Because strategy never stops...

Infinity Journal

IN THIS EDITION

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A Note From The Editor

Hopefully this issue of Infinity Journal will provide our readers with a welcome break from the paddling pool deep discussions about "strategy" as concerns ISIS, or Daesh.

If you are of the opinion that your discussions about ISIS and strategy are useful and insightful, then allow me to suggest some questions that might add greater clarity.

Firstly, does your policymaker have the same policy towards ISIS in Iraq as he/she does with ISIS in Syria, or Jordan, or "Kurdistan?" By that, I mean is the policy to defeat and degrade ISIS in all those places?

If that is the case, then is it being done to restore sovereignty to the both the Government of Syria and Iraq, plus the protection of the Hashemite King? In other words is the policy objective a "status quo ante bellum", as concerns both Syria and Iraq?

The fact is, Luxembourg could defeat ISIS. Well maybe not Luxembourg, but simply put, ISIS is easy to defeat as a military force. The problem is, as it was in Afghanistan and Iraq before, US and/or NATO policy. If policy restricts the means of conduct into irrelevance, then nothing will work.

If anyone wants to criticise Clausewitz, then there is ample opportunity to do so, in that he never wrote the words, "If you get the policy right, almost everything else is easy," in as clear and as simple language as just written. Having said that, Clausewitz was a Prussian OF-7 who had fought in five or six campaigns, took part in over thirty armed engagements, and then wrote the most insightful book on War and Strategy ever written.

If we overlook his lack of clarity, then it is hard to see what views Clausewitz had on policy's relationship with strategy that are still not highly relevant today. The problem, as concerns ISIS, as it was with the Taliban, or even AQ, is policy. Policy tells you why, where, when, how and for what cost. If you are a military man who thinks your job is to carry out policy, and not to make it, then I agree, but you have to understand the art of the possible. A 2g hammer will not punch a 1kg stake through 15 centimetres of oak.
…. But as Iraq and Afghanistan showed, you can get pretty tired trying.

William F. Owen
Editor, Infinity Journal
July 2015

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

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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 at 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.

Giora Segal is a Brigadier General (res.), and currently the Head of the IDF Concepts, Experimentation and Development Center. He holds B.sc. in mathematics and an MA in political Science. He has 38 years of experience in force build-up and operations within the general staff. His current research deals with force build-up and the utility of force, including planning processes in the strategic and operational environment.

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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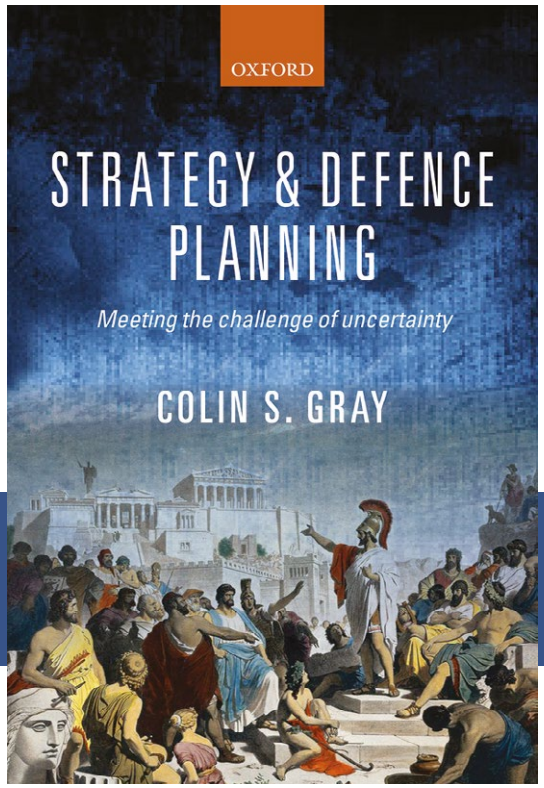

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D - All of The Above: Connecting 21st Century Naval Doctrine to Strategy

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In March 2015 the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, in cooperation with the Commandants of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, released the sea service's new strategic document *The Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. This document is one of many that can help inform a discussion which has been simmering in maritime circles about naval strategy in the 21st century. Over the past several years articles, doctrinal documents, and debates relating to "Air-Sea Battle" (ASB, renamed Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons or JAM-GC), "Offshore Control," and "Joint Operational Access," have tended to dominate these discussions. This is particularly true with reference to the Indo-Pacific region, but it is clearly not exclusive, with plenty of discussion of Persian maritime aspirations and the potential for a Russian return to the world's oceans.

