristic and feature of modern military conflicts that were not in the previous edition of the military doctrine. The new doctrine says that 'integrated use of military force, political, economic, informational, and other non-military measures are being implemented with a wide use of the protest potential of the population, and special operation forces'^[v]. 'Protest potential of the population' is a direct reference to the essence of 'colour revolutions'.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: BĒRZIŅA, IEVA, "THE RUSSIAN 'COLOUR COUNTERREVOLUTION' MODEL FOR CONTAINING GEOPOLITICAL EXPANSION BY THE WEST", *MILITARY OPERATIONS*, VOLUME 3, ISSUE NO. 1, SPRING 2015, PAGES 23-26.



However in the Russian interpretation it is used in the context of military operations. It is an element in the integrated application of military and non-military means of achieving politico-military goals in foreign countries. This is what makes Russian perspective on 'colour revolutions' fundamentally different from the original concept, as it was developed in the context of democracy promotion.

From Strategic Non-Violence to Colour Revolution Warfare

'Strategic non-violence' is the basic principle of 'colour revolution' movements. According to The Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies' (CANVAS) guide to non-violent struggle, it is crucial to maintain non-violent discipline for three main reasons:

(1) Non-violent resistance is sympathetic to many people and increases the likelihood large numbers of people will join the movement;

(2) It will destroy the credibility and legitimacy of the government in power if it attempts to suppress a protest movement violently;

(3) The non-violence of protesters helps to co-opt representatives from power structures such as the military and police[vi].

If representatives from the opposition movement perform acts of violence, it gives an opponent a legitimate excuse to crack down on the movement[vii]. Therefore, for the successful outcome of a 'colour revolution', it is important that it does not escalate into violence. Of course, the opposite is true as well: if you want to counter a 'colour revolution', it is necessary to escalate violence. It is a simple, but fundamental principle. It explains why Russian military experts define a 'colour revolution' as a type of warfare. The destabilizing results of the 'Arab Spring' protests in the Middle East and North Africa, especially the civil wars in Libya and Syria, give rise to Russian arguments that a 'colour revolution' is an adaptive approach to the use of military force.

According to V. Gerasimov, for influential geopolitical forces, achieving politico-military goals in foreign countries in the form of a 'colour revolution' is beneficial. It allows for the maintenance of a positive image in the international community; avoids the substantial costs of military operations; and prevents large-scale casualties. If a 'colour revolution' is successful in terms of a change of government, then the goals are reached even without the application of military force. But if the non-violent change of government fails, there is then a search for a pretext for a military operation. For instance, protection of civilians and foreign citizens, or accusing a party of using weapons of mass destruction.[viii] In the Western understanding it would be the application of the principle of 'responsibility to protect'. Conversely, in the Russian understanding, the commitment of the international community to save civilians from suffering serious harm is being discredited as a manipulation for the purpose of pursuing geopolitical interests.

As it is defined by V. Gerasimov, the military involvement of influential geopolitical players in 'colour revolution' warfare is concealed. It takes place in the form of:

- (1) Military training of rebels by foreign instructors;
- (2) The supply of weapons and resources to anti-government forces;
- (3) The use of mercenaries and private military companies;

(4) Reinforcement of opposition units with foreign fighters.[ix]

Colonel-General Vladimir Zarudnitsky, Chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, mentions five features that characterize the differences between colour revolution warfare and traditional war:

(1) The boundaries between defence and attack, the strategy and tactics that are characteristic for traditional war, are being erased. There is no front and rear;

(2) Military operations are conducted mainly in urban areas and settlements. Groups of mercenaries and gangs deliberately use civilians as human shields, which leads to heavy losses among the civilian population not involved in the conflict;

(3) Military actions go beyond international law and take on the character of a war without rules. 'Colour revolutions' create the conditions for non-compliance with international law regulating the conduct of war. This is due to the fact that the armed groups of the opposition and mercenaries are entities which are outside that legal framework and therefore take no responsibility for violations of international law;

(4) Colour revolution warfare actively involves criminal structures. Impunity and permissiveness leads to the fact that military actions are carried out by bandits and terrorist methods. Terror becomes common;

(5) The extensive use of private military forces and special operations forces, because there is a need for military practices which hide the explicit intervention of one state in the affairs of another. Private military companies are also widely involved in the recruitment of mercenaries.

