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Infinity Journal

The Post-Operational Level Age of War

SPECIAL EDITION

Featuring Articles By

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Infinity Journal

Preface

The three articles in this special edition are a result of an intellectual and practical journey of more than three years. It was initiated as a result of the ambitious will to confront western confusion over the issue of how to currently plan and conduct military operations.

This is not a minor or simple issue but rather a very deep and complex one. The depth of the problem is illustrated by two decades of constant debate on ways to define the problem and the response. The complexity is the product of the notion that current military operations allegedly contradict western values, and nowadays military force structures and decision making processes.

These articles do not just intend to define the problem but to analyze its roots and present a solution that take into consideration the constraints and obstacles inherent to transformation.

In the first article, we wish to identify the concepts that are the main obstacles for the much needed critical analysis and paradigmatic shift in military doctrine. The essence of this article is the refutation of the concepts which are hindering this development.

In the second article, we try to define the concepts of operations that have been implemented in practice. Our basic approach is that current weapons are suitable enough to confront the challenge, and that real adaptation is needed in the approach to operations. The essence of transformation is a revised concept which realizes both a short term and long term vision.

In the third article, we define a simple point of departure for a transformative work plan that will bring the much needed response. This is crucial in order to emphasize that the implementation of our overall approach is possible and practical, and as theoreticians and practitioners we can back it.

We hope this Infinity Journal special edition will give a fresh perspective to a crucial debate.

We dedicate this publication to the memory of our beloved friend IDF Brigadier General Giora Segal, a military thinker and practitioner, and our partner in the post operational age journey. May his soul rest in peace.

Israel Defense Force Brigadier General, Yacov Bengo
June 2016

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In the present environment and with the military problems it currently faces, conceptualizing of the Operational Level as a central component in methods of command, the structure of headquarters and processes of operational planning, creates more difficulties and failures than it does advantages. It may actually be said to have become an impediment to the process required. The best response to the current military challenges is direct contact between the political, the strategic and the tactical.

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Through three concepts: 'Operational Focus Approach', 'Combat Worth' And 'Strategic Value' the authors explain what is needed to be done in order to maximize the utility of force in contemporary military operations. This article is Part Two of an analysis of the post-operational level age.

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To achieve the optimal connection between policy, strategy and tactics (described in part 1) through an operational focus approach that connects the strategic value to the combat worth (described in part 2), a new kind of situational assessment is required. The staffs, from brigade to General Staff level, should include two separate groups: a Planning Group and a C2 Group. We believe the uncertainty hovering over the utility of military force in achieving the national goals makes this new structure crucial for the effective application of that force.

Note: all articles in this special edition have been published in past issues of Infinity Journal. No aspect of the articles has been altered, including author biographies. In some instances, author biographies may have changed since the publication of the original articles.

Introducing "The Post-Operational Level Age of War"

Given that humans will continue to fight in armed conflicts for the foreseeable future, it is critical that we clarify the role of military operations in international relations. In our view, without a comprehensive approach that enables critical thinking about the phenomenon of war and the effective ways of building forces and using them, no military force will succeed in meeting the challenges of the early 21st century.

In this Infinity Journal special edition, we attempt to explain our opinion that the Operational Level is redundant in response to current military challenges. By properly defining the problem and detailing the principles we can create the optimal connection, in both planning and action, between strategy and tactics.

The politician and the tactician operate directly within the real world. The politician is involved in the dialogue with other international leaders, sometimes also those of the enemy, and with the public. The tactician meets the enemy on the battlefield. Strategic headquarters' deal mostly with interpretations of policy and tactical level engagements with the real world. Based on that, they attempt to conceptualize the situation, the problem and possible solutions.

Therefore, there is a need to return to a three-level hierarchy of thinking and conceptualization – policy, strategy, and tactics. These three levels of thinking exist at all levels of the command structure – from the President or Prime Minister who thinks mostly about policy, but also considers strategy and tactics, down to the junior commander who focuses on the tactics of actual combat but also considers the political and strategic ramifications of the situation he is facing.

The senior level of the military command structure – between the Chief of Staff and the Division Commander – is where significant friction between considerations of policy, principles of strategy, and implementation of tactics takes place. Whilst this friction occurs only in the mind of the commander, it is a product of brainstorming between experts of policy, strategy, and tactics. In this process, the participants create simple insights (not simplistic or shallow) of the complex environment through learning, analysis, and conceptual design.

In order to help that process, we define an approach of focusing operations on strategic value. Focusing is a cognitive process that facilitates understanding between people. The focus of an operation is a commander's decision. This decision is the product of a situational assessment. The process for conducting that assessment must assist in producing focus.

The Focus of Operations Approach (hereinafter – Operational Focus Approach) and Value Focused Action is based on two supporting concepts:

a. 'Combat Worth' of a particular aerial, naval, or ground force mass is its overall military capability to achieve its operational missions. Thus for example, the combat worth of an aerial ground attack force is the number of targets it can attack within a specific time-frame

b. 'Strategic value' of using military force is dependent on the political benefit accrued from this use: if the force achieves the goals set for it by the statesman then the strategic value was high. The strategic value, therefore, is determined by the goals set by the statesman for the conflict.

Understanding the concepts of Combat Worth and Strategic Value enables us to employ them while planning and conducting military campaigns. Achieving the sought after strategic objective requires directing a mass of high combat worth towards objectives assessed to be of high strategic value. This means that actions of high strategic value will be defined as opportunities, whereas actions that have low or negative strategic value will be defined as threats. The chosen course of action will be that which the commander assesses will have the greatest strategic value. Actions without a strategic benefit will not be discussed.

The traditional methods of the military situational assessment should be maintained in spite of the need to change some of the emphasis to achieve the required focus.

These changes are based on structuring two separate groups in the staffs from brigade to General Staff level. A Planning Group will conduct general situational assessments and define the principles of the campaign plan, guiding the discussion between the commander and his sub-commanders; and a Command & Control (C2) Group will conduct the processes of command and control and monitor the implementation of the plan. These two groups must combine expertise on the multiplicity of factors influencing the operational focus of a military force, which is influenced by a collection of inter-service, inter-agency and, in some cases, international, experts.

Situational awareness and explicit framing of the problem create the understanding and common language needed between the commander and his group of experts and between the commander and his sub-commanders. The discourse with his sub-commanders leads the commander to define the stratagem of the operational efforts he intends to conduct based on high combat worth and strategic value.

Headquarters Structure seems to be the best starting point for the required transformation. The operational core of these staffs must be split clearly between the planning group and the C2 group. It will require the appropriate military and civilian joint communication networks to be created.

The serious doubt raised on the effectiveness of the military force in achieving national goals requires an in-depth analysis by decision-makers and commanders. We think that the proposed post operational level age change in concept, implementation methods, and structures is necessary, not for the tactical effectiveness of the military force, but rather to maintain the political and strategic relevance of the military organization, without which it has no reason to exist.

Israel Defense Force Colonel (Res), Shay Shabtai
June 2016

The Post Operational Level Age: How to Properly Maintain the Interface between Policy, Strategy, and Tactics in Current Military Challenges

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Yacov Bengo is a Brigadier General and currently a Division Commander. He has an MA in Political Science and 25 years of experience in force build-up and operations in the tactical level and within the General Staff. His current research deals with the utility of military force in the evolving environment of operations and therefore the adequate principals of force build-up.

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Introduction

In this article we attempt to explain our opinion that the Operational Level is redundant in the response to current military challenges. By properly defining the problem and detailing the principles we can create the optimal connection in planning and action between strategy and tactics. We will base our concept on presenting the direct link between strategy and tactics, as described by Clausewitz, introducing the background for the development of the Operational Level in the 20th century and analyzing the new approaches and changes of recent years.

Clausewitz – Policy, Strategy, Tactics

Carl von Clausewitz began writing his book 'On War' in 1819 and by 1827 he had written six full volumes and the drafts for two more.[i] During this time his theory evolved. He gradually concluded that war was not only an absolute use of force to annihilate the enemy but also that there were wars for limited objectives.

This conclusion brought him to understand that war is merely the continuation of policy with other means. He therefore decided that he had to rewrite the six completed volumes. On July 1827 he noted that there was only one chapter in the book that he considered complete and that this chapter would point out the direction he wished to follow.[ii]

His return to active service, until his sudden death from cholera on November 16th 1831, and his focus on historical study of limited wars in order to properly establish his theory, stopped the process of rewriting. The posthumously published version of his work by his wife, therefore, contains a mix of older and newer ideas – some of them conflicting. This has led to mounds of interpretations that do not necessarily convey his ideas accurately.

war is not an independent act. It has a wider political and social context

The first chapter, which expresses his advanced thinking, creates the link between policy and strategy. He defines war as "an act of violence the purpose of which is to force the rival to do our will". It follows that war would bring both sides to escalate their actions to the most extreme levels of violence to defeat the enemy. But war is not an independent act. It has a wider political and social context and therefore rivals do not exert maximum force only a sufficient one. Because war is plagued with uncertainty and luck and because defense is inherently stronger than offense, it is important that the statesman and the supreme military commander define accurately the objectives of the war they are initiating and that they adjust the objectives as the war proceeds.

So, "war is not only an act of policy, it is a political tool, a continuation of political dialogue conducted by other means… the political objective is the goal, war is the means of achieving it and means are never analyzed separately

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from their objectives". It connects the emotions of the public (anger, hostility); risk and probability management of the military commander and it's being a tool of the decision-maker. The object is to develop a theory that connects these three components.[iii]

Clausewitz left us the insight that war is a tool of policy.

Clausewitz left us the insight that war is a tool of policy. Further in the book, in the volumes not yet adapted to this new insight, he divides the conduct of war into two levels – strategy and tactics.