The purpose of this article is to lay out some of the concepts and fundamental principles of naval strategy, as developed by the classical naval strategic thinkers, to help inform these discussions. As Bernard Brodie once wrote in one of his books on naval warfare, "contrary to popular belief, there is nothing especially esoteric about the basic principles of warfare." [i] With a foundational frame of reference described, the underlying ideas behind concepts like ASB/JAM-GC, Offshore Control, and Joint Operational Access will be examined through the lens of strategy as opposed to the funhouse mirror of budget policy and administrative maneuvering in the Pentagon.

Even with the volume of writing on naval operations in the last decade, articles have tended to lack a genuine engagement with the concepts and structures in the theory of naval strategy. These debates, particularly centered on the operational concept turned budget bogeyman "Air-Sea Battle," have spilled over into the pages of *Infinity Journal* as well. Some authors have identified ASB as a "fad" and others questioned its relevance to "strategy" as classically defined. Yet a careful reading of these articles and others, and a detailed consideration of their footnotes, offers readers the conclusion that the subject has been divorced from the actual thinking, writing, and theory of naval strategy. The issue is deeper than continentally minded strategists unstudied in the strategic theory related to the sea. The supporters and developers of the concepts behind ASB, the supposedly competing idea of Offshore Control, or of doctrinal views described by the Joint Operational Access Concept, have also been unable or unwilling to connect their "operational concepts" with maritime strategic theory. There is an odd and disquieting trend to avoid the theory of sea power and the tenets of naval strategy all together. [ii]

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Command of the Sea

The initial point of any discussion of naval strategy is command of the sea. As historian and navalist Geoffrey Till has written, command of the sea "is one of those ringing phrases that dominates the imagination but confuses the intellect." [iii] While the phrase is regularly attributed to Mahan, almost all of the leading naval thinkers have written about this concept. Mahan described the goal of sea power, and the establishment of command of the sea, as "the possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive." [iv] This explanation comes after historical examples in which he details how some nations have achieved the condition, making it clear that it was neither perfect nor total. Much like Clausewitz's comparisons between the idealized and

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theoretical forms of warfare, and the actual and frequently limited execution of war, the concept of command of the sea must be seen with a similar theoretical eye.

There is general agreement in traditional naval strategy that obtaining command of the sea is the foremost consideration; the preliminary to any other naval goals. The concept of command of the sea is not based in the exclusive physical conquest of a body of water and the occupation of said space in the way that a continentalist or land power strategist might view it. Instead the focus of command of the sea is what it provides the nation that has achieved it, because it is very unlikely it will ever be total or uncontested. Whether during wartime or peace, the ocean serves as the world's great super-highway. Warfare, particularly on the global scale that has become the norm of the 20th and 21st centuries, depends on that highway to maintain communications with the theater of conflict. Air travel and air cargo have made a difference in speed but the tonnages carried are miniscule in comparison, and a combatant force supplying itself on a far shore by air will not be able to keep up with one supplied by sea.[v]

Each of the combatant forces in a war must compete for the ability to use this highway to achieve their ends. That competition is the fundamental starting point of any naval war; it is the heart of the contest for command of the sea. Nearly every war demonstrates the importance of this initial element of naval strategy: from the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II, to Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, without which the Duke of Wellington's Army could not have safely begun a campaign in Spain which led to Waterloo. There tend to be two ways naval forces achieve command of the sea. The first is a decisive fleet engagement. Like Nelson at Trafalgar, in the purest form, the destruction of the opponent's fleet will give the victor's ships free rein and the ability to control what happens on and from the sea. The second is to keep the enemy's naval ships from ever leaving port, thus eliminating the ability to contest the superior force's preponderance.