V. Zarudnitsky sums it all up by concluding that 'wars initiated within the 'colour revolutions' are carried out in the most miserable ways. From the point of view of international law and morality, they are more consistent with the Middle Ages than the twenty-first century'.[x] In fact the 'colour revolution warfare' concept, as defined by Russia, outlines new rules of the game in international relations. It significantly reduces the possibility to use the principle of the 'responsibility to protect', because the internal conflicts of third parties are being framed as the struggle for influence of larger geopolitical powers. Russia, and to some extent its BRICs partners, is challenging the unipolar international system dominated by the West. Therefore there is no longer a coherent international community that considers human rights to be of the highest value. Instead there is a harsh struggle for geopolitical influence, in which the suffering of a civilian population is used as an integral part of the war.

Although Russian experts present the concept of 'colour revolution' warfare as a critique of the activities of the West, it can be read as prescription for Russia's own activities in the international arena. In the case of the crisis in Ukraine in 2013/2014, pro-Russian unrest can be defined as an 'anti-governmental force'. Therefore the Russian interpretation of 'colour revolution' warfare may be mirrored back as Russia's own strategy of countering increasing Western influence in Ukraine and elsewhere. Escalating and maintaining violent conflicts by supporting (or even creating) one of the parties to the internal conflicts of foreign countries, without direct military intervention, is one of the strategies which Russia uses to counter the geopolitical expansion of the West.



The Non-Violent Dimension of Colour Revolution Warfare

By its very nature, a 'colour revolution' is a soft tool for achieving political ends in the sense that the change of government must happen without violence. Therefore, to be able to counter the West effectively, Russia also uses non-military elements that are present in pro-Western 'colour revolutions'. It can be said that the pursuit of interests in foreign countries can be undertaken more effectively in a hidden manner, by concealing the pursuit beneath an ideology that morally justifies interference (Figure 1). An ideology that is based on globally recognized and accepted values serves as a tool for justifying interventions internationally. It also turns part of the population of a target state into voluntary supporters of larger geopolitical players that promote this ideology. In this way the compliance of a country with the interests of larger geopolitical players can be achieved even without applying military force.

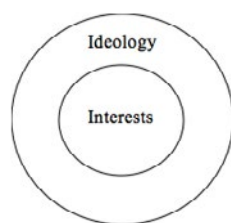


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Hidden Foreign Interference

The Western concept of 'colour revolutions' uses the ideology of democracy promotion. In Russian 'colour counterrevolution' it is substituted by a different set of ideas. Russia's involvement and interest in internal affairs of foreign countries is justified by protection of the rights of Russians outside its borders, antifascism, multiculturalism, historical interpretations, and other arguments. In practice, Russia has not yet formulated a consistent and globally appealing ideology that could be equal to the democracy-promotion concept of the West.

At an instrumental level, Russia is also developing tools to limit and discredit the protest potential of opposition movements. Pro-democracy protests and rallies are being neutralized with pro-government or pro-Russian rallies. Such methods had been used within Russia and in the case of the Crimea annexation in 2014. Anti-rallies make the situation more complicated, because there is 'a crowd against a crowd'; not 'the people against the government'. Pro-government and pro-Russian protests also challenge the pattern of 'colour revolutions' by raising a question: how many protesters are enough to force the government in power to resign legitimately?

The activities of foreign NGOs which promote democracy have been considerably limited in Russia since the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in 2004 and the anti-Putin protests in 2012. At the same time, being aware of the operational efficiency of such organizations in the implementation of interests abroad, Russia has itself begun to set up and use transnational organizations. Examples include the Russkiy Mir Foundation (founded in 2007), Rossotrudnichestvo (founded in 2008), the Gorchakov Foundation (founded in 2010), World without Nazism (founded in 2010), and the Russian International Affairs Council (founded in 2010). The main goals of these organizations are: to build and maintain relationships with Russian compatriots abroad; to promote the Russian language and culture; to create a positive modern image of Russia; to strengthen Russia's view on history; to attract young people from abroad; and others.