Strategy he defined as

> "the exploitation of engagements for achieving the goals of the war. The strategist must define the objective for the operational side of the war – an objective that fits the political purpose of the war… He will design a war plan with the objective defining the series of actions intended to achieve it. He will in fact design the individual campaigns and within this framework decide on the individual engagements".

Clausewitz adds that,

> "since most of these plans will be based on assumptions that may likely be proven wrong, it is not possible to give detailed plans in advance and this requires the strategist to be personally involved in the campaign. Detailed commands will be given only in specific places and contexts, in a manner that enables amending the general plans as required by the evolving situation".

He noted that this was not the accepted approach – "it was customary to decide on strategy in the capital-city rather than in the field".[iv] Strategy, according to Clausewitz, is the art and science of the supreme commander as he conducts the war.

"The engagement is tactical" – "the means are the trained combat forces, and the objective is victory".[v] For Clausewitz, tactics are the actual act of fighting. There are distinct links between strategy and tactics – "changes in the tactical characteristics will immediately impact on strategy".[vi]

Thus, Clausewitz identified three levels – the political level which determines the objectives of the war; the strategic level which plans and manages the war to suit the policy; and the tactical level which is expressed in the combat itself and executes the strategy and which, therefore, also influences it.

Background to the Evolution of Operational Art

In his ground-breaking book, 'In Pursuit of Military Excellence – The Evolution of Operational Theory', Shimon Naveh characterizes the causes of the evolution of Operational Art in the Soviet military in the 1930s and 1940s and in the American military in the 1970s and 1980s. He begins by stating that

> "the dramatic growth of armies through the 19th century reached monstrous proportions towards the end of that period and caused a no less dramatic growth of the spatial and temporal dimensions of military operations. This quantitative change created a new problem in the conduct of wars – especially in the middle-ground between the two traditional levels of military planning".[vii]

The basic understanding is that the increased size of war in the industrial age necessitates the development of an intermediary level so that human cognition is able to encompass the phenomenon. According to Naveh, "the Operational Level is not an independent entity separate from the entire complex of the phenomenon of war. Quantitatively and qualitatively it is not different from the tactical level, and fundamentally it is not different from the strategic level".[viii]

In his historical analysis, Naveh quoted the Chief of Staff of the Red Army, Tukhachevsky, who wrote in 1926, that "in modern operations fighting is dispersed over a series of battles and consequently, the tactics are much more intricate than those of Napoleon".[ix]

a tension exists between the abstract strategic objectives of the war and the mechanical tactical implementation of combat

Thus a tension exists between the abstract strategic objectives of the war and the mechanical tactical implementation of combat. Unlike Clausewitz, who identified a continuum of logic between policy, strategy and tactics, reality is more complex and translating correctly from level to level has proven difficult. The Operational Level is supposed to facilitate the translation of complex strategic issues (annihilation, Blitzkrieg) into mechanistic tactical solutions – between the mechanical context of the random activity and the context of abstract thinking. Campaigns are planned in a hierarchical three-level structure:

a) Formulation of objectives and political restrictions – the strategies – by the supreme national authority.

b) Clarifying the Operational Concept and definition of the main campaign objectives – by the appropriate strategic-operational authority.

c) Creation of a battle plan – by the tactical command level[xi].

Analysis of the definitions of the three levels shows that in creating the Operational Level in order to solve the tension between the abstract thinking of the higher levels and the mechanical thinking of the lower levels, we could just as easily have used Clausewitz's three levels with some adjustments.

Based on his historical and conceptual analysis Naveh developed the thesis that Operational Art is uniquely connected to the General Systems Theory. Basing himself on the theory expounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Naveh characterizes this theory as follows: the system as a complex

of interactive elements; interaction between a large number of variables; three parameters – quantity, material and quality; the interaction is characterized as multi-layered and repeating itself; supreme and total control of the system's objective on its functioning; distinction between open and closed systems; and the afore-mentioned tension between the abstract cognitive generalities and the practical objectives and tasks given to the system's components.[xii]

Without elaborating General Systems Theory, it can be easily seen that the characteristics described by Naveh are very relevant for thinking about strategic issues and complex tactical issues as well. Naveh does not explain why this theory is relevant only for the new intermediary level and cannot exist on the other levels as well. Also, chronologically, the link between General Systems Theory and Operational Art was done at a late stage in the latter's development and cannot be regarded as one of the roots of that development.

Naveh elaborated a number of criteria, that in his opinion define the uniqueness of operational art – expression of the cognitive tension; creative maneuver; synergetic action; neutralizing rather than destroying the enemy system; articulation of the randomness; non-linear character; deliberate interaction between maneuver and attrition; independence of action within the boundaries of the mission; and linkage to a wide and universal theory.[xiii]

The historical analysis shows that Operational Art did indeed assist to create (sometimes only to emphasize) these fundamentals in military planning. They were especially prevalent in the conceptual contest that reached its height in the 1980s between the Soviet Deep Battle and the American Air-Land Battle in the context of war between two regular armies. It is probable that without the debate on the Operational Level these fundamentals would not have been assimilated into military doctrine. However, once they were integrated into military thinking – was there any more need for the "Operational Level inter-mediator"?

Naveh describes Operational Shock as the achievement of a fighting system[xiv] – in other words, the stripping of the rival system's ability to achieve its objectives. He defines the main characteristics of the concept as: unity of objective; striving to disrupt and dissolute the enemy system rather than to destroy it; action in two dimensions – the horizontal, frontal and linear, and the vertical, from the rear to the depth and non-linear; simultaneity of efforts; integration of efforts especially in regards to maneuver and fire; inversion of the enemy system by creating a concentration of critical mass behind its center of mass; deception and surprise as a central component in dealing with the enemy's center of gravity. Clearly this description is relevant the for the collision of industrial-age armies.

Thus, what are the roots of Operational Art? Based on Naveh's research the answer might be that it expresses the search for creative solutions to complex operations at the height of the industrial age – facing a widespread and elaborate challenge composed of large masses, technologies and rapidly expanding military capabilities. Against these was needed a giant leap in existing military doctrines, that were mistakenly named Clausewitzian, tied to linear actions, annihilation and a faulty connection between policy and military action.

New Concepts – Not Necessarily Operational Art

During the 1990s challenges of a different type escalated

During the 1990s, in the days after the end of the Cold War and the impressive performance of the Air-Land Battle in the first Gulf War, challenges of a different type escalated. First, the peace-making and humanitarian aid efforts, such as in former Yugoslavia and Somalia and after September 11 the takeover and stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Israel the expanding fighting against Hizbullah in Lebanon until the withdrawal in 2000 and immediately afterwards 'Ebb and Flow' against the Palestinians (the second intifada).

The frustration of the large advanced armies fighting ostensibly inferior opponents using guerrilla tactics aroused a wave of military thinking aimed at developing updated concepts for military operations that are not total wars. The process of adaptation included a redefining of the discourse between the strategic and the tactical that practically abandoned the medium of the Operational Level. We shall describe three of the new approaches to this discourse as developed by an Israeli, a Briton and an American.

Competition of Learning

In chronological order the first theoretician was IDF Reserves Colonel Shmuel Nir (Semo). Prior. Up until his untimely death in July 2003, Semo focused his thinking and writing on the conduct of Low Intensity Wars (called by the IDF – Limited Conflict).[xv] The foundation of his thinking was that because of its weakness, dearth of reserves and lack of ability to maneuver, the inferior side had little room for error. Therefore, its entire mode of operation is to seek out and attack only enemy weaknesses.

The strong side, in this case the IDF, must engage in a continuous effort to study the situation from all angles, so as to increasingly close ranks on the enemy's weaknesses and impede their ability to act, and over time gradually exhaust him and cause him to lose his will to fight. In Semo's view, Limited Conflict was a constant competition – which side could learn faster. The relevant concepts for military action were 'learning cycles', 'a culture of asking questions' and 'knowledge management'. The core of the military response to an enemy based on guerrilla tactics was to focus on constantly developing new knowledge, questioning existing knowledge and rapidly disseminating new insights in order to eliminate weaknesses.

The next theoretician is the British general Rupert Smith. Among his assignments was to command the UN forces in Bosnia – an experience that influenced him greatly. In 2005, he published a book – 'Utility of Force'. His main thesis was that the character of war had changed and that today it was being conducted among the people, rather than between

armies, and is therefore influenced by the opinions of the public and in turn influences those opinions.

To conduct war in this situation Smith proposes a number of principles.The first requirement is to change the method being used to analyze all political and military actions to enable a deeper and detailed understanding of the nature of the strategic result on the political, the military and the economic planes and the right context and means to achieve it. Better understanding the desired political result will lead the military planner to ask the right questions and to choose a relevant military objective that will properly describe the result of the military action.

Smith defines four types of relevant strategy – improving the situation, containing the situation, deterrence or the forcing of our political will on the enemy. Choosing one is the result of properly analyzing our will against the enemy's.

Another principle is the adherence to an action based on international law.

Another principle is the adherence to an action based on international law. This, because if we differ from our enemy by the fact that our political goal is according to international law, whereas he is attempting to subvert that law, then our tactical actions must also be legal in order to uphold that law. By adhering to the law in tactics we create a direct link between the strategic and tactical levels.

The next principle is the manner of planning military actions. Planning must be founded on two series of questions – one series on the context of the operation and one on the conduct of the operation. The first series require integrated, trans-organizational and even international thinking on the overall political and strategic context of the problem and the manner in which use of force is relevant to aid in solving it. The second series focuses on the tactical means relevant to serving this solution.

Other principles are: Intergovernmental Thinking – the harnessing of all the relevant functionaries and efforts to the thinking and implementation processes; Media – marketing the desired narrative of what is happening to the public; War Among the People – clearly showing the population within whom we are fighting that we are fighting for them against the enemy.

