The Journal of Military Operations

Discussions On The Conduct of War

FEATURING

Gil Barndollar

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Steve Cornell

Nilanthan Niruthan

Gerry Long

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Discussions On The Conduct Of War

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A Note From The Editor

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

Thousands of you have read our previous editions, and the number keeps on growing. The conduct of land warfare is an important subject. War can change the shape of nations, and can do so very quickly. Most warfare is carried out on land. So examining the conduct of war on land is important. You think so; that's why our readership keeps growing. No-one else publishes material on our subject: Military Operations occupies a unique and important position. We know that it is read in some important and unusual places. Military Operations provides a unique meeting place between the serving, those aspiring to serve, and the retired. It allows practitioners to exchange views and information with researchers and writers. But we can only publish articles if you write and send them to us. So please keep sending material to us. Send it now. Or, alternatively, get in touch right now to discuss whatever you are thinking of writing.

In this edition Gil Barndollar makes a case for designated marksman training within rifle sections (or squads). The article is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is an important aspect of how land forces could, should or do fight. A number of commentators have raised the requirement for sections to engage human targets at long ranges (of, perhaps, six to eight hundred metres). *Is* there such a requirement? *What* is the requirement? Is the key issue to suppress the target, or to incapacitate it? What is the best way to meet that requirement?

The second reason why the issue is important flows from the above. The article takes Military Operations' subject matter down to platoon and section level. That is good. Military Operations discusses how land forces could, should or do fight. That includes the realities of the low-level tactical as well as the operational and the abstract or conceptual. Military Operations has published quite a lot of the latter. We will continue to do so (see below). However, we welcome this article as leading some of the discussion down to concrete, tactical issues.

Military Operations does not discuss technical issues. There is about as much technical content in Gil Barndollar's article as we are prepared to include. We would not, for example, publish an article on the relative merits of this or that rifle, or this or that small-arms round. Equally, for what it is worth, my own opinion is that the article advocates the wrong solution to the requirement; but that is not important. What do you think? Is there such a requirement, and if so how should it be met? Please let us know.

Dave Banks is a very experienced former infantry officer who has been able to observe command posts over a number of years. In essence, he says that they should be smaller and that, failing that, they need training; and particularly better training. What is particularly interesting about this subject is that one *never*

reads articles that say that HQs should be bigger; or need more process. Experienced commentators, like Dave Banks, always say the opposite. We should ask ourselves why that is.

Steve Cornell's article on the operational level of war takes a conceptual but very practical view of the subject. He concludes that '[w]e need abstractions to make sense of the world. The Operational [level] is but one abstraction. It is probably always being to be controversial - identifying what happens (if anything) between soldiers on the ground and our home capitals is always likely to be amorphous and ever-changing. Rigidly applying such an abstraction as the answer is a harmful approach, rigidly rejecting it is probably equally harmful.' That seems reasonable. If, or since, much of war and warfare is about human behaviour, it does not seem appropriate to make narrow, restrictive and categoric concepts and definitions. Clarity need not imply excessive precision.

Nilanthan Niruthan's article 'International Law and The Counterinsurgent's Nightmare: A Sri Lankan Case Study' examines a practical aspect of the asymmetry between insurgents and counterinsurgency forces. He remarks that '[w]hile insurgents can get away with nearly every illegality, States are subjected to restrictions that are often crippling.' Taken out of context, that may appear overstated; but it does highlight an important issue. It is paradoxical that ostensibly weaker insurgent bodies can exist and operate in the presence of ostensibly far more powerful security forces. It has been suggested that the insurgents operate in an evolutionary niche. Such niches are different in every case but often have social, cultural, economic and legal facets. Nilanthan Niruthan's article serves, not least, to bring attention to an important aspect of how land forces could, should or do fight.

Gerry Long is one of Military Operations' editorial advisory panel. At time of writing this editorial he has spent several months mentoring a unit of the Afghan National Army. His article 'The Green Mountain Boys: Mentoring an Army from the Ground Up' reflects on his experiences to date. As ever, Gerry tells it 'like it is'. His article is all the more valuable for that.

We wish Gerry a safe return home at the end of his tour of duty.

Jim Storr
Editor, Military Operations
February 2016

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The Precision Engagement Gap

UK and US armed forces, by Spc. Daniel Love, U.S. Army [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Gil Barndollar

A situation common to infantry veterans of our recent misadventure in Afghanistan: a squad-sized patrol is trudging back toward their humble Hesco home, tired and perhaps smelling the barn door after fruitless hours spent traversing canals or stumbling down hillsides. A short burst of fire cracks overhead, a little close for comfort. The men take cover, spread out on line, and scan the arid landscape around them for a shooter. In spite of their best efforts planning in front of the COC computer the night before, they are in open terrain, with the nearest mud-walled compounds nearly a kilometer away. Firing from a wetted down murder hole a few inches in diameter, the enemy is nearly undetectable. So the opportunistic Talib on the other end of the PKM lingers a little longer, expending a few more rounds in an effort to summon that unmistakable sign of success, the medevac Blackhawk.

Our patrol has few good options, especially if it is outside of the comforting envelope of our now-standard surveillance blimps and gyrocams. Light or medium machine guns, if brought out on patrol that day, are highly unlikely to do more than suppress our barricaded enemy at that range. Maneuvering upon him is probably not wise, given both the IED threat and his ability to either hop on a motorbike or stash his weapon and blend in among his neighbors. Snipers are a battalion asset, and often unavailable. Mortars, artillery, and close air support all take time to be brought to bear, and, more importantly, all greatly increase the risk of killing civilians and alienating the fence sitters among the local populace. In the current operating environment, we have an intermediate-range precision engagement gap.

The modern NATO battle rifle (a carbine in many cases) claims a maximum effective range of about 500 meters, be it M-4, HK-416, or SA-80.[i] But can we really expect our infantrymen to be able to consistently kill the enemy at that range? Given often insufficient marksmanship training, fleeting enemy exposure, a subpar rifle caliber, and the physical effects of moving to contact under combat loads that seldom dip below 70 pounds (and can be double that), the realistic range at which our riflemen will consistently hit the enemy is probably more like 250-300 meters.

In Afghanistan, at least half of all firefights have taken place beyond 300 meters.[ii] That this fact has not resulted in heavy casualties to NATO forces is a testament to body armor, dramatic advances in trauma medicine, and the general lack of Afghan marksmanship.[iii] The last factor is particularly key. One can be sure that if Western forces had been fighting even a moderately trained conventional or unconventional foe (like Hezbollah), losses to small arms and machine gun fire would have been far heavier.

A clear testament to the intermediate range engagement gap was provided by a March 2013 *Marine Corps Gazette* article. The authors, a rifle company's lieutenants recently returned from a highly "kinetic" summer deployment to northern Helmand Province, laid out their frustrations with the inability of Marine rifle squads to employ precision fires against Taliban attacking them with machine guns or rifles at extended ranges. Non-organic fires took too long to authorize and bring into action, and the squad and platoon lacked any organic ability to engage at medium to long range. As the article's title plaintively put it: "It's Not the Artillery's Fault."[iv]

The lieutenants' solution was to equip rifle squads with the Javelin missile, in lieu of a better option. A top-down attack anti-tank missile, the Javelin is effective out to 2,000 meters. But weight and cost are substantial drawbacks. Western militaries are already too far down the path of trying to solve tactical problems by throwing ungodly amounts of money at them: $200 million fighter jets for close air support, $450,000 mine-resistant vehicles for 50 pound fertilizer bombs. Shooting $40,000 anti-tank missiles at every solitary "accidental guerrilla" is another unwelcome step down this path.