The global promotion of these interests requires funding. On April

15, 2014 the 'Foreign Policy Activities' State Programme of the Russian Federation was approved.[xi] According to this document the funding of Russian foreign policy activities will gradually increase from around 65 billion RUB in 2013 up to 80 billion RUB in 2020, which is around 2 billion USD. In comparison, the U.S. state operations and foreign assistance request for the 2015 fiscal year is around 50 billion USD[xii]. From these numbers it is obvious that Russia understands the importance of foreign funding in the achievement of its foreign policy goals, but in terms of its financial capacity and scale, is significantly behind the U.S.

Since Russian media are dependent on state power, they can effectively be used as a propaganda instrument in the interests of the ruling political elite. The context of the globalization of the information space allows Russia to target not only domestic audiences, but also people living outside the borders of Russia. In 2005, the *Russia Today* TV channel was launched; it now broadcasts in English, Spanish and Arabic, and has 22 offices in 19 countries, with a global reach of over 644 million people in more than 100 countries.[xiii] In 2014 another Russian international media brand, *Sputnik*, was launched. In this way Russia has channels for spreading its point of view on a global scale as well. Of course, Russia is using not just traditional media, but also social media, to construct its preferred 'reality'.

Sophisticated political campaigning methods, know-how and tools are very important prerequisites in the struggle for power in contemporary media-influenced politics at the domestic and international level. The US is a global leader in terms of the development of political campaigning techniques, but Russia also has its own body of knowledge and approach to communicating politics. The Russian school of political consultancy is labelled as 'political technologies'. The specific nature of Russian 'political technologies' can be identified by the heavy use of administrative resources, state control of the media, low civic activity, and legal nihilism.

Elements of 'colour revolutions'	Pro-Western use in 'colour revolutions'	Russian use in 'colour counterrevolutions'
Interests	<i>Must be specified in each case</i>	
Ideology	Democracy	Protection of the rights of Russians, antifascism, multiculturalism etc.
Mass protests	Pro-democracy protests and rallies	Pro-government and pro-Russia rallies
Youth organizations	<i>Otpor</i> (Serbia), <i>Pora</i> (Ukraine) etc.	<i>Nashi</i>
Transnational organizations	USAID, NED, Open Society Institute etc.	Restrictions on foreign organizations operating in Russia Russkiy Mir Foundation, Rossotrudnichestvo, Gorchakov Foundation, World without Nazism etc.
Foreign funding	~ 50 billion USD	~ 2 billion USD
Know-how for the organization of mass protests	The methods and principles of commercial marketing and corporate branding applied to politics	Political technologies
Media	The Western media	Russian state media
Military	Strategic non-violence	Adaptive use of military force

Table 1. The Model of Russian 'Colour Counterrevolution'

Youth are an important segment in catalyzing mass protests. Therefore, one of the steps that Russia took for the protection of its interests after the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in 2004, was the establishment of the *Nashi* (Ours) anti-fascist youth movement in 2005. However the youth movement also created problems in Russia's relations with the West, because of its activities abroad. For example, the actions of *Nashi* in Estonia, during the unrest regarding the transfer of the 'Bronze Soldier' in 2007, were perceived as a threat to the national



security of a foreign country. Today the *Nashi* movement has lost its importance. There is an ongoing debate about its reorganization or transformation into a party. However, its history is still evidence of Russia's deliberate steps in countering the influence of the West, by mirroring the tools used by pro-democracy movements.

The main elements that constitute the model of Russian 'colour counterrevolution' are summed up in Table 1. A brief overview of the main elements of the soft and hard 'colour counterrevolution' methods gives evidence that Russia, over the last ten years, has deliberately developed various ways to act as a counterweight to the geopolitical expansion of the West. The annexation of Crimea was a fast and successful application of the 'colour counterrevolution' model for defending Russia's interests in Ukraine.

Conclusions

In authoritarian Russia, 'colour revolutions' are acknowledged as one of the most important threats to its national interests and security. Undeniable foreign involvement in post-Soviet 'colour revolutions' give rise to Russian arguments that they are a hidden tool of Western influence. By framing anti-government mass protests as a foreign destabilisation strategy, authoritarian regimes such as Russia can legitimize the crushing of pro-democracy initiatives as being directed against the independence of a country.

To prevent the 'colour revolution' threat domestically, Russia considerably limits the operations of foreign democracy promotion initiatives, uses the judiciary and police against the leaders of protest movements, and discredits opposition protests by organizing pro-government rallies and organizations. Russia also provides diplomatic, economic and military support to governments outside its

borders in cases where a geopolitical shift of those countries towards the West could endanger Russia's strategic interests. Ukraine and Syria are two recent examples.