The utility of military force in a war among the people requires a different organization; creating a technological superiority relevant to this kind of war; emphasis on raids rather than on conquest; multi-capability staffs; knowledge management; avoiding over-simplifying complex problems; constant consideration of the wider context; and, in order to implement the principle of simplicity, the reduction of layers in the command hierarchy and delegation of decision-making authority.[xvi]

Towards the end of 2005 General David Petraeus was transferred from Iraq to become deputy commander of TRADOC, commander of the Command and General Staff College and commander of the Combined Arms Center (CAC) at Fort Leavenworth. In 2006, an extremely bad year for the Americans in Iraq, he led a group of military and other experts in the formation of Field Manual 3-24 – Counter Insurgency (COIN) Operations. When the manual was published in December 2006, he was already designated to command American forces in Iraq. In 2007 – 2008, as commander during the 'Surge', he implemented the principles he had designed so as to reduce the violence in Iraq and stabilize the country. The assessment of COIN success in Iraq and Afghanistan is an ongoing heated debate, which is not relevant to this article.

Design, unlike Planning, is intended to analyze in depth an unknown problem

Chapter 4 of the manual discusses the Design of Campaigns and Operations against insurgencies.[xvii] The manual defines 'Design' as deepening the understanding, analysis of possible solutions to the problem and the basis for learning and adaptation. Design, unlike Planning, is intended to analyze in depth an unknown problem, to define its characteristics (Problem Setting) and to create concepts and hypothesis that enable finding a solution. Design exists also on the tactical level, in what American doctrine calls 'Commander's Visualization'.

Design is a broad dialogue that includes, in addition to military participants, also intergovernmental inputs and connections with local representatives in order to create Situational Understanding. It focuses on framing the problem and breaking it down from complexity to simple components in a continuous repetitive iterative process.

The components of the Design process are: the existence of Critical Discussion; Use of System Approach; Creation of Models, common terminology and principles. It creates the ability for Intuitive Decision Making, serving as a base for Continuous Assessment, the object of which is Structured Learning.

The Design Phase bridges between strategy and tactics and consolidates the commander's understanding of the situation. It begins by defining the desired military end-states as distilled from the political goals, and then defines the operational concept – the Commander's Intent – and guidance for planning. It is based on an intergovernmental holistic discourse with experts and instills the commander's insights of the situation among his subordinates in order to empower them, give them an area of initiative and flexibility and enable every component in the military effort to implement the essence of the concept of operations.

Design creates an initial awareness of the environment based on working assumptions. However, the operational environment is extremely complex and friction deepens and enriches this awareness. On the one hand, it requires a deep understanding and flexibility of action of subordinate commanders and on the other hand it requires transfer of accurate and qualitative information to the commander in order to enable him to adjust his perceptions as the campaign progresses.

Thus the updated concepts of military operations in complex environments - as seen in Semo, Smith and Petraeus' approaches - do not consolidate the existence of an Operational Level. They advance the dialogue between the strategic and the tactical levels in content and quality, on the basis of concepts and principles of learning, analysis, understanding the policy and the broader context; transforming complexity into simplicity without falling into shallowness; framing the problem with the design process; the commander as a key component in developing a discourse of experts; instilling his insights among his subordinates to enable them flexible responses to the tactical problems they face; continuity of the learning and analysis via friction with the changing situation; and reduction of the clumsiness of hierarchical command structures in order to strengthen the intuitive link between the strategic principles and the tactical actions.

Defining the problem in the post-Operational Level age

In the present environment and with the military problems it currently faces, conceptualizing of the Operational Level as a central component in methods of command, the structure of headquarters and processes of operational planning, creates more difficulties and failures than it does advantages. This is because of a number of problems created by the Operational Level.

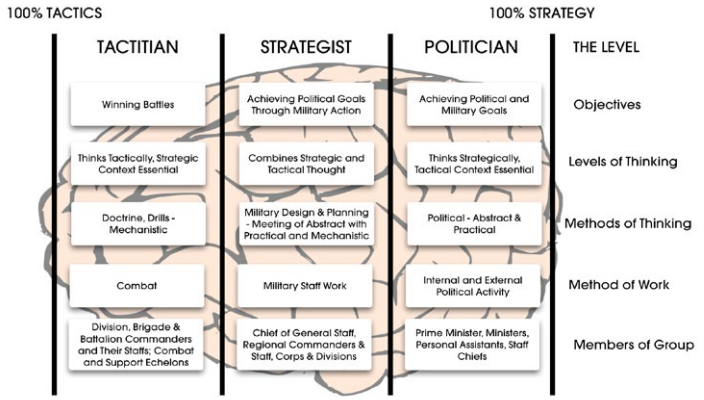
Firstly the Operational Level was developed to deal with the size and complexity of the military challenge in the 20th century wars of the industrial age. Facing the challenges of the 21st century, most of which are characterized by terror and guerrilla warfare, in which there is immediate connection between tactical action and policy consequences, some of the methods of the Operational Level are relevant, but the paradigm as a whole does not fit the needs. Strategy and tactics no longer need a conceptual bridge to connect them.

If the political level is characterized by thinking that combines abstract (strategic) and practical (political and diplomatic) whereas the tactical level is characterized by mechanistic thinking (doctrine, drills), thus, today it is better that these two levels meet directly. This direct encounter to strengthen the gain from the exchange of thinking modes rather than to create mediators (the Operational Level commanders), who are not professional at either level and might mistranslate the concepts and terminology of each level to the operators of the other.

To claim that the thinking methodology of design, learning and analysis according to the concepts of General Systems Theory does not allow them to be used in the strategic or tactical levels is erroneous. These thought patterns are relevant and even crucial for analyzing and solving the problems at both these levels.

The Operational Level has over-complicated the structure of the command hierarchy and the headquarters. Everybody, from the political heads of state down to the most junior tactical commanders should think, or thinks, politics, strategy and tactics. The difference is in the proportions. This can be illustrated by the 'Human Brain Model'.

The Human Brain Model



Sole property of Shay Shabtai

The politician and the tactician operate directly within the real world. If they do not then they are increasing the abstract at the expense of the real world. The politician is directly involved in the dialogue with other international leaders, sometimes also those of the enemy, and with the public. The tactician meets the enemy directly on the battlefield. Strategic headquarters are already dealing mostly with impressions of the strategic and tactical level engagements with the real world. Rather than coming into direct contact with reality they attempt to conceptualize the situation, the problem and possible solutions.

Adding another level of headquarters created solely for mediating between the existing levels is superfluous

Adding another level of headquarters created solely for mediating between the existing levels is superfluous, except in cases where there is a physical reason to do so – solving issues of size and span of control, dealing with a specific discipline of action that requires focus on this medium or as a response to a unique geographic area (unique topographically or demographically).

In armies that operate in theaters far-removed from their homeland, such as the American armed forces, the military commander and the senior civilian representative (usually the ambassador) in that theater are directly subordinate to the political leader and serve as his executors. Because of this they are often involved also at the political level. In contrast, in Israel for example, because of its size and the structure of the political system and government, the political level is concentrated directly in the hands of the government and the military commander is focused only on the strategic level.

Principles of the solution

The best response to the current military challenges is direct contact between the political, the strategic and the tactical by conducting a discourse of experts, utilizing thinking

practices that transform complexities into simple definitions of the problem, and assimilate the outcome of the discourse into the principles of planning and the common language between commanders.

We propose to base the thinking processes on the following ideas:

There needs to be a return to a three-level hierarchy of thinking and conceptualization – policy, strategy and tactics. These three levels of thinking exist at all levels of the command structure – from the Prime Minister who thinks mostly about policy but also considers strategy and tactics, down to the junior commander who focuses on the tactics of actual combat but also considers the political and strategic ramifications of the situation he is facing.

The senior level of the command structure – between the Chief of Staff and the Division commander – is the area where the significant friction between considerations of policy, principles of strategy and practice of tactics takes place. This friction occurs only in the mind of the commander. However, it is based on brainstorming between experts of policy, strategy and tactics. In this process the participants create simple insights (not simplistic or shallow) of the complex environment through learning, analysis and conceptual design.

When structuring the process it is better to define working methods such as groups of experts, knowledge networks and study groups led by the commander, rather than organizational structures. So long as the commander facilitates the meeting of experts, the process can be based on a variety of methods consistent with the personal command method of the commander, the character of the problems facing him and the character of the action and the organizations participating in the action. One of the possible tools in this process is analyzing the strategic and tactical contexts via the Systems Approach.

The result should be the creation of a common understanding between the senior commander and his tactical subordinates in all that pertains to his intentions for achieving the political goals, the central strategic concept and the principles defining the tactical actions. This understanding will be the foundation for the operational plan and expressed in the operational order.

It is a mistake to create new functions and add headquarters and levels to the command hierarchy

It is a mistake to create new functions and add headquarters and levels to the command hierarchy because these prevent free exchange of thoughts and knowledge between the senior commander, the junior commanders and the experts. Action in a complex environment, lacking in certainty, especially when using military force, requires constant study and brain-storming between senior and junior commanders and between the commanders and the experts.

Within this framework, the process is intended to provide the subordinate commanders with sufficient freedom of action and flexibility to respond, according to the spirit of the commander's intent, to any rapid change in the situation even before its implications have been fully explored in the study and brain-storming process.

The process and its products must be expressed in simple terms – clear unambiguous terminology; structured expressions; maintaining differentiated professionalism and expertise; filtering of data relevant for drawing the situation; and creation of correct contexts between the various levels.

Thus the actual need for an operational level no longer serves the purpose it was designed to. It may actually be said to have become an impediment to the process required.