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There is a simple, and relatively cheap, tactical solution to the precision engagement gap: the squad designated marksman. Doctrinally, the squad designated marksman (SDM) is almost a blank slate for US ground forces. The US Army's Field Manual 3-22.9 Rifle Marksmanship provides a short training course of fire for the squad designated marksman and briefly defines his role: "The SDM engages targets with direct small arms fire in the gap between the engagement range of the average combat Soldier and the sniper…. The SDM program provides the squad with a designated marksman that has been trained to engage targets from 300 to 500 meters. He will operate and maneuver as a rifleman, but will have the added responsibility of engaging targets out to 500 meters with effective, well-aimed fires."[v] The US Marine Corps, despite training and employing designated marksmen for decades in its Security Force Regiment (Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Teams and nuclear weapons security battalions), has no formal written doctrine for them.

Despite the absence of doctrine, it should be clear what a designated marksman is not. He is not a sniper. His training in stalking, tracking, and counter-sniping should be minimal to non-existent. Training in observation skills is an aid to any infantryman, but the designated marksman is not an intelligence-gathering asset like a sniper is. The SDM is also not to be employed independently forward of friendly lines, as Marine and SOF snipers often are. He is a member of his squad, an infantryman who fills a vital overwatch and precision engagement role by dint of extra training and a superior rifle. A platoon commander can also opt to aggregate his DMs into a small but highly lethal support element, should the mission require it. For situations where his skill set is not needed, the DM can pick up a standard rifle or carbine and fill a different billet in his squad.

There are some who argue that while the designated marksman concept is sound, the DM should be armed just like his squad-mates, with an M-4 or M-16A4 with a 4x general combat optic.[vi] This argument ignores one of the primary drivers of our engagement gap: caliber. While the NATO standard 5.56x45mm cartridge is adequate at relatively close range, it derives its wounding power from its ability to fragment inside a target at high velocity due to its yaw. If the round does not yaw and thus does not fragment, it is likely to pass through a human body relatively cleanly, leaving small entry and exit wounds. While 5.56mm rounds may be able to perforate paper targets at 500 meters, they rapidly lose the ability to incapacitate men as ranges creep beyond 200 meters.[vii] Repeated attempts over the last thirty years to rectify this problem within caliber have failed.

The insufficient terminal ballistics of the 5.56mm cartridge only became more pronounced as first the US Army and now the Marine Corps shifted from the M-16A4 rifle to the M-4 carbine as the primary personal weapon of their troops. While the Marine Corps' new M-27 Infantry Automatic Rifle is extremely accurate, it shoots the same 5.56x45mm rounds as the rest of the weapons in an infantry squad. Until the US military, and thus NATO, makes a wholesale conversion to a heavier intermediate cartridge like 6.5mm or 6.8mm, the designated marksman requires a different weapon than his squad-mates.

There are many possible options for this Designated Marksman Rifle (DMR). The British Army, new to the concept, uses the Lewis Machine & Tool L129A1. The US Army provides its SDMs with the Enhanced Battle Rifle, a modernized (albeit heavier) M-14. The Marine Corps Security Force Regiment uses the M-110 Semi-Automatic Sniper System (SASS). What all these intermediate-range, precision rifles share is a 7.62x51mm cartridge, semi-automatic fire, and the ability to consistently hit (and kill) a man-sized target at a range of at least 800 meters. All of these rifles also mount a more powerful optic than the Trijicon Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight or M68 Close Combat Optic that are standard for most Western infantrymen.

The weapon, however, is secondary to the training needed to create a truly expert squad sharpshooter. As in so many other areas, our marksmanship training is a hold-over from the days of a mass conscript army, designed to be thrown into combat en masse against the Soviets and suffer heavy casualties. The trainfire course, developed for the 1950's Pentomic Army and still in use today, only requires shooters to engage out to a distance of 300 meters.[viii] The close quarters jungle fighting of Vietnam and the low quality of US military manpower during the dark rebuilding years of the 1970s only reinforced training to the lowest common denominator, with marksmanship being no exception.

As a result of this inadequate training and equipment, designated marksmen became an ad hoc addition to infantry operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The US Army added SDMs to its light infantry tables of organization, but provided them with bare bones training, a weeklong course in fundamentals, taught by the Army's marksmanship team, that was little more than information all infantrymen should know: range estimation, windage, stance, and trigger pull.[ix] US Marine Corps units provided hastily identified superior shooters with the Mark-12 SAM-R (Squad Advanced Marksman Rifle), essentially a National Match-grade M-16 firing superior 77-grain 5.56mm ammunition. Despite only minimal in-country training, this tactical innovation was reported to be highly effective.[x]

With the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns appearing to be over for conventional forces, the US Army and Marine Corps have returned their units to the status quo ante bellum. The United States Army Marksmanship Unit's SDM Course maintains an erratic training schedule, while DMs have disappeared from Marine Corps infantry and light armored reconnaissance battalions. Despite the clear need for designated marksmen, the training and the rifles necessary have lost out to other priorities for a military entering a period of (relative) fiscal austerity. This is a typical case of being penny wise, pound foolish.

Truly embracing the squad designated marksman concept would not be without cost. If the designated marksman is to be a true specialist, on par with a machine gunner or a mortarman, a four week course is necessary, with the attendant ammunition and travel costs. The rifles and optics are also expensive. A M-110 SASS and its full suite of day and night optics costs $75,000. But again, one Javelin missile sets the taxpayer back about $40,000.

There are countless tactical bad habits from the last fifteen years of low intensity conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.[xi] The addition of a medium-range precision rifle to the infantry squad is not one of them. The squad designated marksman is an idea that has been discussed in US infantry units for decades. It is an idea that has been validated by battlefield experiments and expedients during the last ten years of small wars. Precision engagement at the squad level is not a tactical need that will end with the war in Afghanistan. Future wars are still, as Marine General Charles Krulak noted 15 years ago, more likely to be the "stepchild of Chechnya" than "the son of Desert Storm." This likely persistence of low intensity, infantry-centric fighting, coupled with the extreme aversion of Western armies to causing civilian casualties, demands a high level of marksmanship and the ability to positively identify targets at the greatest possible range. These skills are even more necessary in urban environments, where fleeting target exposures and the 360 degree threat make the DM's overwatch capability a critical enabler of squad maneuver.

The benefits from squad designated marksman training would also go beyond simply providing small units with trained sharpshooters. The DMs, having gained a far fuller knowledge of marksmanship and a host of associated skills (range estimation, observation techniques, ballistics) in their training, would gradually build up these skills throughout the infantry as a whole, resulting in a better-trained force across the board.[xii] An army with trained DMs in all of its rifle squads will be one that is restoring a hunter or "jaeger" mindset to its men, a mindset that has been dulled by the past decade of presence patrols and key leader engagements. For all of these reasons, the designated marksman's full inclusion in the doctrine, training, and equipment of Western infantry units is long overdue.

Capt Barndollar is an infantry officer of the United States Marine Corps. He recently served as a combat advisor with the Georgian Army's Batumi Battalion in Afghanistan.

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[i] This number is illusory from the outset, because it does not account for the inaccuracy of the M855 cartridge most commonly issued. See Major Thomas P. Ehrhart, 'Increasing Small Arms Lethality in Afghanistan: Taking Back the Infantryman's Half-Kilometer'. Monograph, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009, p. 2, and First Sergeant (Retired) D. Robert Clements, 'The Designated Marksman Equation', Infantry, Vol. 97, No. 5 (September-October 2008), p. 48.

[ii] Ehrhart, p. 24.

[iii] C. J. Chivers, 'Afghan Marksmen – Forget the Fables', New York Times At War blog, 26 March 2010 (available online, http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/26/afghan-marksmen-forget-the-fables/, accessed 26 May 2015).

[iv] The Officers of Golf Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, 'It's Not the Artillery's Fault', Marine Corps Gazette, March 2013, pp. 40-43.

[v] FM 3-22.9 Rifle Marksmanship,M16-/M4-Series Weapons (2008), p. 7-62.

[vi] Clements, p. 49.

[vii] Ehrhart, pp. 26-28.