Non-violence is at the core of the Western concept of 'colour revolutions'. Escalation of violence is one of the ways to counter 'colour revolutions', because if protests become violent, it gives a legitimate excuse for the regime in power to oppress opposition movement. In international public discourse it opens the way for a blame game, because the West accuses regimes in power and their supporters of being responsible for the violence, whereas the opposite side, especially Russia, blames the West for destabilizing the prior public order.

Russians discredit democracy promotion initiatives by defining 'colour revolutions' as a type of warfare. The use of the term 'colour revolutions' is a reference to the pro-Western concept, but by putting it in the frame of warfare, Russians clearly say that it is a tool for the implementation of the interests of great powers. Civil wars in Syria and Libya, which began as a result of the 'Arab Spring' protests, are used by Russia as evidence that 'colour revolutions' can develop into long-term hostilities.

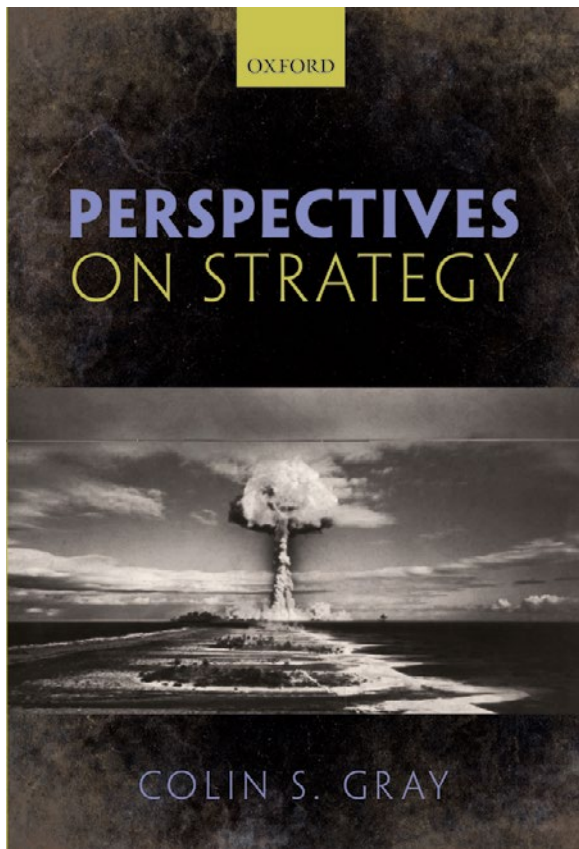
To promote its interests internationally, Russia adapts and uses in its own way the Western 'colour revolution' model, but Russian-type 'colour revolutions' are not as effective as their Western original. First of all, the presence of Russian armed forces in the case of the annexation of the Crimea, albeit unidentified, is quite obvious. It discredits the 'democratic' procedures used as being pseudo-democratic and exercised under military pressure. Secondly, Russia currently cannot provide globally-appealing ideologies and values such as those – democracy, freedom, and human rights – that are supported by the West. Accordingly Russia's execution of 'colour revolutions' is regional, rough and rather brutal.

Dr Ieva Bērziņa is Senior Researcher at the Center for Security and Strategic Studies at the National Academy of Defence of the Republic of Latvia