since the end of World War II another phrase has been introduced to the naval strategy lexicon: sea control

The strong tendency to see the goals of command of the sea as permanent and general, both from naval officers and from others who dabble in naval affairs, makes it appear to be an impossible and unworkable concept in the modern era. As a result, since the end of World War II another phrase has been introduced to the naval strategy lexicon: sea control. Because command would not be as total and complete if, as those who misread the traditional strategists claim, degrees of control were introduced to replace the concept of command of the sea. Those who described sea control did it with new language that in essence said the same thing as the classical theorists: with geographical and temporal flexibility and a moving scale of totality in their description. From Mahan, to Corbett, to Brodie, command of the sea had always been a matter of degrees.[vi]

Whether using the classical phrase "command of the sea" or the neo-strategic language of "sea control," the first concept any discussion of naval strategy must cover is how, when and where a force obtains the ability to keep its enemy from using the vast maneuver space of the sea and thus open the opportunity for the successful use of that maneuver space for its own purposes. As the French Admiral and naval strategist Raoul Castex wrote in the years between the World Wars, "domination of maritime communications permits a double action, economic and military, against the enemy... virtual free use of the sea confers opportunities for coastal raids, seizures on the high seas, and conditions permitting, old-fashioned blockade." [vii]

Exercising Control: Blockade, Bombardment, and Boots

Mahan, Corbett, Castex and others, all agreed that while it may be possible, and was the best case scenario, it was unlikely that establishing command of the sea would be sufficient to obtain the political objective desired in a conflict. In a theoretical form of war, an opponent who had lost command of the sea would surely see the futility of continuing the conflict and relent, but it was easily recognized such idealized rationality was not likely to happen.[viii] Instead, the naval strategist would then be required to exercise the command of the sea that had been established, leading Corbett to his famous but often misrepresented dictum that "in no case can we exercise control by battleships alone." [ix]

In a theoretical form of war, an opponent who had lost command of the sea would surely see the futility of continuing the conflict and relent

Exercising the control which command of the sea offers to the successful naval force takes many forms and has many variations. However, with an eye for clarity, the options available to a naval strategist can be generally collected into three categories. A nation with command of the sea can attack the enemy's shipping and commerce, strike at targets ashore with their sea based weapons, or launch an amphibious operation to land ground forces in the adversary's territory. In the simplest terms, exercising control means using the "3 B's" of blockade, bombardment, or boots on the ground.

The first thing achieving command of the sea gives the strategist is the opportunity to interdict the enemy's shipping. This can take a number of forms: from the capture of warships and the elimination of the enemy's ability to conduct amphibious or other operations, to the destruction of commercial or essentially civil shipping. In Mahan's strategic "trident," which tied the military, political, and economic sources of power together, this is the most effective way for one nation to take control of or threaten another nation's economic well-being. Yet it also tends to be slow to have effect. Sometimes known as *guerre de course*, or the war against commerce, the word blockade has come to represent this element of naval strategy in recent writing.[x]

Interdiction of shipping can be executed in a number of ways. The commanding force can sink enemy vessels outright, as was eventually done by American submarines in the Pacific

during World War II, or first capture and inspect the suspected ships as was required during the age of sail. These decisions offer a number of tactical and operational considerations that must be addressed by planners. These should also be informed by strategists, as each has a relationship with the political goals that make up the ends desired by any belligerent. Whether talking about enforcement of international sanctions regimes or unrestricted submarine warfare, the interdiction of enemy shipping, known in this recent shorthand as blockade, is a fundamental element of naval strategy.[xi]

The second general category of operations used to exercise command of the sea is the attack of land targets by naval forces. In classical terms this is described as bombardment. When Lord Admiral Pellew sailed into the harbor at Algiers in 1816, with his combined fleet of British and Dutch ships to put an end to Barbary piracy, his demands were rejected until a massive bombardment of the Algerian harbor and city had taken place. Then capitulation was total. In the late 20th and 21st century the range, precision, and capability of maritime forces to strike at targets ashore grew exponentially from the days of sailing ships. As that capability increased so did the ability of bombardment to achieve certain strategic ends.[xii]

In the works of the older naval strategists, like Mahan and Corbett, the importance of bombardment is mentioned but admittedly received less focus.