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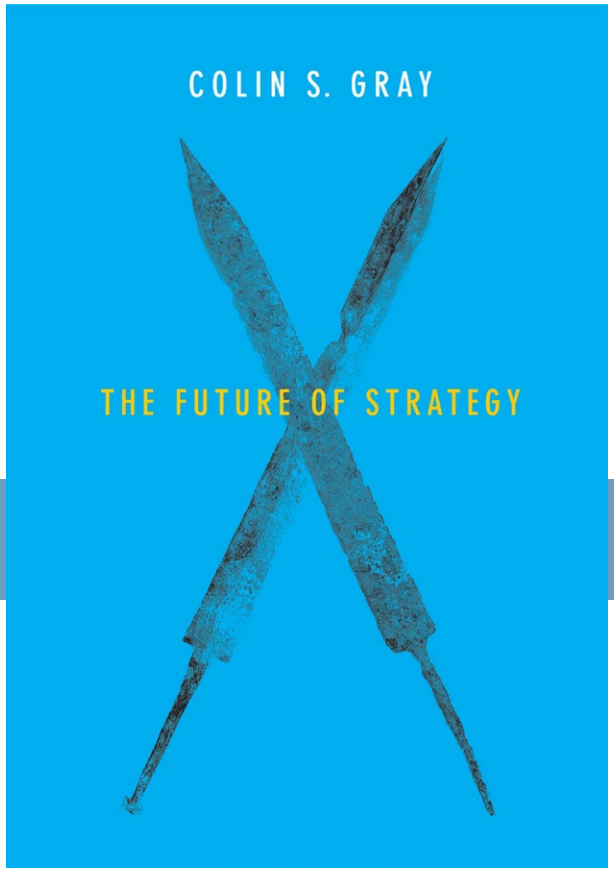

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The Post-Operational Level Age: The Operational Focus Approach, Part 2

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Introduction

Today there are two rival approaches to operating military forces in conflicts:

On the one hand are those who argue that nothing has changed and all discussion of a new type of war represents the confusion of people not sufficiently cognizant of the details of the military profession. These argue that today's wars are conducted according to the same rules as they have been over the past thousands of years.

On the other hand are those that argue that the change in the phenomenon of war is so deep that almost every parameter of the old world is no longer valid.[i] The means available to fighting troops today to execute the politicians will have changed the rules and principles of war so dramatically that they have to be reformulated and it is not enough to merely redefine the tools for solving military problems.[ii]

These rival theses are discussed and critiqued both overtly in journals and covertly in actual operational planning meetings. However, these discussions do not really contribute significantly to solving the issues relevant to the character of war and to its relevancy. The opposite is true – one notes considerable confusion over the relevance of using military force in all known mediums; air, sea and land, and also in new mediums; public media, diplomacy and cyber.

Given that humans will continue to fight wars in the foreseeable future, it is critical that we clarify the role of military confrontations in international relations. In our view, without a comprehensive approach that enables critical thinking on the phenomenon of war and the effective ways of building forces and using them, no military force will succeed in meeting the operational challenges facing it in the early 21st century. Furthermore, commanders will continue to fail their missions because the operational-level environment has merged into the strategic environment, and the political level directly influences not only the classic operational-level commanders, but also the tactical commanders.

Today, politicians demand to understand the strategic goals the military force is aiming to achieve. If the use of military force does not seem to be able to achieve a clear political result, the politician will not authorize it. This article attempts to find a way to enable the military force to achieve considerable strategic value while simultaneously provide it with freedom of action at the operational-level. We have named this approach: the 'Operational Focus And Strategic Value Focus Approach'.

The Problem: The Conceptual Distortion Created by Precision Weapons

The Precision Weapons Revolution

It is commonly accepted that military problems are always set in a specific geographic and temporal location. Over thousands of years humans knew only one way of solving military problems in a specific geographic location: bringing

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ground forces there. The impact distance of a ground force depended on the range of its weaponry. For example, in early eras this was from a few meters (swords, spears) to a few hundred meters at most (bows, ballistae). When weapons are so short-ranged, every problem can be solved only by the physical presence of a ground force at the location of the problem. In other words, the solution is only to conquer or hold ground.

This situation did not change even after firearms increased the effective range to a few dozen kilometers (artillery) or even thousands of kilometers (aircraft). Thus, the problem of Nazi Germany was solved only when the Red Army conquered Berlin and hoisted their flag on the Reichstag.

However, it changed dramatically after the Precision Weapons Revolution. Precision weapons today include a large family of tools organized into a well-oiled and focused system. This family includes not only smart bombs and guided missiles, but also special-forces, focused defensive interception weapons, personal diplomacy, cyber-warfare and communications media.

It should be noted that it was the politicians rather than the soldiers who first identified the potential of precise weapons to achieve strategic results

It should be noted that it was the politicians rather than the soldiers who first identified the potential of precise weapons to achieve strategic results. These new weapons gave the politicians abilities they never had before; direct control of the military force at all levels; to predict with high certainty the probability of success of every action (or at least the collateral damage at each level); to achieve focused effectiveness with a small number of actions; high availability of forces from the moment they decided to act until the actual effect on the ground; reduction of the friction[iii] that had been a central phenomenon of using previous weapons.

The precision weapons revolution was made possible by two factors: technology and intelligence.

Technology enables achieving very accurate hits – to within a few meters or less from the target – and this requires accurate target acquisition intelligence. The Intelligence organs were compelled to quickly develop new fields of action – advanced VISINT, COMINT and Cyber OSINT. HUMINT was not cast aside – it too was improved. The fusion between Projectile Technology and Intelligence was natural because these are both technology-intensive systems that allow a high degree of mechanization both within themselves and between them.

Two decades passed from the development of precision weapons to the moment they achieved the critical mass required to make them felt in battlefields. Another three decades passed until the new technology was complemented by a new doctrine. This enabled maximizing the new capabilities and developing the complementary resources for exploiting them – especially in the intelligence field. Thus were born what became known as 'The New Wars' – wars in which the significance of territory is no longer strategic, only operational and translates merely into a precise map coordinate.

The new weaponry enables reaching the operational problem from all points of the compass with varying strengths and enhanced speed and achieving results that seem no less significant than those achieved by ground forces. Theoretically, the era of 'The New Wars' enables the creation of military tools whose operational value is greater than previous tools – tools that can achieve strategic goals. Ostensibly the use of force acquired greater strategic flexibility – a flexibility much needed for the discourse between the military and the political levels.

However, accumulated experience showed that the expected flexibility had not been achieved. The opposite: the balance between precise fire and ground maneuver had been disrupted. A disruption that led to operational problems (some argue severe problems) in all dimensions of combat.

The Conceptual Revolution Changed The Balance Between Attrition And Maneuver

The problem facing armies today is a severe mismatch between the politicians' expectations and reality. When the politician decides to apply "other means",[iv] strategy and operational solutions designed by the military repeatedly fail to achieve the results they wish for. This is especially true in regards to operations of the ground forces.

Applying force by shooting precision weapons from a distance, without troops crossing the sovereign borders, seems simpler and more promising to the politician because it reduces the political signature, thus allowing some deniability and reducing escalation.

The enormous expectations from precision weapons created a creeping deviation from balance, to allocation of resources primarily, to a Strategy of Attrition based on these weapons and avoiding maneuver. To clarify how this systemic problem occurred one must discuss in depth the two theoretical doctrinal approaches to the use of military force: the Attritional Aproach and the Maneuver Approach.[v]

The Attritional Approach focuses on the inflicting of as many casualties as possible to enemy manpower and equipment in order to achieve the strategic goal – deterrence or total defeat. Conversely, the Maneuver Approach sees actual combat as only one military means to gaining the strategic goal.[vi] Furthermore, according to the Maneuver Approach, the key to success is initiative, and all strategic results are achieved by physical surprise – maneuver being an interaction between mass, time and space on land, sea and air.

If so, attrition in the context of this article, means the weakening of the enemy by constant harassment until he is strategically disabled, whereas maneuver means the use of movement and ruses to achieve the strategic goal.[vii] From this, follows that achieving attrition is explainable by

maneuver and vice versa. Moreover, the discourse between the two approaches is central to designing the operational context of the use of a military force. Prior to commencement of operations these two approaches oppose each other, just as the status quo is opposed to the action aimed at achieving an advantage.[viii] However, once operations commence they complement each other. So applying only one creates a systemic problem in using the military force and will necessarily severely damage the ability to achieve the strategic goals.

The gradual deviation in Israel and the world at large from a balanced merging of attrition and maneuver towards a paradigmatic preference for attrition alone has frozen military thinking. This freezing has occurred because of the military ethos that when solving operational problems, military men have a geostrategic understanding which is based on experience gleaned from the past. Unfortunately, knowledge of the past does not necessarily help in explaining the present or the future. Thus, reliance only on experience creates the conception that combat has not changed and will not change in the future. This misconception has two negative effects:

1. Many forces have frozen their development based on the working assumption that a day will come and history will indeed provide them this nostalgic encounter.

2. A Single Service approach to force-building that rests on the notion that the solution is merely one more piece of hardware away – one more bomb, or one more piece of intelligence and we will win.

The imbalance towards Attrition is a strategic threat because it has created the expectation that it alone can solve any problem

The imbalance towards Attrition is a strategic threat because it has created the expectation that it alone can solve any problem, whereas time and again reality shows that despite their technological and quantitative superiority, armies that focus only on attriting the enemy do not achieve the clear strategic decision they seek.

The revolution created a doctrinal shock wave that has resulted, among other things, in a situation in which any weapon that is not precise will not be used. This, in turn threatens to destabilize both ability to Maneuver and to Attrit.

Like any other phenomenon that peaks we are today witnessing a new battlefield friction – collateral damage – that does not allow exploiting the Attrition Approach to the full. Fighting in civilian-saturated environments has become commonplace and this situation will not change in the foreseeable future. This difficulty to distinguish between military and civilian targets applies in aerial, naval and ground combat and creates restrictions on actual use of weapons – especially non-precise weapons such as artillery. The friction exists also in the new combat-media – cyber warfare, with its potential of disrupting all computer and electricity dependent civilian infrastructure such as water supplies, traffic control of ground and aerial transportation and financial systems.