REFERENCES

- [i] Gerasimov, V. (2014, May 28). Presentation at the Third Moscow Conference on International Security. In Cordesman, A. H., Russia and the "Color Revolution": A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West (Full Report). Center for Strategic & International Studies. Retrieved from: http://csis.org/files/publication/140529_Russia_Colour_Revolution_Full.pdf
- [ii] Minasjan, G., Voskanjan, A. (2013) Zarubezhnije NPO – mehanizm vlijanija na vnutrennyj politiku SNG (Foreign NGOs – mechanism of influence on internal politics of CIS), Obozrevatel [Observer], 3, Retrieved from: <http://www.cisatc.org/134/157/552.html>
- [iii] Kremlin. (2014, December 26). Voyennaya doktrina Rossijskoi Federacii (Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation). Kremlin.ru. Retrieved from <http://kremlin.ru/news/47334>
- [iv] Ibid.
- [v] Ibid.
- [vi] CANVAS. (2007). CANVAS Core Curriculum: a Guide to Effective Non-violent Struggle. Retrieved from <http://global.wisc.edu/peace/readings/cambridge-canvas-core-curriculum.pdf>, pp.88-89.
- [vii] Ibid., pp.164-165.
- [viii] Gerasimov, V. (2014, May 28). Presentation at the Third Moscow Conference on International Security. In Cordesman, A. H., Russia and the "Color Revolution": A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West (Full Report). Center for Strategic & International Studies.
- [ix] Ibid.
- [x] Zarudnitsky, V. (2014, May 23). Moskovskaya konferenciya po mezhdunarodnoi bezopasnosti (Moscow Conference on International Security). Mil.ru. Retrieved from: http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11929746%40egNews.
- [xi] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. (2014, April 15). Gosudarstvennaya programma Rossijskoy Federacii 'Vneshnepoliticheskaya deyatel'nost' (State programme of the Russian Federation 'Foreign Policy Activities'). Mid.ru. Retrieved from: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newslines/089840FEF1B3F35944257CC90040CC4
- [xii] U.S. Department of State. (2014, March 4). Congressional Budget Justification, Fiscal Year 2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222898.pdf>
- [xiii] Russia Today. General info. Retrieved from <http://rt.com/about-us/>.

Eminent strategic theorist and Infinity Journal Editorial Panel member, Professor Colin S. Gray's new book on strategy is now available for order.



Perspectives on Strategy

Colin S. Gray

~~£55.00~~ £44.00

"Perspectives on Strategy examines in depth five aspects of strategy from the perspectives of: intellect, morality, culture, geography, and technology. Colin Gray asks and answers the most challenging and rewarding questions that can be posed in order to reveal the persisting universal nature, but ever changing character, of strategy." - OUP

We are pleased to have secured an exclusive 20% discount for our subscribers, thanks to [Oxford University Press \(OUP\)](#).

Subscribers can claim the discount by visiting the OUP website, adding the book to the shopping basket, and entering the code **AAFLY4** in the promotional code box.

TEN YEARS OBSERVING COMMAND AND CONTROL



© Sadikgulec | Dreamstime.com - US Soldiers In Iraq Photo

Jim Storr

In 2001 I wrote an article entitled 'A Year Observing Command and Control'. It was published in the British Army Review. I had recently spent a year, with what was then the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, examining command posts (CPs) and how they worked. We looked at CPs in Canada, Corsica, Ramstein and Madrid. We looked at unit, brigade, divisional and theatre-level HQs.

I have been doing the same thing, less formally, ever since. I have followed trends. I have followed individuals (one officer who was a lieutenant colonel when I first watched him is now a four star General). This article reports my main observations from the last ten years or so. That period has seen Western-led coalitions come and go from Iraq and Afghanistan. It has also seen the widespread deployment of digital IT into command posts.

Some years ago someone in the HQ of Multinational Corps, Iraq (HQ MNC-I) made a suggestion for a community engagement project in Baghdad. It took six days just to organise, plan and schedule the briefings required to get a brigadier general to sign it off. On the fifth day someone noticed that one of the insurgent militias was doing exactly what HQ MNC-I was planning to do. The plan had to be scrapped: playing copycat was not a good idea. Someone closely involved said that the HQ was a perfect planning machine, but 'the wheels never touched the ground'. Plans never became reality. Something was wrong. That observation is typical. There is something badly wrong with our CPs.

Observation: The introduction of IT into CPs has brought new capabilities, but overall, the impact has been negative. HQs have become much bigger and tend to produce worse plans, and take much longer to produce them. Much, but not all of this, is due to

digital IT. It has led to a number of problems

Observation: We have been bewitched by the technology. We ascribe things to it which we could do without. For example, a colleague told me that he once got hold of CAS, from another nation, within seven minutes. Wasn't that amazing? No. In 1944 it was normal to get the fire of up to 12 battalions of field artillery, from 3 different nations, directed onto a target within five minutes. The 21st Army Group routinely did it in Normandy in 1944, with no digital IT. Digital IT does some wonderful things, but some of them can be done with voice radio communications and slick drills and procedures.