[viii] US Marine Corps annual rifle qualification includes prone shooting out to 500 yards, albeit with archaic "loop slings" until recent revisions. See MARADMIN 069/15, AUTHORIZED INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS, OPTICS, MODULAR ATTACHMENTS AND MODIFICATIONS FOR FY15 ANNUAL RIFLE AND PISTOL TRAINING.

[ix] Major Tyson Andrew Johnson, 'The USAMU Squad Designated Marksman's Course (A Student's Perspective)', Infantry, Vol. 97, No. 4, (July-August 2008), pp. 47-51. SDMs were allocated to US Army squads at a rate of one per squad, later changed to two.

[x] CWO4 Charles F. Colleton, 'A New Page in Combat Marksmanship', Marine Corps Gazette, January 2004, pp. 46-47 and R. R. Keene, 'The Corps' Guardian Angels Tote One Hell of a Rifle', Leatherneck, September 2009, pp. 36-38.

[xi] Risk aversion at all levels, an over-reliance on fire support, the primacy of force protection, and an overuse of special operations forces are some of the most obvious.

[xii] This is especially true in the US Army, where the 300 yard marksmanship qualification range does not even require wind holds to be successful.

Making The Big Headquarters Better

David Banks

In his recent article "*Ten Years Observing Command And Control*", (Military Operations, Volume 3, Issue No. 1, Spring 2015) Jim Storr offered a series of observations and recommendations concerning the malaise that currently affects formatiovn level HQs in some Western countries. Reflecting on his decade of first-hand experience in the world of higher C2, Jim presented a commentary which I found amazingly close to my own views on the subject.

Much like Jim, I've spent the last ten years or so involved in the training of headquarters and staff officers at the brigade, division and equivalent levels. I've been part of the training effort for headquarters on their way to fight in Afghanistan; for others that were preparing to conduct large deliberate internal security operations in Canada; and for still others preparing for any contingency which might arise. I've served in Canadian, US and NATO headquarters, and I've experienced how other countries train their headquarters. Most recently, I've been involved in the NATO C2 training process. Perhaps most valuable and satisfying of all, I've been able to visit headquarters I've helped to train, when they were in the midst of conducting operations. Along the way, I've watched headquarters become bigger and bigger.

My experiences have led me to opinions very close to those expressed by Jim, and to reflect on the curative (or perhaps palliative) value of training in addressing some of these problems. I have become a zealot for the old Teutonic idea of a small hard-working staff being the most effective. Clearly, our headquarters have become much too big for any good they might do. This unhealthy bloat has aggravated three pre-existing conditions which are, I think, inherent in headquarters. These conditions are: the need to train a headquarters as a unit; the struggle to manage information effectively; and the persistent tendency for headquarters staff branches to function in splendid isolation.

In this piece, I'll examine each of these conditions. Based on my own experience and observations, I'll offer some suggestions on how beleaguered Chiefs of Staff might overcome them, and make these big headquarters at least somewhat better.

A Headquarters Is A Unit

This seemingly redundant statement is here because many people just don't "get it" when it comes to the subject of training a headquarters. Some assume that because every officer in the staff must be a graduate of a service or joint staff college, the organization is inherently ready to function. Still others believe that because a headquarters sits in garrison for months (or years) doing force generation and administrative tasks, it somehow becomes operationally capable through osmosis. Finally, we have those who think that throwing the headquarters out in the field in charge of a manoeuvre exercise every now and then is quite good enough.

In my experience, these comfortable assumptions are wrong. First of all, (as Jim noted) not all the officers in a headquarters are graduates of any staff college. Of those who are graduates, not all arrive at their staff jobs with any relevant experience. We should remember that staff colleges are responsible for individual training and education: a headquarters is a unit that needs collective training. It's a team, not a collection of individuals.

It is mostly nonsense to think that a large headquarters somehow becomes fit to run operations through carrying out the endless drudgery of force generation tasks. Some basic staff skills are indeed applied on a day to day basis in garrison, but at nothing like the level required to produce an operationally effective headquarters.

Obviously, the ultimate purpose of a headquarters is to command and control units in the field, so at some point it's probably necessary to put the headquarters into a field environment to ensure it can do

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that, but only as a final confirmation. Soldiers are not training aids for staff officers. Placing real units and soldiers in the field under a headquarters that doesn't yet know what it's doing is an inexcusable waste of time and of good will. Before a headquarters inflicts itself on cold, tired and possibly bored soldiers, it needs to have its own act sorted out. That's why it has to be trained as a unit.

The bigger and more complex we make our headquarters, and the more they are forced to rely on inadequately trained officers or short-term augmentees to fill their giant structures, the more difficult this problem becomes. The more difficult the problem becomes, in my opinion, the more likely it is that it will be wished away or addressed in half-measures.

What to do? What I have to recommend here is not new at all: rather it is common sense far too often glossed over or neglected, usually because of a perceived lack of time. I am convinced that the answer begins with a rigorous and progressive training process for a headquarters, as opposed to a perfunctory "check in the box" or "there…we've done that, let's get on with it". Regardless of the size or mission of the headquarters in question, this training process must have three basic components.

First, it must begin at the level of the individual branch or cell, and start at a perhaps embarrassing fundamental level. What are our SOPs in this branch? If "x" happens, what do we do? Who amongst us does it, and why? This must appear maddeningly self-evident, but you might be surprised how often it is swept aside.

Second, training must progress in a measured way, from individual branch/cell up to, eventually, the entire headquarters, at a steady walking pace, moving through a problem. There must be time for meaningful "after action reviews" and for "do-overs". I've observed that it's best if (at least initially…) this training is "unplugged": stay off the workstations and away from banging out huge slide decks. Get the process right first, so that staff understand what they're supposed to be doing. Then, once the branch heads and Chief of Staff are confident, turn to and switch everything on, ultimately arriving at the gold standard of a demanding, realistic readiness exercise which sees all people and all systems running flat out over several planning and execution cycles.

Finally, just like any good unit training program, the leaders really must do it. I've run a number of headquarters training teams over the years, and while various headquarters benefitted at the start from our help as "outsiders", the most effective headquarters were always those in which the Chief of Staff and his branch heads "owned" the training of their own people.

Where's My Yellow Sticky?-Struggling with Information Management

Big headquarters both generate and consume bales of information of all sorts. We're generally led to believe that this is not only good, but somehow necessary. It's also very easy to fall into the trap laid for us by digitization-mongers, who would like us to think that if we only had more big screens and chat systems and shared drives in our headquarters, we would automatically be more effective. This is one of the biggest falsehoods I've noted in the process of headquarters training.

Now, I'm not a digital Luddite: far from it. But my observations tell me that all of these systems are just tools-nothing more. Tools in the hands of skilled users produce great results: the same tools in the hands of unskilled users will probably produce garbage. Worse, they may be lethal. Before any headquarters can use digitization tools to their full value, it must understand its own internal processes. Staff must know what information they need in order to support their commander; why they need it; whom they must share it with, how and when. Yet far more important than any of those things, they must understand what information *means*. What is important, and what's rubbish?

This degree of understanding is, in my experience, very uneven in most headquarters at the beginning of their training process, even if they have been together for a while. In many situations, digitization on its own doesn't really help: in fact, it often becomes the efficient agent for the rapid spread of disinformation and confusion. It may also lead to an obsession with rather shallow but "shiny" products, as opposed to sound intellectual processes. In a big, ponderous and innately incoherent headquarters, this problem becomes immeasurably worse. "Drowning in information" or "information constipation" are two sadly familiar symptoms of this condition.

How can this wicked problem be tackled? Certainly *not* by giving the job of headquarters information management officer (IMO) to the last junior officer to get off the bus, who is not even a staff college graduate, and who still doesn't know where to find the headquarters orderly room. Perhaps readers scoff at my "exaggeration", but sadly I've seen this hapless approach all too often. Somehow a short, generic "IMO course" makes this poor young officer into an expert on how the headquarters functions. The results are all too predictable.