THE SOLUTION – THE OPERATIONAL FOCUS APPROACH

Focusing operations on strategic value is an approach that attempts to minimize effort to the minimum required – thus saving resources. Focusing is a cognitive process that facilitates understanding between people in the same manner as turning the focusing apparatus of a camera lens sharpens the picture being viewed. It is based on acquiring information from all the relevant external environments – the more relevant information acquired, the sharper the focus. The sharpness of the photograph is determined by the human operator. Even if he is using an automatic camera he chooses what to observe and what to photograph: on what to focus.

Unlike camera focusing mechanisms, which are fairly similar in all cameras, humans do not have a common cognitive focusing mechanism. The physical mechanisms of humans are similar, but the cognitive mechanisms vary. Human focus enables the observer to identify an object and to interpret the situation. The observation is based on human intelligence which varies from person to person. Situation interpretation is therefore always subjective.

People need much information to widen their understanding of the close and distant environment. Each individual interprets his environment differently so that on average all see the situation subjectively and blurred. Thus each commander and each staff officer at each level interprets situations with small or great differences. The gap between the objective situation and the subjective varies with each individual. Historical experience shows that military organizations can create a fairly similar situational interpretation among their members, but it must be remembered that in war one needs constant adjustment to cope with inaccurate interpretations. The better the intelligence, the lower the probability of making mistakes. The Intelligence strategic and tactical estimate, the operational capability to exploit it and the commanders' leadership skills will determine the operational focus.

The Intelligence strategic and tactical estimate, the operational capability to exploit it and the commanders' leadership skills will determine the operational focus.

In other words, operational focus is, like with the camera, a commander's decision. That decision is the product of a situation assessment. The procedure for conducting that assessment must assist in producing focus. The chosen operational focus must have strategic value.

To present the Operational Focus Approach and Value Focused Action we must first define two supporting concepts: 'Combat Worth' and 'Strategic Value'.

Combat Worth[ix]

Operational momentum is a concept often used to explain the interaction between mass, time and space. Momentum is a quantitative concept that expresses the mass multiplied by the speed multiplied by the operational tempo. The concept is relevant for operating air, sea or ground forces. Before the campaign begins, momentum is a potential that must be expressed in operational planning. Converting the potential during the campaign expresses the actual ability of using the force.

Combat Worth of a particular aerial, naval or ground force mass is its overall military capability to achieve its operational missions. Thus for example, the combat worth of an aerial ground attack force is the number of targets it can attack within a specific time-frame – for example, in 24 hours. The combat worth of an intelligence force, in the context of the above aerial force, is its ability to provide the required targeting data. This is a critical component of that aerial force's mass.

Ground forces are required to take over and hold ground within the operations zone, to attack objectives of strategic value and return to their bases. The combat worth of such a force is the overall capability of its mass to assemble (including mobilization of reserve forces) deploy, rapidly move to attack the objectives, take ground and destroy enemies, break contact and withdraw back to its bases. The more real time and accurate the intelligence available to it, the greater the combat worth of the ground force mass.

The combat worth of a naval force is its ability to sortie a mass of naval units continuously from its ports, neutralize or destroy naval threats and to attack targets on land. Again, availability of accurate real-time intelligence provides a crucial multiplier to its combat worth.

In cyber warfare malicious programs are employed to disrupt the enemy's information systems and thus the command and control procedures of his weapons and the supporting infrastructures that enable the state or non-state actor to employ his forces. The combat worth of a cyber warfare unit is, for example, its ability to prevent or disrupt the enemy's decision making procedures, create uncertainty and disrupt supporting systems – without physically attriting the military force. Combat mass in cyber warfare is the product of manpower quality, the capabilities of the malware and the flexibility of its ability to exploit the cyber domain for varying uses.

Strategic Value

The strategic value of using military force is determined according to the political benefit accrued from this use: if the force achieves the goals set for it by the statesman then the strategic value was high. The strategic value, therefore, is determined by the goals set by the statesman for the conflict.

The strategic value of a specific enemy asset or force is an assessment, by the commander, of the expected strategic result of acting against that asset or force by military means.

The strategic value of a specific enemy asset or force is an assessment, by the commander, of the expected strategic result of acting against that asset or force by military means.

Thus, conquering territory that is critical to the enemy and destroying the enemy forces on that territory has high strategic value if doing so will highly affect the enemy's strategic or operational-level functioning. When fighting non-state organizations, critical territories could be their base of operations: villages or urban neighborhoods where their leadership resides, where they have hidden their logistic facilities or have their base of popular support. The infrastructure of non-functioning states which is often exploited by non-state organizations residing in that state could also be a worthwhile target when fighting them.

It should be noted that holding onto conquered territory over extended periods of time could become more harmful than beneficial, so that cost of holding such territory must be weighed against its strategic value.

The Correlation Of Combat Worth And Strategic Value

Understanding the concepts of Combat Worth and Strategic Value enables us to employ them while planning and conducting military campaigns: achieving the sought after strategic decision requires directing a mass of high combat worth towards objectives assessed to be of high strategic value.

To do so requires asking questions on the probable contribution of specific military assets to achieving the overall strategic value. For example:

- What is the strategic value of employing air power in this specific campaign?

The combat worth equals the number of targets attacked in each 24 hour period multiplied by the average speed of attack operations against those operations. This multiplication will create the operational-level momentum that achieves the strategic goal of deterrence or defeat of the enemy. This combat worth represents the strategic ability to extensively damage the enemy's infrastructure and ability to function and from there his will to continue fighting. However, to maintain a positive strategic value one must ensure minimal collateral damage while attacking targets assessed to be of high operational quality.

- What is the strategic value of employing naval forces in this specific campaign?

The combat value equals the series of quality targets attacked at sea and on the shore multiplied by the tempo of operations against high quality targets. The result is the operational momentum that drives the achieving of the

strategic goal. This combat worth expresses the ability to attack a wide variety of state-owned strategic objectives such as sea-lanes, on which more than 90% of all civilian and military merchandise are transported. Maintaining a high level of naval strategic value requires acquiring the freedom to perservere in these naval actions and integration of these actions with aerial and land operations. Without these, the strategic value might become negative.

- What is the strategic value of employing ground forces in this specific campaign?

The combat worth is equal to the number of quality objectives attacked multiplied by the tempo of operations against objectives with high strategic value.This multiplication creates the operational momentum towards severely damaging the enemy's ability to function effectively and continuously by striking his commanders and disrupting his command and control systems.

Achieving and maintaining high strategic value requires knowing what are the human or territorial objectives against which continuous physical pressure by the ground forces will create the operational-level momentum that will force our will on the enemy. Without this knowledge the ground forces' operations might have a negative strategic value.

- What is the strategic value of using cyber weapons in this specific campaign?

The combat worth of cyber weapons is, for example, striking the enemy's ability to decide and disrupting the activity of ancillary systems without physically attriting the enemy's military strength. Used covertly this can achieve strategic benefits without using kinetic efforts. Used overtly it serves as a force multiplier to kinetic efforts, reducing friction with enemy forces even in areas that are considered to be densely defended.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE OPERATIONAL FOCUS APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY MILITARY ACTIONS

The Situation Assessment Procedure For Planning And Conducting Operations

Historical experience shows that commanders need a compass to guide their actions. Command concepts such as Mission Oriented Commands, Auftragstaktik[x] and Directive Control[xi] were developed for this purpose. These are tools that facilitate clarification of the context and create a common understanding of the purpose of the action. This common understanding rests on a number of pillars, such as common terminology along the hierarchy of command and major operational procedures and an understanding of the relationship between headquarters.

These pillars enable different commanders to interpret similarly the operational situation 'on the ground'. It enables headquarters to reach similar conclusions and direct operations accordingly. The situation interpretation process includes both the detection of opportunities and the detection of threats on the tactical, operational and strategic levels.

Assessing the situation is a cognitive process. It begins by observing and studying the situation. The first phase is collecting information and this too requires common terminology. Learning begins after the facts have been processed. Learning means interpreting and interpretation is always subjective. Reducing the subjectivity is achieved by disseminating information universally to all individuals involved, a common understanding of the circumstances of environment being studied and an unmediated contact with that environment and creating a common terminology for the facts.

The learning/interpretation phase is complex and differs from individual to individual. The assessor's culture will influence his interpretation of the facts, of the required actions and possible results. The personal previous experience of the assessor will also affect his interpretation. It is in this phase, while interpreting the situation, that the operational focus is determined.

The decision on what to focus is the commander's. We advise him to adopt one simple guidance: interpret the situation according to the strategic context of the entire problem. Doing this will greatly increase the harmony between his interpretation and the strategic goal he has been directed to achieve.

This means that actions of high strategic value will be defined as opportunities, whereas actions that have low or negative strategic value will be defined as threats.

This means that actions of high strategic value will be defined as opportunities, whereas actions that have low or negative strategic value will be defined as threats. The chosen course of action will be that which the commander assesses will have the greatest strategic value. Actions without a strategic benefit will not be discussed. Commanders who understand the overall strategy will interpret the situation in that context and will define operational missions that are highly beneficial strategically.

Commanders differ, among other things, in their ability to understand the strategic situation and to derive from it the operational and tactical implications. A commander able to discern the strategic essence of a tactical decision will interpret the situation correctly and make more beneficial decisions. This commander will be focused – i.e. applying the operational focus approach. Cutting through the chaos of battle, the missions he assigns his forces and the directions he launches them will be of greater strategic value.

Intelligence is the essential but not a sufficient precondition for applying the operational focus approach. Another essential precondition is a combat force appropriate in capabilities, structure and organization to undertake the required operations. Meeting these preconditions enables strategic, value focused situation assessments

and operations. Understanding the strategic goal and the threats will enable the commander to define what he wishes to achieve, whereas understanding the forces at hand will enable him to decide how to achieve it.