Observation: Even before digital IT was introduced, people said that CPs would have to get bigger to support it. That was an error: IT should make working groups more efficient. That should mean doing the same with fewer people. In practice it just meant 'more people', which caused problems (see below).

Observation: IT, and particularly word processing packages, enabled people to create more output in terms of the length of documents. As a result the primary output of a CP (the orders it produces) simply got bigger. This is a major problem. Orders became wordy and difficult to understand. Long orders are entirely inconsistent with Mission Command. In practice the meaning of 'mission command' has become adulterated.

Observation: The use of digital IT in general, and battle management systems in particular, have fostered a growth in explicit process which has become absurd. Process has become an end in itself. In addition, strict adherence to explicit process is contrary to the aim of helping talented staff officers to work well as a team. People become enslaved to their machines. People can become frustrated. Some indulge in activities that are counterproductive. They also waste a lot of time doing things like answering e-mails. The issue of process is a wider problem, discussed further below.

Observation: CPs now have sufficient bandwidth to be able to pass

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: STORR, JIM, "TEN YEARS OBSERVING COMMAND AND CONTROL", *MILITARY OPERATIONS*, VOLUME 3, ISSUE NO. 1, SPRING 2015, PAGES 28-31.



multiple-page documents around electronically. As described above, products such as orders have become bulkier. Worse, however, is that staff now tend to 'cut and paste' information from higher HQ, rather than précis or abstract it before passing it down. In the 1980s many Western HQs did not even have photocopiers, so producing anything more than a few pages long was impractical. In the Falklands conflict all messages had to be passed by Morse code. Both measures meant that the staff had to really think about what they wished to tell subordinates. They had to do it in as few words as possible. As the (Falklands) Force Signal Staff Officer told me, 'that was a good thing'. That discipline has gone.

Observation: Over the same period, CP's were freed of the Cold War requirement of having to move frequently. That has meant that the discipline of having to be small has been removed. Naval and amphibious CP's have had to remain small, and are typically more effective.

Observation: The quality of graphical representation has gone down. That is, not least, because staff officers no longer actually draw their graphics. They are typically created on digital IT (such as Powerpoint). As a result, the staff are not intellectually connected with their product in the same way. NATO's system of symbology and graphical representation, APP-6, was rewritten to make it compatible with early digital IT (with low resolution or single-colour screens). The result is less intuitive, less elegant and more cluttered. APP-6 should be revised.

Observation: There has been a consistent belief that adding manpower to CPs is a good thing. It is not. It is counterproductive, but that is not obvious. There is an optimum size for groups of human beings who interact. It is a balance between dividing a job up between more people to reduce the time taken, against the increased time needed to brief all the members of a larger group. As CPs get bigger, they get inefficient. They are clearly well beyond their optimum size now. The graph is a representation of Brook's Law which points to the same result.

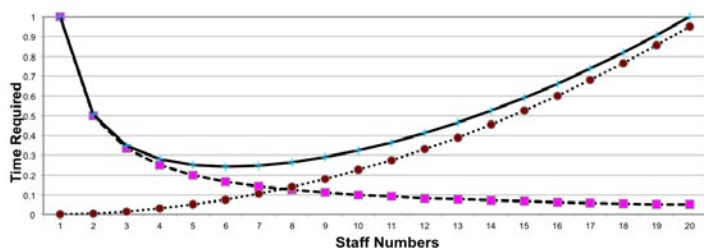


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Brooks' Law

Observation: Many HQs have more than doubled in size since 2003 or so. There are many apparent drivers for this growth, but most are mistaken. Most HQs do not need genuine 24-hour operation. They need planners who can plan when required. That rarely means as much as 16 hours in 24. Thus, planning in practically any HQ can be done by one man, or at most by a few men working in one shift. Not least, too much nugatory planning is taking place. HQs also need a few 'current operations' staff who work around the clock, this requires two shifts.

Comment: If very few insurgents do anything during the hours of darkness, why do COIN HQs all need to be scaled for 100%, 24-hour working? Modern HQs also need individual specialists such as political and media advisors. However, the few such posts actually required does not nearly account for the vast increase in

numbers observed.

Observation: The expansion of NATO, and the large number of nations represented in coalitions, has led to a huge increase in the supply of staff numbers. That is faulty rationale to enlarge HQs. Related to that is the growth in staff ranks, discussed below.