In my view, the "Chief IMO" is the Chief of Staff. He must begin with his own complete understanding of how the headquarters will function, in broad terms. (If he hasn't got that in his head, I don't think he can do his job anyway.) Most importantly, the Chief of Staff must answer the question "how do we support the Commander's decision process?" If a headquarters can't perform that task, it is really just a worthless resource consumer. Once the Chief of Staff has that concept clear in his own head, he must get together with his branch heads and work out a concept of how information will move in the headquarters under different situations, and why. Then, and only then, should the Chief of Staff bring in the IMO and give that *experienced, staff-trained officer* his marching orders. Finally, things will work best if the IMO is an "operator" (i.e.: working directly for the Chief of Staff or the Chief of Operations) rather than a "technician". Nothing against signal officers, but their job is really to enable information management, not to take responsibility for it.

Cylinders of Excellence - It's All About Us

A headquarters is organized into a number of separate structures of varying complexity. The nature and role of these structures (or branches and cells) may also vary. A mechanized brigade group headquarters focused on short term tactical planning and the control of manoeuvre forces will look quite different from a "brigade-plus" task force headquarters such as Canada deployed in Kandahar. Neither of these will exactly resemble a "division-plus" joint task force headquarters deployed to a world crisis spot.

Regardless of how they may be structured, at the outset, all the headquarters I've helped to train suffered from a condition known as "staff silos", or "cylinders of excellence". Simply put, this is the tendency for staff branches and cells to have relatively little knowledge of, (or concern for) what is going on in the rest of the headquarters. Typically, given proper training and good leadership, a staff branch can become competent in its own discipline in a reasonably short time. The bigger challenge is to create a pan-headquarters environment in which staff officers both understand that they need to interact regularly with other parts of the headquarters, and then truly act on that understanding. This problem can be extended beyond the walls of the headquarters to include a generally weak appreciation of the value of good working relationships with higher, lower and flanking headquarters. The attitude of "it's all about us" is sometimes quite prevalent. In the very big and complex headquarters common today, this condition can be endemic. It will manifest itself in ways such as supporting annexes which have clearly been developed either in isolation from the main plan, or from other staff branches.

Overcoming this third condition can be a happy by-product of dealing with the first two issues, but it won't happen magically. Every headquarters whose training I have been involved with has struggled with this problem. Some have overcome it fairly early in the training cycle, while others have still been wrestling with it on their final operational readiness exercise. None overcame it without human effort and leadership. Only an effective regime of training, led by the Chief of Staff and his branch heads, can break the cylinders and smash the silos.

The fundamental and progressive training I recommended as the solution to the first condition above is the most important remedy here. If the time is taken to do that training properly-and by "properly" I mean making sure that people are actually learning useful things, not just checking off boxes and making slides-I believe the staff's awareness and understanding of what goes on outside their own little "bazaar" will grow exponentially. A well-thought out information management plan, driven by the Chief of Staff and understood by the staff team, will only make things better.

Making Them Better

I've highlighted three well known problems inherent in our formation headquarters; all of them, in my view, badly aggravated by the tendency in Western countries towards headquarters' structures which are too big, too complicated, often over-ranked and too ponderously sclerotic to be really useful. We don't train them very well, they can't really manage information properly, and they are internally fragmented.

Ideally (in my mind) we could "solve" it all by taking a draconian approach to the size and complexity of headquarters, and just slash them down to size. Alas, I fear that measure will require levels of determination and focus which often seem to escape some military institutions these days. There always seems to be another just one more "functionality" or another brand new "capability coordination centre" which simply *has* to be added to the structure. That, I think, is a separate fight for each nation's military to resolve. A smaller, productively hard-working team who know each other well is the goal, but I'm not sure we will get there.

So, if we can't immediately make these monstrous headquarters smaller, can we at least try to make them better? I believe we can. I've tried to put forth the idea that making these headquarters "better" relies on the same thing that most important aspects of military success have always relied upon: determined human beings effectively applying common sense and experience. Training which accounts for human factors and which follows well-known military principles will go far toward mitigating all three of these problems. I've also illuminated the sad but all too common tendency to minimize or skip over these simple solutions, based on false premises.

At this point, doubtless some readers will say "really…is that it? I knew that already!" I would have to agree, but I would have to add that to know something is not quite the same thing as putting it into practice, and sticking with it until you achieve the result you need, which in this case would be headquarters contributing to operational success against increasingly agile and flexible enemies.

David Banks is employed as a civilian contractor at the Canadian Army Simulation Centre. He works as a team leader in the design development and delivery of synthetic exercises for Army, Joint and Other Government Department requirements. David retired from the Army in 2012 as an Infantry officer with 38 years of service.

The Operational: As Valid And As Dangerous As Any Other Abstraction

Steve Cornell

The Journal has seen a steady drumbeat of debate regarding 'The Operational' (be it the level, the art or both), addressing what it might be and its utility. Those who sound the clarion call of the dangers of an expansionist concept have some valid warnings, but they also may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Those who oppose The Operational, from differing perspectives, provide criticisms that are focused on three main areas. First, that it is a poorly expressed and confusing idea and that by imposing itself as an intermediate (and ever-growing) level of warfare, it hinders rather than supports the linking of strategy and tactics. Second, that The Operational's utility depends upon the context in which is conceived and that context is no longer relevant. Finally, that it offers superficial clarity and simplicity but is actually a confused logic that has been misapplied and has spawned a host of processes and approaches.

An over-weaning but not invalid concept?

These criticisms are either true or they suggest an area of risk we need to consider. So from the perspec-tive of someone who has no fundamental issue with The Operational, where does the concept risk being unhelpful to the prosecution of effective military activity? I suggest that they centre on two areas: the military mind and the worship of the past.

Military mindsets seem to favour taking an idea or abstraction, turning it into very detailed doctrine and then requiring a dogmatic approach to utilizing it. We have taken The Operational and made it a rigid set of mental (and for staffs, physical) hoops to jump though. We also demand that abstractions are ap-plied; in this case it is a desire to force a separate operational level of command into our structures be-cause the doctrine says so in a diagram or definition rather than a need. This is unwarranted and possi-bly dangerous. There is also potentially no end to how far a military mind is willing to take this dogmat-ic approach, going as far as the replacement of basic building blocks of activity with shining new edi-fices. Operational Art and Operational Design are just normal military command and staff activity but you would not know that from the reams written on these alleged bespoke activities. While it may be true that every commander and HQ will have a particular set of nuances, context and procedures, mak-ing up new terms for age-old activity strikes of empire-building.

The study of history is an important tool in learning but we should be inspired by the past, not become its prisoners. When we do, it shows in two ways: we re-prove that 'preparing to fight the last war' is more than a hackneyed phrase or instead, we clad our supposedly new idea in the armour of historical legitimacy by linking it to past success. For example, operational thinking on the Eastern Front of WW2 does not in itself justify its use now. An idea born of any era is likely to age and lose some rele-vance. The Operational, as the West knows it, is a child of the 1980s and in some ways this shows. It struggles in the light of 24-hour media influence, civil-military integration, the scale and reach of global communications and societal demands to be involved in military decision-making. These would have been a struggle to comprehend or forecast thirty years ago but all of these point to a close linkage of the strategic and tactical levels.

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The Operational is thus not a panacea to the complexity of military activity or a magic formula. Some would have us believe that you need only dial in the factors to The Operational and out pops some pret-ty effective PowerPoint (on us if not the enemy). It is fairly clear however that there is strategy and there are tactics. Somehow the two need to be linked for military activity to be both meaningful and effective. That does not in itself require new ideas, levels, structures, commanders or doctrine. What matters is making an effective linkage. Steve Hart's first thought is true: The Operational is not omnipo-tent.[i] However arguing further that this makes it impotent or invalid risks going too far and misses out on what could be gleaned from it.

Where do the criticisms risk going too far?