In the works of the older naval strategists, like Mahan and Corbett, the importance of bombardment is mentioned but admittedly received less focus. This was because of the issues involved in range and the connected ability to place an adversary's interests and valuable targets at risk. As the 20th century developed, thinkers whose work was founded in these classical strategists increased the focus on striking targets ashore and what came to be known as power-projection. The ability to place an adversary's shipping at risk and the ability to land military expeditions ashore dominated late 19th and early 20th century strategic thought, but the introduction of technology, that made maritime strike more useful, rightfully led to the increase in its place in strategic thinking. The inclusion of naval strikes ashore, in the list of operational methods for exercising command of the sea, gained prominence to the point that in the 1990's official U.S. naval doctrinal and strategic documents tended to focus on this area.[xiii]

The third general category for the exercise of command of the sea is the landing of ground forces in what the early thinkers termed military expeditions. More recent strategic language calls amphibious operations, or what today's popular culture refers to "boots on the ground." Mahan was well known for his suspicion of military expeditions, and many writers have told us he was against their use as a tool of sea power. This, as with many assertions about Mahan, is divorced from his actual writing. Mahan recognized the importance of landing troops to achieve the political objectives of a naval power, but he warned it must be done with an understanding of the temporal and geographic nature of command of the sea. In short, he feared the tendency to try and launch a military expedition prior to achieving sufficient command of the surrounding waters. Transports and the vessels of amphibious operations tend to be vulnerable to organized naval forces. With proper strategic planning, and operational execution, Mahan wrote about the value of such operations.[xiv]

Corbett's writing, particularly in *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, expanded on the place of amphibious operations in over-all naval strategy. He was later joined by Castex who wrote, "if navies would do more, they must conduct combined operations, enterprises of vast scope that transcend the limitations on the sea's ability to operate against the land." Amphibious operations take many forms: from small raids ashore to attack strategically important positions, to massive assaults aimed at defeating the enemy and occupying large amounts of their territory. How, when, and where to conduct these kinds of operations have long been a central part of naval strategy.[xv]

The Art of Naval Strategy & Today's Doctrine

Establishing command of the sea and exercising the control allowed by that command through blockade, bombardment, or putting boots on the ground, is a simplified way of looking at the basics of naval strategy. Admittedly, from the discussion above, these principles appear sequential, but that is not necessarily the case. They are simply building blocks of naval warfare and can be put together in an almost infinite number of ways. Mahan described the conduct of war as an art: "art, out of materials which it finds about it, creates new forms in endless variety... according to the genius of the artist and the temper of materials with which he is dealing."[xvi]

Understanding how to combine the elements of naval warfare described is the central task of naval strategy. Each has its own temporal and geographic elements in play as well as a moving scale of totality. They should not be considered strategies by themselves or in isolation. Instead, if a navy's fleet and resources are its means these should be the ways in which a strategist employs them in order to achieve the political ends desired from the conflict. Thus, localized command of the sea may be all that a naval force can accomplish, but it also may be sufficient to achieve the political objectives desired. Command might also only be established for a very specific period of time: such as the Japanese in the waters around Hawaii during the Pearl Harbor attack, when the bulk of the U.S. Fleet was in port and the Imperial Japanese Navy was able to achieve sufficient command of the sea to conduct a strategically significant bombardment. As John Hattendorf has related, "there are gradations that range from an abstract ideal to that which is practical, possible, or merely desirable... control is to be general or limited, absolute or merely governing, widespread or local, permanent or temporary."[xvii]

This scaling of the principles of naval warfare, and their combination into a method by which the naval strategist hopes to achieve his nation's goals, is the heart of the task. Attacking an enemy's economy and well-being, through exercising control over their shipping, tends to be a long

process but also presents opportunity to control escalation. Landing forces ashore can drive to faster conclusion but tends to place more blood and treasure at risk. Mixing and matching the competing strategic level strengths and weaknesses to develop a sound approach to achieving national objectives takes an appreciation of these factors. As Brodie observed, "to say that the basic principles of war are easy to understand is not to say that it is easy to comprehend the finer points, or what is more important, to determine upon a wise plan of strategy to carry it out." These are some of the fundamentals we should be discussing when considering the doctrinal and operational writing of maritime affairs in the 21st century.