Comment: The Danes like to say that, with anything more than 200 people in a CP, it doesn't need any input. It runs itself! A British officer hearing that observed that all it needs is a process. No, said a Dane, the staff will invent one themselves.

Comment: A senior staff officer was recently overheard to observe that his HQ needed to 'concentrate on the process, not the structure'. He was partly right, but basically wrong. HQs should concentrate on *output*, which leads to outcome. Explicit process should be a guide to that. Process has become a bible rather than a guide.

Observation: Most explicit staff processes, such as NATO's Military Decision Making Process (MDMP), are simply not fit for purpose. They take too long. They produce plans which are mediocre and orders which are too long. An instructor at a Scandinavian staff college recently observed that only the very best staff college students can really use the MDMP properly. That means that something is very, very wrong. It may mean that either most staff college students aren't good enough; or that the instructors aren't good enough. Both are unlikely. It actually means that the MDMP is too complex, and therefore not fit for purpose.

Comment: Processes should be streamlined and allowed to evolve, in order to produce good plans and short orders quickly. It is commonly assumed that processes should not be streamlined until the staff have mastered the basics, such as the MDMP as taught. That is a fallacy. Firstly, the evidence is that it will never happen (see above). Secondly, the process just gets in the way. Able and well-intentioned staff can do better without it, if allowed to practice. Just ask yourself: would you know a good, short order describing a good plan if you saw it? If so, just concentrate on producing them. Get rid of all the rest of the junk, such as synchronisation matrices.

Observation: Wargaming Course of Action (COAs) (etc) is an aspect of process which was introduced in the 1990s and 2000s. If the staff have to resort to wargaming COAs, their plans are too complex. The problem may be that they are trying to do things that are too complex and will not survive contact with reality. Alternatively, the staff are not sufficiently well trained. Both issues can, and should be addressed.

Observation: Some senior staff become hyperactive. The G5 of one Coalition HQ in Afghanistan used to work up to 16 hours a day. He produced up to 10 fragmentary orders a day. In practice only about one in 15 affected subordinate units by as much as changing the tasking of a single infantry section. It was a clear case of a triumph of process over outcome.

Comment: The outputs of CPs are plans, represented in orders. Other than the initiating directives for a campaign or major operation, few orders should ever be more than a few pages long in total, perhaps ten or twelve. If they are, they are not fit for purpose. The initiating order for Operation OVERLORD, the Allied landing in Normandy in 1944, was incredibly short: about a dozen pages in total.



Observation: Part of the problem is that of poorly trained staff, both individually and collectively. Many of the staff in a number of major NATO HQs today have not attended a staff college. They shouldn't be there. The HQ would be better off if they were not there. The small number of trained staff left behind could get on and work together better in smaller, more cohesive groups.

Observation: A few years ago a colleague noticed that the orders originating from Regional Commands (RC's) in Afghanistan were inconsistent with those originating in HQ ISAF. The ISAF commander had recently produced a revised campaign plan. My colleague visited the RC commanders and gently asked them what they thought of the ISAF campaign plan. Their general opinion was that it was 'useful' and 'insightful'. In simple terms, each RC had written its own campaign plan, largely in isolation.

Comment: The truth is brutally simple. In one theatre there should only be one campaign, and therefore only one campaign plan. Subordinate HQs should extract their orders from that and make tactical plans based on it, *especially at the 2-star level*. The Operational Level has become badly overdone. All together, developed nations teach hundreds of officers a year how to conduct operational-level planning. An incredibly small number actually need to do it.

Observation: HQs have become so big that it is almost impossible to train them. Staff training has become a big, unwieldy process often conducted only once a year. That is demonstrably insufficient (not least because of the frequent turnover of staff). In the invasion of Iraq in 2003 one British brigade HQ was notably poorly run. It was possibly poorly led, but certainly poorly trained. That was in part because it had been considerably expanded above its peacetime establishment. Unfortunately, the wrong remedy was applied. The HQ didn't cope well and it was assumed that the reason was that it had been too small. The result was to make all British brigade HQs bigger. It was clearly the wrong answer. The answer should have been better training.

Observation: I know a number of generals personally. I have observed a lot more. Some are good, and definitely do a good job. A few are outstandingly good. Some look, or act, the part. Of those, some are mediocre and some are inept. To be clear, inept commanders have commanded formations on international operations.