The fundamental truths behind an 'old' idea can still be useful if they can be divined. There is also very little out there which is purely a function of an era's character. Most likely every concept bears something of the nature of war, however small, and is thus useful in some way to our thinking now. Forming squares to protect musket-armed infantry against sword-wielding cavalry is no longer a valid tactic, but the truth of strong defences based on maximising weapons' effect and unit cohesion is a useful lesson to bear in mind. Furthermore, if war is an activity full of stresses, some caused by the nature of war and some by its current character, this does not mean that those character-caused stresses and their responses are irrelevant later on. The Operational recognises some of those strains and attempts to mitigate them. Most crucially it recognises that strategy and tactics are linked but that a successful linkage is not a giv-en; it must be forged and maintained. The challenges of doing this are magnified if tactical action is oc-curring in widespread locations against possibly differing opponents to meet a variety of goals. This might be a large scale conventional war (e.g. WW2) or multiple small scale civil-military conflicts (e.g. the struggle against jihadist franchises).

The need to apply concepts to past eras with care applies to both those who support or oppose them. I agree that the Falklands case study has uses. It highlights how an abstraction, if rigidly described and applied, is probably dangerous in application. This is because the situation, the abstraction, or both, are bent to make them fit together. We thus risk the faulty assessment of command structures and more im-portantly command activity through a lens that was not recognized nor used at the time. In this case, the Falklands War of 1982 came before the operational level was really in the British mind-set and it was certainly not doctrine.

Linking strategy and tactics requires thought to achieve. Using abstractions is a valid way for someone to be introduced to a requirement, be assisted to understand the requirement and to support their in-sights in meeting it. The Operational is no different. War and its strains are hugely complex and attempt-ing to understand these strains requires some sort of abstraction and simplification. Over-simplified ab-stractions pose a risk but that does not mean attempting to create these abstractions is invalid. Nathan Toronto's article[ii] points towards the chasm we are seeking to bridge: a time and space challenge that if ignored risks pointless tactical violence and death, ineffectual strategic desires and direction, or both. The Operational has to be seen as a good thing at least to some degree, even to those who wish to see it debunked. It is an honest attempt to address a challenge that has existed since the Napoleonic Wars where armies became too large to be within the sight and personal direction of the overall combatant commander.

Where might we go?

We might consider dropping 'operational' as a label. It is now a loaded term and to some it is poison-ous; to others it is yet another use of an over-employed word. Hopefully it can be agreed that there are battles and engagements, there are campaigns and there are wars. Might we just call the effort to link strategy and tactics 'campaigning'? These campaigns are sub-sets of a wider conflict probably differen-tiated by separations in time, space, context and goals. The Operational is like all ideas; we cannot de-lete or un-think it, indeed it has shaped modern military command. Whatever your view, the focus should be on ensuring we gain insight from it, regardless of whether it continues to major in military thinking or whether it becomes an overused idea past its period of immediate use.

It should also be recognized that The Operational has grown well beyond its original logic and form. Delineation between the abstraction and the raft of other operational terms and procedures is needed. As Kizeley offers, using the term Operational Art with, in my opinion, its connotation that it is some new form of command and control paradigm, may be unhelpful.[iii]

Most importantly, the rigid application of a concept – that oft-repeated military passion – is not useful. Linking strategy and tactics is needed, and how someone arrives at an understanding of it matters. Armed forces should recognize that abstractions are tools, not answers. If that tool to link strategy and tactics is 'The Operational' or 'campaigning' so be it. If it is some other abstraction or method, that is just as valid.

Finally, I am struck by the perceived need of many to offer firm prescriptions. My view is that this de-sire is part of the problem and we now have sides busily entrenching themselves around a number of conclusions without a desire to simply think about the issue - linking strategy and tactics. We are reach-ing for the answers without due consideration of the problem. For example, it may be that The Opera-tional is simply what the senior HQ in theatre does that others with a purely tactical role do not.[iv] This seems to be sensible and resonates with some recent experience. However, we are again reaching for a real-life response, rather than considering what we may want that link to achieve or do. *Someone, somewhere, somehow* needs to link strategy and tactics. The primary question I think that needs to be resolved is not the form but what functions we want that linkage to carry out? This is a big question and beyond the scope of this article. However, this should be a priority for discussion as we need to avoid the lack of strategic success the West has seen in recent campaigns, however that shortfall may have come about.

Being comfortable with the imperfect and amorphous

We need abstractions to make sense of the world. The Operational is but one abstraction. It will proba-bly always be controversial. This is because identifying what happens (if anything) between soldiers on the ground and our home capitals is always likely to be amorphous and ever-changing. Rigidly apply-ing such an abstraction as the answer is a harmful approach; rigidly rejecting it is probably equally as harmful. That means that this abstraction is as valid or as dangerous as any other. We may wish to spend less time worrying about abstractions and more about how we develop, teach and use them. Unfortu-nately rigid approaches to viewing abstractions seem to be favoured.

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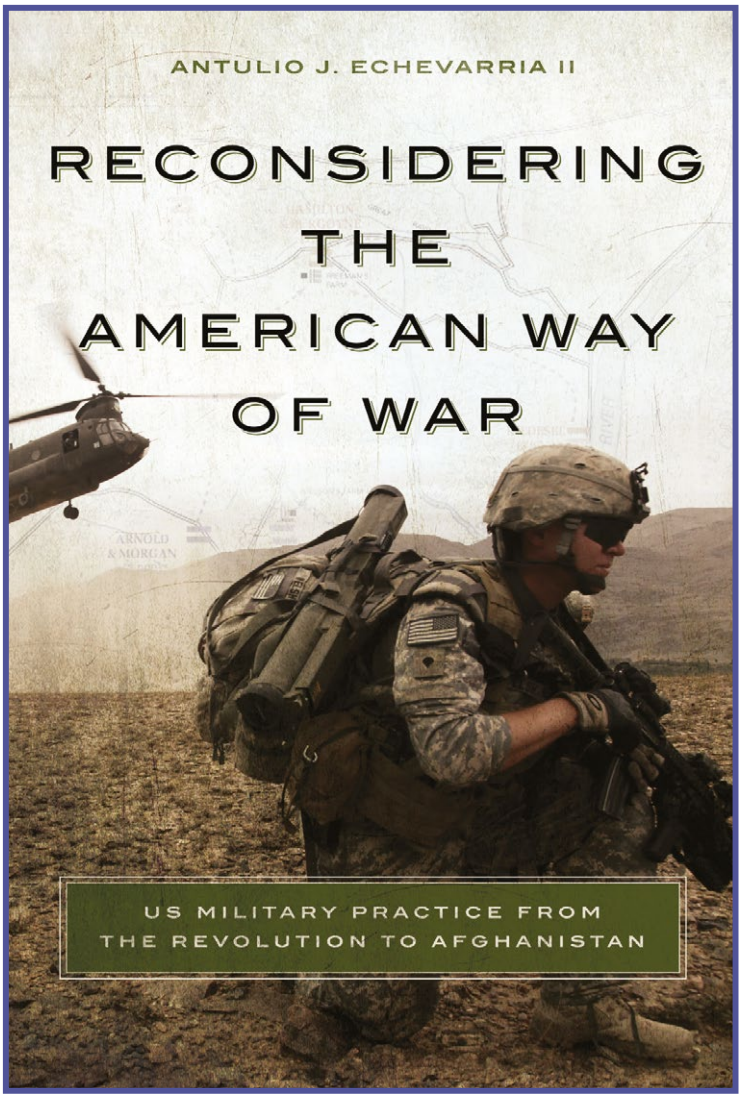

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International Law and The Counterinsurgent's Nightmare: A Sri Lankan Case Study

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Nilanthan Niruthan

In his annual report submitted at the 28th UNHRC session in Geneva, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Sri Lankan government[i] to ensure "failures of the past" were not repeated and that a foundation for reconciliation was laid. This comes in the context of successive UNHRC resolutions adopted in 2012, 2013 and 2014 demanding that an independent investigation be held on allegations of human rights violations by the Sri Lankan army in the civil war against the LTTE.