In the complex political (national and international) and military environments in which operations are conducted, the strategic value of objectives changes frequently.

The process is not static – it requires continued discourse between the hierarchic levels. In the complex political (national and international) and military environments in which operations are conducted, the strategic value of objectives changes frequently. The operational focus process begins with the situation assessment, but today needs to be more didactic and precise. Precision is achieved by choosing the strategic goals. Analysis of the enemy and territorial objectives leads the situation assessment process as follows:

1. The strategic relevance of each tactical objective must be determined according to its assessed strategic value.

2. Determine the shortest route to the ultimate objective, i.e. the route needing the fewest number of interim tactical objectives to be achieved.

3. Analyzing the enemy's possible courses of action is an essential tool. This analysis must be conducted in the context of the strategic value of one's own objectives and the enemy's tactics.

4. Whereas in the operational-level era, a deep understanding of the intelligence information and interpretation was deemed a requirement only for the operational-level commanders, today it is required of even the most junior tactical commanders. The intelligence summary must enable even junior tactical commanders to think of the strategic value of their actions and focus appropriately. A major component of this intelligence, no less important than knowing and understanding the geographical terrain, is knowing and understanding the human terrain facing the commander.

5. Assessments of threats to the possible courses of action must consider not only possible enemy responses but also the choosing of incorrect objectives. Operations against objectives lacking strategic value can threaten the ability to achieve the strategic goals.

The entire analysis described above must be kept simple. Simplicity will be achieved by maintaining the traditional methods of assessment while changing only some of the emphasis to achieve the required focus. This facilitates discussing the strategic value of each tactical action and the combat worth of each tactical force at any moment and at every level of the hierarchy.

So how does one measure the relative combat worth of any operational force? According to the Operational Focus Approach – determining the advantages of each relative force in achieving objectives of strategic value.

The Contribution Of The Operational Focus Approach To The Ground Forces Problems

As noted above, the ground forces face a two-pronged problem: on the one prong – the inherent complexity of ground operations relative to that of precision weapons, and on the other prong – the reduction of strategic worth of territory. In contemporary wars ground operations rapidly lose their effectiveness. This was learned by the Americans in Afghanistan and Iraq and by the Israelis in Operation 'Cast Lead'.

This stems from the lack of focus of ground force operations resulting in a divergence of the separate actions so they lose strategic coherence. Territory can be analyzed in two aspects: on what objectives should we focus and how to complete our operation as rapidly as possible. Speed, a distinctly tactical requirement, has become today a strategic requirement. However, in ground operations it is a very difficult requirement to achieve.

Speed, a distinctly tactical requirement, has become today a strategic requirement.

Achieving tactical and strategic speed in ground operations is not only a matter of technological improvements. The technology of ground combat vehicles has peaked and is no longer the limiting factor. Therefore the way to increase the tactical and strategic speed of ground operations is to focus operational planning on minimizing the number of territorial objectives the ground forces must acquire or hold in order to attain strategic value.

Changing Emphasis In Ground Force Situation Assessments

The traditional emphases of ground force situation assessments must be changed. Thus, assembly and concentration areas must be reduced in space and time; force deployment should be conducted on the move; analysis of movement to objectives of strategic value should focus on speed and operational tempo and their effect on the strategic goal; when planning the battle on the objectives we must analyze their strategic value as well as their tactical value; sequencing the mopping-up phase will be planned according to priorities ensuing from the strategic value of each objective; the breaking of contact phase and returning to the assembly areas will be planned in advance according to the strategic understanding that there is no intention to hold the captured territory for a long period of time.

Even though, tactically the operation is not a raid, the planner must consider the need to evacuate the area to allow other efforts, such as aerial operations or long-range fire to proceed. These can strike strategic value targets detected as a result of the ground operation.

The Contribution Of The Operational Focus Approach To Conceptual And Operational Flexibility

Operational flexibility is the ability to efficiently transit between operational situations on the battlefield, for example from defense to attack or from defense to retreat, etc. The last is considered particularly difficult because it is conducted under enemy pressure. Operational flexibility requires that the force understands the operational problem it is facing and that it can adapt itself to the type of combat required.

Operational flexibility is required not only in combat, but also in all the preparations for combat: beginning in the planning phase, through organizing the ad hoc battle-group suited for the specific operational problem and finishing with the battle itself, when multi-service and often multi-agency forces are employed. When the tactical commander has a multiplicity of capabilities and a good working relationship with the senior command, he can create tactical achievements that have, at very least, operational-level value. Achieving this is possible with proper preparations to meet the operational requirements.

Operational planning must consider both the strategic goal and the combat worth of the basic multi-arm ground formation (in the IDF today – the division) the aerial mission commander and the naval task force commander. The Operational Focus Approach facilitates the ability of commanders to create flexibility in each operational-level or strategic context.

DESIGNING THE FORCE ACCORDING TO OPERATIONAL FOCUS APPROACH – THE VISION

Our vision is that the employment of every force in the future will be focused. The focus will be on both the combat worth of the specific force and to the highest strategic value of its operation. This is a conceptual and practical vision for organizing an army for war, based on an operational logic that integrates the services, the departments and civilian security agencies. Employing forces according to the operational focus on high strategic value will facilitate the building of an ad hoc force with enhanced combat worth and using it effectively so as to gain maximum benefit in solving the problem that instigated its employment. An operation planned in this manner will have a better chance of gaining public support internally and globally. Thus the force will succeed more in its purpose: being a tool for acquiring political objectives that cannot be acquired via diplomacy.

It is apparent that no aerial, naval or ground formation can be created or maintained that includes within it all the required operational capabilities.

It is apparent that no aerial, naval or ground formation can be created or maintained that includes within it all the required operational capabilities. Every proposal for reform needs to address the practical issues of structure, organization and functioning of the operational forces. This is because the nature of these organizations is to discuss allocation of resources rather than concepts and long-term designing of the force.

On this issue, the US military is without doubt a model for repeated experimentation. Its experiments often focused on the desire to redefine the measure of operational independence of the operational forces (especially the ground forces) to achieve improved combat worth appropriate to the strategic needs. These experiments suggested almost conclusively that the era of the permanent basic formation is over. It seems that it is no longer possible to create or maintain any single formation; ground, air or sea that contains within it all the required operational capabilities.

All military forces face the question of where to draw the line between an operational structure that facilitates functioning in a closed, multi-arm system and an open multi-service system. Reality shows that there are always capabilities that are outside the purview of a specific service's capabilities. In fact, the concepts of multi-arm and multi-service cooperation are the same in all services. For example, a naval commander is expected to integrate the actions of the various arms of his service; surface ships, submarines, naval commandos and naval air forces. Additionally, he is expected to know how to employ for his needs air forces and ground forces from the other services. An air force commander must integrate manned and unmanned aircraft, combat aircraft, intelligence aircraft, logisitic aircraft, combat and transport helicopters, anti-air defenses, air force rescue and special operations forces in addition to employing ground forces and naval forces to assist him in fulfilling his missions.

Many armies across the world maintain permanent multi-service basic formations. The IDF does not – it is organized in single service formations that cooperate ad hoc. This must be changed. The IDF must be reorganized so that its formations are not organized by service, but rather by mission. The air force and navy seem to be better organized for multi-service operations – they are always organized and employed ad hoc on a mission by mission basis and placed under a unified commander for concentration of effort. The ground forces belief that the ground maneuver is the main effort in any campaign and that its purpose is to conquer territory and destroy the enemy in that territory prevents them from developing a similar structure.

We believe there are two ways to overcome the difficulty of employing ground forces in multi-service formations. We have termed them the 'small vision' and the 'grand vision'.

- The 'small vision' of multi-service employment of ground forces:

In this vision the forces will organize ad hoc in multi-arm and multi-service formations to solve specific tactical problems within operational-level and strategic contexts. Each ad hoc organization will be designed to have high combat worth and the ability to rapidly initiate battle. Because of the two above-mentioned inherent problems of ground forces the emphasis of the ad hoc organization will be around them, but they will include strengthened niche-capabilities designed to overcome specific operational challenges as well as aerial

and naval assets under command.

Multi-service mission-oriented formations will need active involvement of senior headquarters in preparing the forces for battle. The main challenge is to ensure high combat worth of small forces by properly integrating the various units from each service in direct relation to the operational problem according to the Operational Focus On Strategic Value Approach.

To enable this systemic approach requires:

1. **Determining the command structure** – where passes the control line between the multi-service basic formation headquarters and the superior headquarters required to achieve expertise in multi-service capabilities.

2. **Changing the ethos of current service and arm headquarters** – these headquarters are the driving force behind the current tendency to conduct single service and single arm operations. They are the leading impediment to developing integrated multi-arm and multi-service operations.

The 'grand vision' proposes the forming of permanent multi-service and multi-arm basic formations of high combat worth, directly under the command of superior operational headquarters who will thus be able to rapidly organize specifically tailored problem-solving task forces operating at high tempo. Each of these superior headquarters will be capable of independently conducting complete multi-service operations on land and sea and in the air. The consideration, which senior headquarters to activate and which operational-level commander to appoint to a specific mission, will be only according to their individual relative capabilities.

A military force built of multi-service formations will enjoy increased organizational flexibility that will enable it to rapidly organize task forces tailored for each operational problem. Operational focus will be an inherent component of constructing the task force, directing it a priori towards missions of high strategic value.

This structure will require a different organization of superior headquarters. They themselves will have to be mission-oriented in design, adapting to each operational problem. Our hope is that this vision will be the first conceptual and practical milestone in a long process of change. Fulfilling the vision will facilitate the conduct, in rapid continuous succession, of focused actions against objectives of high strategic value.