Boiled down to its central thesis, today's discussion of JAM-GC is an examination of command of the sea in the modern world. The official writing of the ASB Office, and now the JAM-GC Office, repeatedly uses the word "access." The 2015 edition of the *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* also embraces this idea by dedicating a whole discussion to "all-domain access." From a strategic standpoint, rather than operationally or technologically, the Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2AD) struggle is about ensuring that one naval force cannot maintain access, and the other force can deny that opponent the ability to use the area. Like the introduction of the concepts of sea control, A2AD simply replaces the long standing strategic and conceptual understanding with new jargon and contemporary examples. What the ASB/JAM-GC doctrinal documents are really talking about, in the terms used by classical naval theory, is command of the sea.[xix]

Some modern analysts might claim that the A2AD challenge has nothing to do with command of the sea.

Some modern analysts might claim that the A2AD challenge has nothing to do with command of the sea. They proceed to explain that it's about creating a space where the enemy can't go, so the enemy can't use that area to achieve their objectives. Yet this line of logic sounds nearly identical to Mahan's goal of "possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it," which was quoted earlier. When the theoretical concept of command of the sea was first developed the sea was the only global common that needed to be fought over. In the 21st century the air above the oceans, space, and the cyber realm are all contested as well, but the theoretical construct remains valid even if the commons have expanded. What concepts like JAM-GC are doing, when viewed through the lens of traditional naval strategy, is discussing the ways naval forces achieve command of the sea.

When considered alongside the elements of traditional naval strategy the counter- proposal to ASB/JAM-GC, first published by T.X. Hammes and called Offshore Control, does not really appear to be a counter-proposal at all. Built around the establishment of a blockade and the interdiction of shipping, what Hammes describes is focused on exercising the control which command of the sea establishes, rather than the fight for command itself. Hammes and the advocates for strategies that favor blockade add an important element to the discussion. The considerations inherent in exercising command are illustrated in their analysis, and their thinking illuminates one of the important options available in naval strategy. However, despite the claims Offshore Control is itself a strategy, it is impossible to develop a strategy without a specific political objective. Because of this, the excellent writing on Offshore Control should be read as one of the potential alternatives when deciding what mix of blockade, bombardment, and boots on the ground is best used to achieve the nation's desired ends.[xx]

Official Department of Defense publications have not been the only place that ASB/JAM-GC has been discussed. The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment's (CSBA) *Air Sea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept* report has a much more expansive view of the ideas encompassed than the actual doctrinal and official writing. In the study led by Jan Van Tol, CSBA expands beyond the establishment of command of the sea and developing the ability to maintain access, while also looking at how the same or similar technologies and operational concepts could be used to strike at targets ashore. In this conceptualization of an air and sea battle the authors move from command of the sea to the use of bombardment to achieve the political ends desired. Much like how the writing on Offshore Control is almost exclusively focused on blockade, the treatment of ASB by CSBA is relatively focused on striking targets ashore and also misses some of the art of the choices that need to be made in naval strategy.[xxi]

Finally, the third element of exercising command of the sea also has a place in the modern discussion of doctrine and operational concepts. The Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) and the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Force 21 doctrinal documents are focused on the operational challenges of putting boots on the ground in the 21st century. Like the CSBA report, the JOAC doctrinal document addresses some of the modern concepts necessary to achieve command of the sea, but it does so with contemporary Pentagon jargon and think tank speak rather than engagement with traditional strategic concepts. As opposed to the CSBA analysis, the focus then shifts to the concepts necessary for getting troops on the ground. Expeditionary Force 21 follows a similar discussion, though as is to be expected, it has a greater focus on the amphibious operations to get Marines across the beach.[xxii]

the third element of exercising command of the sea also has a place in the modern discussion of doctrine and operational concepts