While international legal interest in Sri Lanka's military campaign comes with tremendous potential for good, it does expose worrying problems for counterinsurgency practitioners and theorists around the world. International humanitarian law is appropriately robust to deal with conventional warfare, but turns into a counterinsurgent's nightmare in modern asymmetric conflicts, as it places obligations which render the State utterly impotent in the face of a brutal adversary and encourages insurgents to blur the distinction between civilians and combatants.

The Sri Lankan conflict is a useful case study to illuminate this and will be particularly pertinent to democratic states involved in counterterrorism operations, like India, Israel and the United States. After all, the LTTE was a highly sophisticated insurgent and its methods are a textbook example of what is now referred to as "Hybrid Warfare", which we see gaining traction all over the world. It possessed an army, a navy and an air force, enabling it to resort to unconventional and conventional warfare as it pleased, forcing civilians to serve as shields and readily disguising its members as non-combatants in order to gain a tactical advantage.

Impunity for Non-State Actors

There is no established system that restrains the use of force by non-state actors. While the LTTE was free to use targeted killings, suicide bombers, human shields, torture, child soldiers and anti-personnel mines to achieve their tactical objectives without the threat of legal prosecution, the Sri Lankan army could not adopt a cavalier attitude towards the obligations placed upon it by international law. As nations like India and the USA also consistently find in their military campaigns, the tools at the State's disposal are limited, often devastatingly so, in comparison to those of the insurgent.

It should perhaps not come as a surprise to anyone that insurgent groups are more or less immune to legal action, since a large bulk of humanitarian law (like the Hague and Geneva conventions) was envisioned with State vs State conflicts in mind. There are no legal mechanisms capable of preventing groups like the LTTE or ISIS from breaking the law on the battlefield or of holding them accountable once the damage is done. While there might be restrictions in theory, there are no arrangements in place to enforce them. One could argue that this is untrue and that non-state actors have been prosecuted in the International Criminal Court, but even a cursory look at the scope and effectiveness of those prosecutions would reveal how inadequate that legal regime is.

Consider the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Though the Convention completely bans the use of anti-personnel mines, employing them (along with even cruder booby traps) was a huge part of the LTTE's combat style, eventually resulting not only in the maiming of Sri Lankan soldiers but hundreds of civilians as well. There was no procedure available to anybody to hold the LTTE legally accountable for violating the ban. Even after they were defeated, the de-mining process took years, hurting post-war resettlement plans.

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Another factor contributing to this could also be the misconception among many that the gratuitous use of force weakens the cause of the insurgent, as it alienates the local population. This might be true if one was to accept the effectiveness of the "hearts and minds" approach. However, in large swathes of the world, especially in guerrilla conflicts where the local population is far weaker than the insurgent financially and politically, this does not seem to be the case. The LTTE was utterly relentless in its brutality and rarely paid a price for it, since the civilian population under its control was totally incapable of resistance. Some emphasize the need to act humanely so that neutral parties might switch over to or remain on the counterinsurgent's side. The truth however, is that such parties are usually negligible in number. In asymmetric warfare across the world, the will of rural civilians unfortunately makes almost no difference to the outcome of armed engagements.

There is an inherent problem that exists with non-state groups in this regard. Since they inevitably rely on terrorism as a prominent tool in their arsenal, a rejection of concepts like the rules of war is part of their very nature. It is futile to expect them to take heed of legal obligations listed in Treaties and Conventions they are not even a party to. The innumerable bomb blasts orchestrated by the LTTE through the decades, for instance, were a clear violation of humanitarian law, but any legal considerations were dismissed by the organization's propagandists and sympathizers as irrelevant in a struggle for freedom of this kind. The army on the other hand could never justify its actions purely in terms of tactical advantage, since the State is expected to behave better.

The Counterinsurgent's Nightmare

While insurgents can get away with nearly every illegality, States are subjected to restrictions that are often crippling. For a soldier on the battlefield today, there are two legal principles that he or she must always have in mind while using force – Distinction and Proportionality. In theory, both principles lay down requirements that mandate the protection of civilians, but in practice they give non-state armed groups more incentive than ever before to use civilians as pawns in asymmetric warfare. There is a third principle – Military Necessity – which is the go-to principle for practitioners to justify their actions. As the element of necessity is determined solely by those who exercise force themselves, it is often criticized for being arbitrary and subjective, and will not be discussed here. Distinction and Proportionality are explicitly stated in the Geneva Conventions, and that is where the focus ought to be.

Distinction requires belligerents in a conflict to always classify civilians and combatants as two separate entities, the idea being that while combatants can be considered legitimate targets, civilians cannot. The principle is enshrined in Article 48 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which declares that *'…the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives.'*

While Additional Protocol I applies only to international armed conflicts, Distinction is also considered a part of customary law, which means that it would apply to non-international armed conflicts as well. Here is the problem. In traditional warfare where two uniform-wearing armies gather on a battlefield to attack each other, it is understandable for the law to demand that civilians not be targeted. In the irregular wars of today however, it is an impossible task, since combat takes place not on some open field between the two States, but in cities, towns and villages where anyone could be a combatant.

In the infamous April 2006 attack on Sri Lanka's then army commander, General Sarath Fonseka, the suicide bomber sent after him was disguised as a pregnant woman. The LTTE often blended into the general public this way, orchestrating more than 315 such attacks - more than Hamas and Hezbollah combined.[ii] During any military engagement against the LTTE, it was consistently unviable to abide by the Distinction principle, since they had mastered the use of disguise.

When the Indian Peacekeeping Forces fought the separatists, they noted that armed cadres were always accompanied by an equal number of unarmed ones, usually to provide ammunition or carry their slain comrades away. If they could not carry a corpse away, they would clothe it in a 'lungi' (a traditional Sri Lankan sarong) in order to perpetrate the notion that it was a civilian who had died. [iii] In the final offensive by the Sri Lankan army in 2009, the LTTE's ability to blur the lines took on horrifying proportions. They used child soldiers wearing civilian clothes to charge in and assault their way through the army's defenses, creating fatal moments of hesitation that led to the deaths of several Sri Lankan soldiers.[iv]

This is not a problem unique to the Sri Lankan context, though it is a prominent example of it. Distinction was formulated with good intentions, but for a style of warfare that is simply not prominent today. As conflicts become increasingly urban and against groups that rely on the element of surprise to seize the initiative, it has the opposite effect of granting the insurgent a decisive advantage.

The same could be said of the Proportionality principle as well, which is also considered part of customary law. It is codified in both Article 8(2)(b)(iv) of the ICC statute and Article 51(5)(b) of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which prohibits any *'attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.'*

This too, while clearly intended to outlaw the gratuitous use of force in battle, becomes impossible to abide by when the adversary is adept at using human shields and attacking from the midst of civilian areas. For several years, a favored tactic by the LTTE was to gather specially trained members in a village, assemble their artillery and fire at army bases nearby. By the time the army could respond with any firepower, the insurgents would have escaped back into the jungles. In essence, this continuously forced the army to retaliate in defense, damaging the villages instead. This would be considered a breach of Proportionality, despite being deliberately orchestrated by the insurgents. As Israel too found out with the Goldstone report, the international community is reluctant to take heed of these imperatives while assessing a counterinsurgent's decision to open fire on civilian areas.

More worrying is the response to the final offensive in 2009, which is the root of most allegations that throw around words like "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing". The Sri Lankan army was faced with a cruel choice due to the LTTE's forcible use of tens of thousands (some estimates put the number of trapped civilians at over 200,000) of non-combatants[v] as human shields. The choice was between endangering the lives of the civilians boxed in with the LTTE or allowing the insurgents, including their notorious leader Velupillai Prabakaran, to escape by blending in, thus negating all the sacrifice and bloodshed incurred so far.