SUMMARY

Despite the presumptuousness we believe that our vision meets the test of relevant application of military force in most contemporary nation-states and especially the democratic states. Operational focus and value-focused actions provide the statesman with a tool suited to achieving his political goals. For the commander it means the direction of a high combat worth mass to fight for objectives of high strategic value. This will improve the coordination and the cooperation between the political and the military levels, improve the ability to fulfill the strategy authorized by the political leadership and provide the military leadership more freedom of action. This approach is expected to create decisive strategic results and thus promote the political goal for which the military action was initiated. In our understanding, this is the political and strategic purpose needed today for employment of the military force and from this derives the guidance needed to build that force.

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The Post-Operational Level Age: The Operational Focus Approach, Part 3

In memory of our friend and colleague, IDF Brigadier General Giora Segal, a military thinker and practitioner who was our partner in the journey in the post-operational level age.

May his soul rest in peace.

Yacov Bengo

Israel Defense Force, Israel

Shay Shabtai

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Yacov Bengo is an IDF Brigadier General and currently a Division Commander. He has an MA in Political Science and 25 years of experience in force build up and operations on the tactical level and within the General Staff. His current research deals with the utility of military force in the evolving environment of operations and therefore the adequate principals of force build up.

Shay Shabtai, an IDF Colonel (res), has more than 20 years as an expert and practitioner in Middle East issues, Israel's national security, strategic issues and military issues. His current research includes alternative strategies for Israel; the influence of human global trends on strategy; strategic communication and perception management; and redefining the operational level of armed conflicts. In 2014, Shay received his Master's Degree (*Magna Cum Laude*) from Tel Aviv University's Executive Program for Middle East Studies, and is currently a PhD candidate and lecturer at Bar Ilan University and the IDC in Herzliya.

General

To achieve the optimal connection between policy, strategy and tactics (described in part 1) through an operational focus approach that connects the strategic value to the combat worth (described in part 2), a new kind of situational assessment is required. The staffs from brigade to General Staff level should include two separate groups: a Planning Group that will include the required military and civilian experts dealing with all the topics that affect the operational focus who will conduct general situational assessments and define the principles of the campaign plan, guiding the discussion between the commander and his sub-commanders; and a C2 Group that will conduct the processes of command and control in addition to monitoring the implementation of the plan. We believe the dramatic question mark hovering over the utility of military force in achieving the national goals makes this new structure crucial for the effective application of that force.

The Post-Operational Level Age – Direct Contact Between Tactics And Strategy

In Part 1[i], we described the worsening problem created by the conceptualization of the operational level as a central component in the methods of command, structure of headquarters and processes of operational planning. We showed that the current environment and the types of problems armies face today this concept creates difficulties, and even failings, more than advantages.

The strategic context of conducting military operations is becoming tacticalized, and makes redundant the artificial mediation of the Operational Art.

The strategic context of conducting military operations is becoming tacticalized, and makes redundant the artificial mediation of the Operational Art. The connection between policy, strategy and tactics is created by experts of the three disciplines brainstorming and discussing the issues with the commander. The commander, in his mind, is the connector.

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The participants in this process create simple (though not simplistic) understandings of the environment by learning, analysis and conceptualization. The results of the process are the creation of an understanding, common to both the commander from General Staff level to brigade level (and the commanders of the sub efforts) of the commander's intent vis-à-vis achieving the political objectives, the central strategic concept, the definition of the mission and the principles guiding the tactical actions. This is translated into a Campaign Plan which is then implemented.

The Post-Operational Level Age – The Operational Focus Concept, Strategic Value And Combat Worth

In Part 2[ii], we described the approach we use to connect the strategic and tactical levels in the design and planning process – Operational Focus on Strategic Value and Combat Worth. Operational Focus means that only the exactly suited actions are undertaken, because we have no spare resources or time.

Focus is a cognitive process that enables people to understand each other. The focusing process is based on information acquired from all relevant external environments. The more relevant the information, the sharper is the picture. Every commander and every staff officer at every level interprets the situation differently. Historical experience shows that military organizations can create a common understanding, or at least consent, of how to interpret the situation they face. However, the chaotic nature of war can distort the situational assessment and it therefore must be constantly adjusted. Strategic and tactical assessment of intelligence, the operational capability to exploit it and the commander's leadership capabilities will determine the Operational Focus.

The combat worth of military mass is a tactical concept that describes the overall capability of a military force – aerial, ground, naval or cyber – to conduct missions relevant to achieving the campaign objectives. The strategic value of employing force is determined by the political gain acquired by its actions. If the military force's actions have achieved the policy objectives decided by the statesman, it has high strategic value. It follows that the strategic value is a function of the objectives of the war or of the conflict as a whole – as decided by the statesman.

The definition of Combat Worth and Strategic Value and the ability to connect them in the design and planning phases of the campaign as well as in the conduct phase are the basis for achieving Operational Focus. In this context we will aspire that the activation of a mass of high Combat Worth to fight for objectives of high Strategic Value will lead to decisive outcomes and further the overall strategic achievements of the campaign. Understanding the connection between these concepts enables us to ask questions concerning the connection between various combat worth and their contribution to achieving overall strategic value.

The Post-Operational Level Age – How To Do It

Situational Assessment

The basis for optimal connectivity between policy, strategy and tactics through operational focus requires a form of situational assessment different from that conducted today. This assessment requires combining the experts on the multiplicity of factors influencing the operational focus of a military force:

a. Military experts able to define the potential combat worth of all relevant force types: air, ground, sea, cyber/information warfare and special-forces.

b. Intelligence and Civilian Population Liaison officers able to assess the enemy in depth – his strategic decision making process and style, the civilian environment within which he operates and his military capabilities.

c. Experts on the wider context of the campaign – diplomats, foreign liaison officers, public-relations experts, media and psychological warfare specialists for both overt and covert perception management operations and experts on the home public's resilience and mood.

d. Military and Civilian Strategic Planners able to add insights on the policy of the home government and the wider national context - the diplomatic, economic, social and national infrastructure issues. In some cases there must also be experts representing the thinking of international or regional allies.

It is therefore a collection of inter-service, inter-agency and, in some cases, international, experts.

It is therefore a collection of inter-service, inter-agency and, in some cases, international, experts. It has a permanent core of members, but it can add others according to the needs of the evolving planning process and battle situation.

This group is constantly discussing the integrative situational assessment with the commander in order to inculcate in his mind the optimal situational awareness as a background for his decision-making. It is conducted on all levels – General Staff, Regional Command, Corps, Division and Brigade, each level adapting the assessment to suit its purposes. The General Staff, for example, might include a techno-tactical expert on underground warfare, whereas the Brigade might include an expert on the home front civilian population in its area of responsibility or an expert on a foreign army with which it is coordinating actions or cooperating.

This is not a new idea. In his book, *The Utility of Force*, Rupert Smith wrote: "There are two sets of questions to be asked in making a plan. The first set deals with the context of the operation as a whole, at the political and strategic level, and the second with the context of its conduct at the theatre level… The questions in each set are iterative… the first set is to define the outcome and the effort to achieve it… The second set of questions is answered on the basis of the answers to the first set of questions, and the circumstances in the theatre understood at the time… one is establishing at what level it is possible to expect military force on its own to have utility… it must be clear that the answers to the questions lie with a

wide range of agencies, in which the military is but one, and only a minor one at that".[iii]

U.S. Army COIN Field Manual, FM 3-24, COIN, published in 2006, states that: "…dialog among the commander, principal planners, member of the interagency team, and host nation (HN) representatives helps to develop a coherent design. This involvement of all participants is essential. The object of this dialog is to achieve a level of situational understanding… such that the situation no longer appears complex… framing the problem rather than developing courses of action".[iv]

Designing Force Employment

Situational awareness and framing of the problem create the understanding and common language needed between the commander and his group of experts and between the commander and his sub-commanders. This facilitates the designing of the force employment according to the operational focus. The experts discuss the combat worth of various actions with the commander and the connection between them and the strategic value.

The discourse with his sub-commanders leads the commander to define the stratagem of the operational efforts he intends to conduct. The stratagem must be of high combat worth and strategic value in order to properly complement the civilian effort, political, economic and strategic communication, and combine the civilian and military efforts.

This framework enables the unique and optimal mix of civilian and military efforts required to achieve the strategic objective and ultimately the policy goals. This mix will be expressed in the formation of the relevant task force as per the unique mission requirements.

Planning Force Employment – task forces

Operational focus requires the different levels, from brigade level up

This is a critical component of the concept. Operational focus requires the different levels, from brigade level up, to completely integrate the various services and agencies and enable the employment of a wide variety of civilian and military capabilities:

a. Ground maneuver of all types.

b. Fire efforts whether aerial, ground or naval.

c. Information warfare including cyber warfare, electronic warfare and overt and covert strategic communication assets.

d. Intelligence assets from tactical UAVs and interrogators to the allocation of General Staff or national assets whether military or civilian in origin.

e. Civilian administration for maintaining and assisting the civilian population in or near the battlefield; defensive assets for protecting the home front population from various threats; and liaison with international organizations (inter-governmental or non-governmental) operating in the area.

f. Secured IT capabilities to link all the assets into one communication network enabling command and control of all the various combat, civilian and logistic efforts.

This integration of these capabilities complicates the campaign planning process, specifically the conduct of standing operating procedures, assembling of the components and organizing the task force. It requires a staff and headquarters different from those that currently exist, at least in the IDF, and probably in other western militaries.

Execution and controlling of the campaign

The execution and controlling of the campaign is also a more dynamic process than in the current method.

The execution and controlling of the campaign is also a more dynamic process than in the current method. The situational assessment process is continuous, constantly updating the situation report and integrating it into the commander's understanding. It takes into account numerous changing factors of the reciprocal effects and consequences of the various elements and actions that reframe the reality. All of those could affect the task force's ability to maintain operational focus in order to achieve its mission in accordance with the strategic objective.