Naval Strategy...It's a Thing

Understanding the foundational theories and strategic writing on sea power is vital to a proper discussion and debate of naval warfare in the 21st century. For the first decade and a half of this new millennium there has been an overarching focus and dominance of the strategic thinking of land warfare in the United States and much of Europe. This occurred for good reason, particularly as the United States

and other western nations attempted to develop successful strategies and plans for difficult conflicts ashore in the Middle East. However, as the next decade approaches, many foresee the return of maritime affairs and naval conflict with the rise of new great powers and an increasing role of economic competition between nations. Because of this, those who are interested in military and national strategy must come to the realization the continentalist thinkers who have dominated the discussion for decades are not enough.

Viewing today's debates on naval strategy through the lens of traditional maritime strategic thought offers officers, policy makers, and thinkers a framework and a clarifying structure. Naval power is a part of the joint or combined power of a nation, and as such its relationship to land is central to its strategic thought. The ability to achieve command of the sea is the central and vital starting point, but it provides a beginning rather than an end to itself. Instead, how that command is exercised through the use of blockade, bombardment, and putting boots on the ground dictates the interaction between naval power and the land. A naval strategist, in his or her contribution to an overall military and national strategy, must understand the artistry of mixing and matching the mediums and materials described, and they must consider them in a balanced way to achieve the nation's goals.

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Strategy as a Learning Process: Israel and the United States Against Islamic Terrorism

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Introduction

The term, 'Islamic terrorism', refers to terrorist attacks conducted by Islamic Jihad Organizations who wish to replace the nation-state based regional and world order and its currently accepted borders with the unitary Islamic state. Beginning, in the Levant, they wish to expand throughout the Middle East, then Europe and farther afield. Therefore, the spread of Islamic terror through the Middle East destabilizes the moderate Arab states and the Western Democracies currently fighting it.

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To achieve political goals, strategy must achieve an optimal matching of the military effort to them. However, Islamic terrorism poses a novel challenge that disrupts the ability of Western Statesmen and Military Commanders to design a coherent and relevant grand-strategy because of the complexity of the phenomenon; its intellectual and cultural riddle is as yet not sufficiently comprehensible to them. Thus, statesmen are struggling to define political goals commensurate with the challenge and the commanders are struggling to define appropriate military action that will achieve those goals.[i] The resulting maladjustment between the two can lead to a crisis of expectations and then to a crisis of confidence between the political leadership and the military leadership.

The complexity of the Islamist terrorist challenge[ii] requires both the military and the statesmen to conduct complex learning and diagnostic processes to properly interpret the operational environment, analyze the relevance of political goals and military courses of action and adjust them accordingly to design a strategy. Ensuring such a learning process requires a distinct discourse space,[iii] an 'Open Discourse Space' that removes the hierarchic boundaries between statesmen and commanders, thus creating an intellectual partnership.

The copious existing literature on learning discusses individual learning, organizational learning and the specific learning methods of a military organization, but does not sufficiently discuss learning processes joining hierarchic levels. This learning across hierarchic boundaries is unique in that it is not individual, nor organizational, nor military.

Another problem is the limited understanding of the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism. Despite its unique characteristics vis-à-vis other forms of terrorism and the fact that it has become a major challenge to regional and global stability and to the industrialized democracies, it is still an unsolved phenomenon. An important testimony to the extent of this gap and its strategic ramifications can be found in the comprehensive RAND study of the American-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.[iv] After 13 years of war, the West has not yet developed and effective strategy to terminally defeat Islamic terrorism.

The concept of a Discourse Space joining statesmen and

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commanders can help to bridge these gaps. This article develops the original concept[v] by characterizing two types of Discourse Space (open and closed), identifying the correlation between strategic learning and the Open Discourse Space and identifying the conditions required to create it.

Israel has been fighting terror attacks since its establishment and over the past two decades it too has been fighting Islamic terrorism. Therefore, Israel's experience can be used as a unique case study for studying this subject.

This article will attempt to answer three main questions:

1. How does Islamic terror challenge the ability of the statesman and the commander to identify the strategy best suited to achieve the political goal?