As a counterinsurgent, the Sri Lankan state took a military decision to prioritize the annihilation of the rebels in order to end the war and relieve the entire country from an insurgency that had gripped it in fear for over three decades. Neutral experts representing neither the Sri Lankan army nor international human rights lobbies, like Indian security analysts Nithin Gokhale and Narayan Swamy, have not observed any deliberate genocidal motive behind the decision. Yet, like Israel, the ire of the international community is directed squarely at the State, with allegations of mass murder from many quarters. The UNHRC resolutions are by themselves a reflection of what is perhaps an unintentional but nonetheless demonstrable bias favoring non-state actors.

From a purely security related perspective, this raises important questions. If it is indeed wrong for counterinsurgents to breach Proportionality even while human shields are used, does this not give insurgents in all future conflicts a brutal but secure tactical option? Does this not actively incentivize non-state armed groups all over the world to adopt this tactic? What are States to do, other than capitulate, when human shields are used?

Conclusion

Thus, the issue might not be how insurgents can be held accountable, since a rejection of conventional laws is an inborn trait in them, but how law-abiding States can be given the freedom to cope with this imbalance. It is clear that something needs to change, for the rules meant to protect civilians are steadily becoming their worst enemy.

A radical solution would be for democratic states to form an alliance of sorts to officially recognize that the structure of humanitarian law today is grossly out of touch with reality. There needs to be a strong legal consensus built up by countries that currently or potentially face security challenges similar to Sri Lanka. If Distinction and Proportionality continue to paralyze counterinsurgents in this manner, the only possible outcome is that countries get disillusioned with the international legal system altogether, eroding even the credibility of appropriate laws in armed conflicts. Laws that cannot regulate the actions of both parties to a conflict cannot be considered legitimate; unless they allow the side whose actions they restrain a reasonable margin of freedom.

This could be criticized as a counterproductive suggestion, as it is only the democratic states of the world that can be relied upon to enforce international standards of conduct. But the opposite is then true as well – that since the democracies are the only parties who agree to limit their military operations in the interest of humanitarianism, it is all the more vital that they not be penalized by outdated laws for their commitment to avoid gratuitous harm.

Another suggestion is that a new principle be introduced in international law – the "Lesser Evil" test.[vi] What this concept envisions is simple – that if a State has to exercise the use of force in order to spare civilians even greater misery in the future, or to defend a large number of non-combatants, or any other purpose which can be objectively assessed as being part of the greater good, it must be allowed the freedom to do so, even if this means breaching the other rules of war. This would free up democratic States whose soldiers intend to pursue the laws of war wherever possible, without having to compromise their safety in the face of insurgents who use civilians for leverage.

Whatever the situation and the acceptable solutions may be, something has to change in order to defeat outfits like ISIS, the Naxalites, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba, which seriously undermine either global or regional security. As long as the Sri Lankan or Israeli style of counterinsurgency is rejected by the international community, there is little chance of any success. It is about time that more practitioners and academics started highlighting this problem. Until then, international humanitarian law shall remain the counterinsurgent's nightmare.

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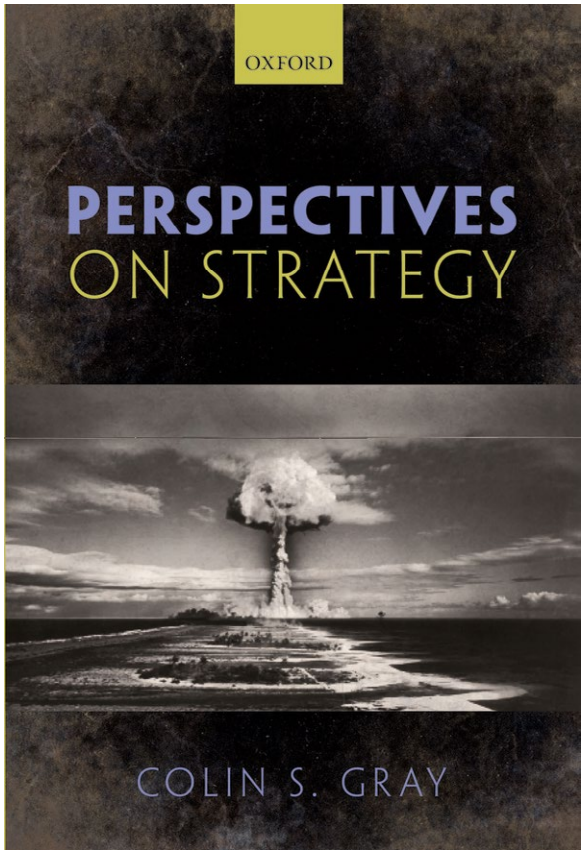

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The Green Mountain Boys: Mentoring an Army from the Ground Up! The British Army & Afghan National Army (ANA) Experience 2006-15

Gerry Long

"Courage is a good thing; another ingredient, obedience, is also absolutely necessary for your soldiers"[i]

"You say to your soldier, 'Do this' and he does it. But I am obliged to say, 'This is why you ought to do this' and then he does it"[ii]

Even if a mountain is high, there is a path to the top[iii]

Wars are inherently dramatic events, events that bring out the best and worst in human nature. The ongoing Afghan War is no different and it has had a profound effect on the DNA of the Afghan National Army (ANA). The ANA is expected to be the instrument of choice for dealing with the ongoing security situation, but like many armies before, it is an imperfect instrument. There has been a lot of money, let alone blood sweat and tears spent on the ANA, but even its most ardent supporters, cannot ignore vast disparity in weapons, equipment, training and professionalism between NATO forces and the ANA. Since the Afghan state is involved in making war it has been forced by circumstances to make an army while in contact, not the most advantageous position to be in. Similar contexts that come to mind are Cromwell's '*New Model Army*' and the Baron von Steuben's efforts with the *Continental Army*. Much of the ANA capability still rests in the realms of the paper it has been written on (or Excel spreadsheet) and has the depth in capability that reflects this.

Before NATO and especially the British Army get too pumped up by its own capability and importance, it should be acknowledged that the British Army has had over three hundred years of military development. The British Army has its faults; it was not that long ago that the British Army's officers were drawn from the landed gentry and nobility and bought their commissions. Promotion was either bought or obtained by political connections. For all that, the British officers were by and large a competent lot, dedicated to their profession, and the men they led. The rank and file until the twentieth century was confined to the foolish, debtors, criminals pardoned on the condition that they enlist, and drunks. It would seem that the British Army with such a makeup would lack the elements to build a reliable force in combat; but its record in war is to the contrary. The British soldier throughout the years has unquestionably displayed qualities of hardihood, courage, persistence, and military effectiveness that did honor to the nation it served. The ANA, perhaps coming largely from better demographics, is no different. In short it has taken the British Army a long time to get to its current standing as one of the leading training organizations in NATO and to expect the ANA to get to the same level overnight while in contact is perhaps over ambitious. Cultural context and understanding is required.

Mission Tactics

There is no reason to doubt the ANA courage, it is the application of that courage so it can be effective that is the role of the NATO mentoring mission. The mentoring of the ANA does not so much require innovation or imagination but imperturbable patience, with an understanding of the conservative culture. The ANA needs

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to be mentored as much in the realism of administration, and organizations as it does in being a reflection of its warrior tribal make-up. The ANA is no different from any army of the twenty-first century in demographics; it is predominantly made up of young men in their late teens and early twenties, usually without families of their own, who are called on to do most of the fighting. With an army being formed in contact, the added friction is the command structure and intuitional infrastructure is being recruited at the same time as the rank and file. Experience is a valuable and variable commodity requiring constant refinement and validation.