The changes could be in any element of the situational assessment – the combat worth of one of the military efforts is high or too low; the effect of our actions or the enemy's actions on each other's leadership, military operations and home front or on the international arena may be different from what was anticipated; international, regional or media reaction is more negative or positive than expected; our own leaders and public change their opinions and perceptions vis-à-vis the political goals and the strategic objectives; an unexpected singular event can basically change a variety of the elements.

Such an analysis, that guides the commander in understanding the changing environment and in redefining the problem, is an integration of the knowledge and understanding of each expert in his own field and the joint learning of all the experts together.

The commander's and sub-commanders' conclusions from these new insights can lead to one of three decisions:

a. Stick to the plan - despite the changes, it will still create a positive outcome even in the evolving context.

b. Change the plan – based on revised operational focused analysis in order to improve the fit between the combat worth and the strategic value of the current task force.

c. Redesign the concept - an updated plan that changes the task force composition and mix of efforts.

Recommendations

Proposed Starting Point – Headquarters Structure

Headquarters Structure seems to be the best starting point for the required transformation. The operational core of these staffs must be split clearly between the planning group and the Command & Control (C2) group. The idea seems simple but to all those with actual experience it is clearly not wholly simplistic.

The fierce controversies between the planners ("The Thinkers") and C2 staffs ("The Doers") are well known to all military professionals.

The fierce controversies between the planners ("The Thinkers") and C2 staffs ("The Doers") are well known to all military professionals. The tensions between them are escalated in the post-operational level age. This separation will enable a better connection between the strategic and the tactical, because it correlates to the commander's core position of bridging planning and execution. His position in between the two groups will affect the planning and the execution of the operations, and will compel him and his staff to act with operational focus based on integrated forces conducting military and civilian efforts coordinated in context and rapid in time. He will be the agent of constant adaptation of the plan and its implementation to the changing situation continuously striving to achieve strategic value.

The concept requires first the creation of the team of experts. Part of this team should be formed from the existing staff officers dealing with analysis of the enemy and planning of fighting and supporting efforts. To them must be added aerial, naval, special-forces, cyber advisors and a variety of experts – population officers, public-relations and media officers, psychological warfare officers, liaison officers, law officers and home front officers, strategic planning officers, representatives from civilian intelligence agencies and the Foreign Ministry and if needed representatives from various civilian authorities or foreign armies. This team, though the exact composition might vary, should not include more than 11 members and should be headed by the chief of staff of the unit.

The planning team conducts overall situational assessments and defines the operational plan principles. It will operate according to a flexible time cycle adapted to the operational situation, the commander's schedule and its working methods.

The C2 team will be headed by the chief operations officer (G3) and be the commander's tool for command, control and monitoring the forces in action. This team will translate the commander's decisions into detailed orders, will monitor in detail the execution of operations for the purpose of command and control, and will decide on issues relevant to the implementation of the plan.

Instead of the general designation of 'operators', which, as we explained above, causes more harm than good ("Jacks of all trades and experts in none"), every staff from brigade up will have two separate groups, each manned by true experts trained and educated in their specific professions and the integration of them into an overall concept.

Force Build-up

The Operational Focus Approach does not change the current force composition. The various combat and support services, branches and arms - aerial, naval, ground, intelligence, cyber and information warfare, communications and computers, logistics, public-relations and media, psychological warfare and home front - will continue to create the same basic unit building-blocks of today. The decision concerning how many individuals from each area should make up the group will be determined and prioritized according to the threat analysis.

The Operational Focus Approach does not change the current force composition.

The change will occur in the realms of organization, doctrine and training of force employment headquarters from the General Staff down to the brigade. These will be rebuilt to include the two staff groups; the planning group and the C2 group.

It will require creating the appropriate military and civilian joint communication networks and logistics capabilities that can adjust to numerous unique operational contexts.

Focusing on these realms of force build up and not the issues of capability development and force composition diverts the discussion from the ever sensitive budgetary and political major platforms and projects debate to the safer environment of concepts implementation.

Bottom Line For All 3 Parts – On The Crucial Neccessity To Change

Ostensibly everything that has been presented is not new – political leaders have always designed policy and defined strategic goals for military leaders to achieve by tactical operations. Our argument is that the extent and strength of the change in the human-global context within which military force is being employed has already overrun the question posed by Rupert Smith a decade ago on the utility of force and raised a new question: what is the essence of military force beyond the mere recounting of its organization and capabilities? What is its new ethos?

This is not an easy question to answer – especially in Western armies which are under constant scrutiny and criticism from their populations and the elected government that is employing them. These questions contain severe tensions and span a spectrum of issues such as; allocation of national

resources, prioritization of national efforts, motivation to serve and legitimacy of employing force. They directly impact questions of national security and national resilience of each state for itself and the Western World as a whole. A clear example is the tension placed on the US military between the actual employment of its forces across the globe versus the public desire to reduce military involvement in situations in which it incurs casualties.

These tensions raise the question on the central ethos of any military organization – its willingness to sacrifice the lives of its personnel in order to protect the state and its interests. The one characteristic unique to military organizations, relative to other national organizations (police, intelligence agencies, diplomatic service, etc.) is the depth of identity between it and the national existence. Everything else is deemed to be a supporting service or subsidiary in importance.

the proposed post operational level age change in concept, implementation methods and structures is necessary not for the tactical effectiveness of the military force

The serious doubt raised on the effectiveness of the military force in achieving national goals requires an in-depth analysis by decision-makers and commanders. We think that the proposed post operational level age change in concept, implementation methods and structures is necessary not for the tactical effectiveness of the military force, but to maintain the political and strategic relevance of the military organization, without which it has no reason to exist.

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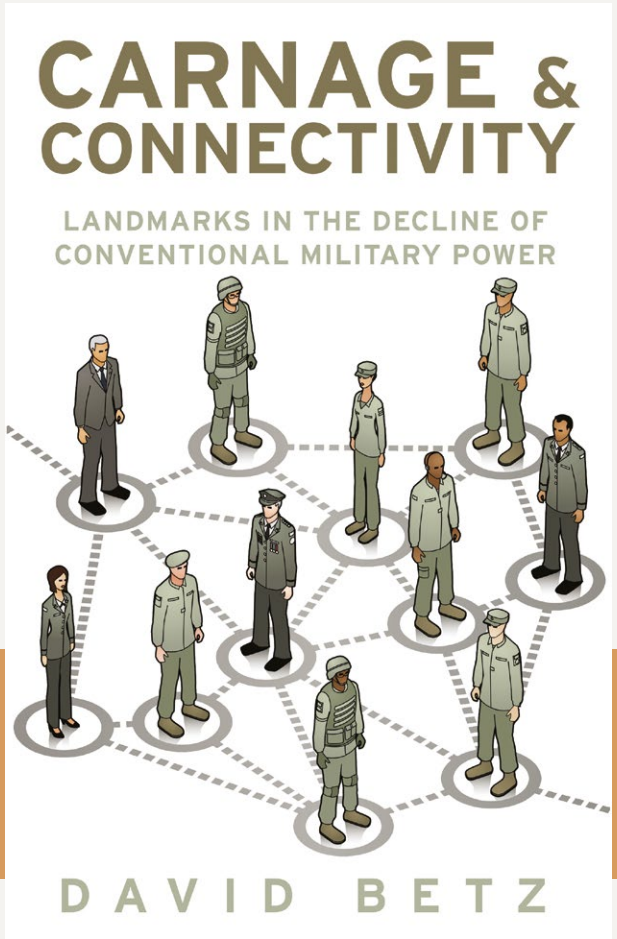

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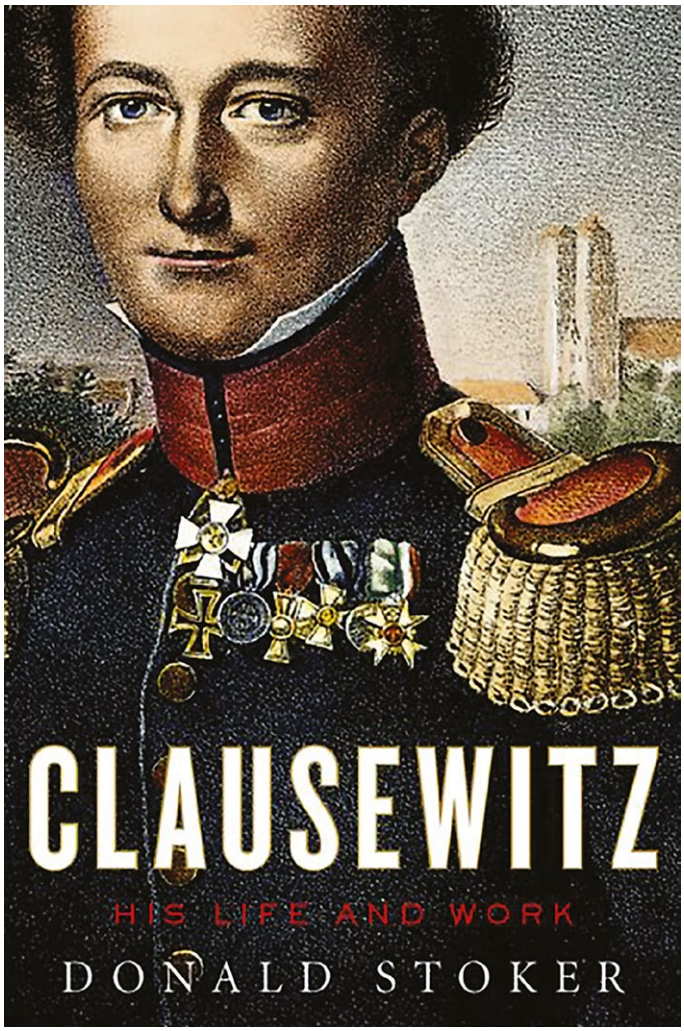

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