Observation: Surprisingly, many generals are not good tacticians. They do not have a clear idea about what to do in order to beat their adversaries. That suggests that they have been poorly trained, or selected for the wrong reasons. Overall, generals are not as good as their nations would expect.

Comment: Generals are almost exclusively promoted in peacetime, using criteria largely based on peacetime requirements. Nowadays many have operational experience, but that is seen as a qualification (a tick in the box). Real operational ability is not in practice a requirement. Much of the reason is due to do with social dynamics which underlie the way that annual appraisals and promotion systems work in practice. It is quite subtle. I know of one General who was groomed for promotion before he even got to staff college, because he looked and acted the part. In my opinion he was overpromoted by four to five ranks.

Comment: My own experience tells me that many of the people promoted to high rank were predicted to do so from staff college,

20 years before. There are people in armies who would have been better, but they are in practice overlooked quite early. That suggests that selection processes are insufficiently perceptive. Many of those who did succeed were moderately competent at junior levels, but looked and acted the part. They were then groomed and gained experience in high-calibre posts. Many nations get this wrong. It would be entirely possible to identify future commanders who could beat others in comparative tests, for example tests based on war gaming.

Discussion

Quite separately, it is quite clear that almost nobody in any HQ should be above the rank of major. There is virtually no post in an HQ that a major cannot be trained to do: given the right training. There are very, very few posts which require levels of experience which a major cannot be expected to have. Those posts should be held by lieutenant colonels or colonels. There should rarely be more than one or two of those in any HQ; *especially* the largest. In practice there are often several layers of staff above the level of major. Detailed examination reveals that the officers in those layers are usually counterproductive. They either slow down staff process; overcomplicate it; take decisions that their subordinates know are flawed; tell the commander (and other senior staff officers) things they want to hear, rather than the objective truth; or some combination of all the above. All are detrimental to operational effectiveness.

In addition, the act of inserting more senior staff (for example lieutenant colonels) is demonstrably self-defeating. It means that the majors and captains that they supervise have less responsibility than before. In due course, they will not be as experienced when they become lieutenant colonels themselves. If your majors aren't good enough, don't use lieutenant colonels. Select and train your majors better. More people and higher ranks is not the answer. Fewer, but better trained people is the answer.

We should be quite clear. To take one real example, a corps HQ does not need a lieutenant general, two major generals, four brigadiers and a raft of colonels to do its job. It probably needs one lieutenant general as a commander and a colonel as its chief of staff. When deployed, it might need one other senior officer. Some of the officers in the ranks of lieutenant colonel to major general spend much of their effort trying to make bloated HQs, full of poorly-trained staff, work.

The weakness of HQs does not appear to be a big problem at the moment. NATO, and the coalitions which its members tend to dominate, generally holds a monopoly in the use of large-scale collective violence. The fact that their HQs are poorly-trained, bloated and inefficient does have negative consequences, but they are rarely exposed. However, it will not always be that way. Some nation somewhere will be capable of doing simple but violent things quickly and effectively. When that happens, an army of a developed nation (or a coalition of such) will take a bad beating. But it doesn't have to be that way.

The key lies in the people. There should be fewer of them, but they should be better trained and better organised. IT should help bind talents together as a team. Reduced to its absolute basics, the functions of an HQ (even the largest) are simple and can be delivered by a few people. They need to be the right people and be highly trained, both individually and as a team.



Conclusions

There should be a fundamental review of what HQs are required to do. It should start from the premise that staff only exist to assist a commander exercise command. If they don't do that, they shouldn't be there. The principle functions can be seen as leadership, decision making and control. What does that mean? How can that be delivered with the smallest practical number of people? Brook's Law, or something like it, will not go away. There should then be a fundamental review of how digital IT can, and should, assist in the process.

CPs should focus on *output* leading to *outcome*. That means that within a theatre there is one, and only one, enduring campaign plan. Anything below that should be contained in short, succinct orders which describe simple, robust tactical plans.

Overall, there are two overarching requirements. The first is to understand that command is a fundamentally human issue. It is best delivered by small, expert groups of talents working together in teams. The second is to then accept that, at present, something is badly wrong.

Jim Storr is the Editor of Military Operations