Historically the Afghan tribesman, when he came together for war made a reluctant convert to what the British Army understands as how modern warfare should be conducted. The tribesman did not lend himself to the discipline and organization of a modern army. The Afghan, if he obeyed anyone, obeyed his tribal leader, where all men were pretty much equal. He had no concept of a chain of command; he had no understanding of the role of the noncommissioned officer. The reflexive obedience to an order that is pounded into the infantryman in training of every army in the Western World was all but missing. Since his primary loyalty was to the tribe, clan and family, (in that order), even at times of conflict the tribesman came and went as he pleased. If a man felt the need to go home and tend to his goats, he would leave and perhaps send back a son or a brother in his place. It was not, in brief, an army that could stand its ground in fixed positions, and due to being largely illiterate, it could not issue and receive orders and action a mission. It was not an army a British Officer understood or trusted.

Into this ill-disciplined mix, is the added fact that Afghanistan lacked a dedicated officer caste such as in the case of Germany (Prussian, Junker-class) or England (drawn originally from its landed gentry or during the height of the Empire from its public school output). Being landlocked and unable to feed, or water large military formations, with a notorious weak central government throughout its history, Afghanistan was ill-suited to the creation and maintaining of a large European-style army. Yet, since the mid-nineteenth century this has not stopped many from trying. The armed forces of Afghanistan have been the victims of excessive tinkering from a host of well-meaning benefactors, if only for their own long term interests. With each *'New Model Army'* that rises and falls on the ruins of its predecessor, successive foreign advisors and military experts could do little more than look on in disbelief, as their respective creations; despite vast expense and diligent supervision, proved to be a house of cards.

The ANAOA looks to adopt some form of institutionalize training to develop mission command across the Academy. Mission Command being a cultural philosophy, it will always struggle against the cultural norm of the ANA to stay firm and await confirmation of orders. Its military professionalism is still in its infancy. This however should not be in itself a block to the instruction or education of the officer cadet. Instead, integrating of mission command into all education and training from the very beginning of basic training would have some distinct advantages, not only for the cadet but also the mentorship of the instructional staff. Even more importantly the goal should be to develop an understanding of the philosophy of mission command across the ANA guided by the graduates of the ANAOA, to attain this culture of trust. Knowledge of this skill set will allow officer cadets to employ mission command and to overcome cultural dynamics and social convention which shies away from the adoption of this style of command.

Once in the Field Army our officer cadet will of course find themselves responsible for subordinates with only the most basic level of training, such that they possess minimal capacity and capability for action beyond the most prescribed. But the level of training of soldiers should not be a hindrance to leadership development. It does however place great emphasis on the training of officer cadets and on the ability of instructors at ANAOA to recognize the delicate balance, when giving their charges scope for initiative, between the benefits to be gained from the greater responsibilities against making mistakes that might undermine the mission commanders intent, but it's better to make those mistakes in training than in the FUP.

One flower does not make it springtime[iv]

The ANA enters the fray as a symbol of the growing influence of the Afghan government, the ANA is the first national institution to come into being since the communist regime with credibility. The Afghan soldier goes through six months training; the officers are trained through three routes via NATO sponsored military academies[v]. The ethnic makeup of the ANA reflects those groups who historically oppose the Taliban; Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and Eastern Pashtuns fill the ranks making the Kandaks reliable in combat. The senior leadership is dominated by former members of the old communist era officer corps, and their reaction to contact often reflects this. This however does not distract from the deeply held conviction in the fight and the regard for the Afghan people.

The leadership of an infantry platoon is the most demanding and dangerous job in the ANA, as it is in any army, yet the infantry platoon is often commanded by the most inexperienced and least qualified man in that army. This is the ANA greatest challenge to deliver the future commander ready to command. The ANA current focus for that command is counterinsurgency warfare and there is a paradox here: on the one hand, recent history teaches us that the ANA is going to get dragged into an ongoing messy irregular conflict, and that conflict will increasingly be complex. On the other hand, when building an army from scratch, mentors/advisers prefer to develop a more conventional focus when training. So a mentor must start thinking about squaring that circle. To add to the Clausewitzian friction, the mentee, due to his cultural differences from the mentor can often seem to lack a sense of urgency. Endless time is spent on meetings, with compliments, ceremonies, politeness and the obligatory refreshments. The art of persuasion and patience are not only advisory, but a necessity. To lead a platoon into war is the rite of passage that focuses all minds. Small unit combat leadership remains the prevailing romance to which all new lieutenants aspire to and old generals cling.[vi]

"Your Army has existed for a century, mine for but a day" [vii]

As Colonel David Hackworth's observed, to deliver combat power, you do not have to be dependent on the sophisticated machinery of modern warfare. The helicopter is viewed not as some magic panacea for winning the war, but as a vehicle to move men into battle. Ground radar, technical intelligence devices and countless other mechanical gimmicks which had been developed to bring a quick and easy solution to war are but only a means to an end. They are not considered an end in themselves. At the end of the day battles are only won by well trained, dedicated, highly motivated men who are expertly led.[viii] The soldiers' training at the end of the day should equip them for future employment to lead men on operations; it is not merely meant to train them to man equipment.

The biggest problem for the ANA currently is the levels of attrition within its ranks. The ANA attrition to western eyes seems beyond belief but much of that attrition comes down to poor administration

rather than direct contact with the enemy. That is not to belittle the effects of that attrition on the army; the losses are greater than the current system can bear. As always the attrition affects the brightest and the best, disproportionately the bravest are always the first to fall in conflict. The ANA can ill afford to lose so many low level commanders when it cost so much and took so much time to recruit and train. The ANA have also inherited a long war which are never good for armies, a struggle that goes against the teaching of modern western academies which it hopes to replicate. The Taliban's jihad is not so much an insurgency as a prolonged siege that has metamorphosed into a war of attrition that requires stamina on the part of the ANA, something that perhaps cannot be mentored.

"Keep your Powder dry and trust in God" [ix]

The very experience which frames the ANA and its mentor's view of the army is perhaps not the clearest lens with which to view the future. Tactical decisions taken in response to an imminent threat seldom make the bases for long-term strategic planning. The ANA mentee will often have more questions than answers. This is where the mentor must not provide the compete answer, but provide the conditions for successful deliberation by the mentee to find that answer.

As the ANA looks to finding its own way in the future perhaps they could look to another Army that grew out of war and militia:

> "Your exertions in the cause of freedom, guided by wisdom and animated by zeal and courage, have gained you the love and confidence of your grateful countrymen; and they look to you, who are experienced veterans, and trust that you will still be the guardians of [the Nation]. More human glory and happiness may depend upon your exertions than ever yet depended upon any sons of men. *He that is a soldier in defense of such a cause, needs not title; his post is a post of honor, and although not an emperor, yet he shall wear a crown—of glory—and blessed will be his memory!"* [x]

What we await is the soldier that transcends his military appointment and moves seamlessly into the realms of nation building. Afghanistan awaits its George Washington or Ataturk its Cincinnatus the soldier with vision who lays aside his military persona for the good of the state to create a stable political environment for security and nationhood to take hold. If mentoring the ANA resulted in that, then that would be a worthy legacy for all the blood, sweat and treasure spent in the last fifteen years.

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References

[i] Adjt Gen Edward Harvey 1775

[ii] Baron von Steuben, observing the difference between the French and American Soldier

[iii] Pashto proverb

[iv] Pashto proverb

[v] The Afghan National Army Officer Academy (Sandhurst in the Sand) sponsored by the UK, The National Military Academy (a West Point model) sponsored by the US & Turkey, & Officer Candidate School, (US, OTC model) which is a joint NATO/ANA project.

[vi] Samet D. Elizabeth, (2014) No Man's Land, Farrar, New York, p9

[vii] Baron von Steuben

[viii] Hackworth, David, H. (1970) Guerrilla Battalion, http://www.hackworth.com/guerrilla.html

[ix] Oliver Cromwell.

[x] George Washington's speech to Connecticut Troops before their enlistment ran out during the Siege of Boston in 1775. It is apt in connection with the Army and its relationship between the soldier and the state in time of war.

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