2. What type of discourse between the levels can ensure the greatest compatibility between the strategy and the political goal?

3. What are the conditions for creating the relevant Discourse Space and what are the barriers limiting its creation?

THE ESSENCE OF ISLAMIC TERRORISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE COMPLEXITY OF STATESMEN-COMMANDER RELATIONS

The Al-Qaeda attacks against the USA in Tanzania, on the American destroyer 'Cole' in Yemen and of course the Twin Towers on 11th September 2001 were significant milestones in the evolution of Islamic terrorism. When President Bush declared the 'Global War on Terror' and ordered American forces to invade Afghanistan and Iraq he was actually declaring Islamic terror the official enemy of the USA and the West. Despite some operational successes against Islamist forces and the killing of Al-Qaeda's founder and leader, Osama bin-Laden, the organization continues to sustain its global activity. In fact, that specific organization was weakened more by an internal rift, caused by ideological and personal disagreements that prompted some groups to leave it, than by the Western Alliance's attacks. The breaking away of ISIS from Al-Qaeda and the fervor it aroused, is a significant milestone in the spreading of the Islamic terror phenomenon throughout the Middle East and its penetration into Europe and North America.

The breaking away of ISIS from Al-Qaeda and the fervor it aroused, is a significant milestone in the spreading of the Islamic terror phenomenon

Al-Qaeda, ISIS and other organizations conquered territories while erasing international borders and inflaming the passions of many, including young Moslem citizens throughout the world. These young men and women volunteered to serve in ISIS and some returned to their homelands as trained, ideologically motivated terrorists, establishing an infrastructure for terror cells in their home-countries and posing an internal threat to these countries. The Western democracies now face a complex two-front threat – one in the Middle East and the other gradually evolving at home.

Islamic terrorism has certain unique characteristics compared to traditional terrorism. The first, most important distinction is that Islamic terrorism is transnational and global. It is a network of organizations, cooperating in various ways, aimed to nullify the existing regional orders, erasing existing state borders and replacing them with a unified Islamic state and then extending this state globally. Islamic terror organizations are especially murderous and cruel, uniquely exploiting both the traditional and the new medias and social networks to promulgate their message and amplify the awe they inspire. They have access to a wide variety of weapons, including weapons of state-armies and in some cases chemical weapons. After conquering territory they are undergoing a process of formalization in order to establish a governmental infrastructure for the Islamic State. They are, therefore, undergoing an accelerated transformation from the non-state terror organizations we have seen in the past to semi-state players.

Westerners struggle to understand the attraction of the phenomenon and try, unsuccessfully, to assess it with Western paradigms

The unique attributes of Islamic terrorism make it no less of a unique cultural and intellectual challenge. Westerners struggle to understand the attraction of the phenomenon and try, unsuccessfully, to assess it with Western paradigms – note Raymond Ibrahim's criticism of CIA chief Brennan's explanation of the motivation of the volunteers to ISIS:

> *"When Brennan, Harf et al insist that jihadis are really not motivated by religion but rather are products of political, economic, and social forces, is this total dismissal of the "other" and his peculiar motivations (in favor of familiar, Western paradigms) not the epitome of cultural arrogance?" [vi]*

Already, during the Great Arab Rebellion of the First World War, Lawrence of Arabia discerned the uniqueness of Irregular Warfare when he determined that:

> *"Irregular war was far more intellectual than a bayonet charge, far more exhausting than service in the comfortable imitative obedience of an ordered army." [vii]*

Identifying the phenomenon as abstract, involving a philosophy and theory mainly regarding the metaphysical aspect, required him to develop a relevant theory. [viii]

Islamic terrorism is a form of irregular warfare several times more complex because of two unique characteristics: emergence and speed. It is not sufficiently crystallized or clear enough and yet it emerges rapidly, with frequent radical changes, it spreads quickly to other geographical arenas and its consequences are multi-dimensional. The

strategic theory or paradigm needed to defeat this complex challenge does not yet exist.

In the Israeli case, the complexity of the challenge stems from the wide variety of groups in areas geographically adjacent to Israel. *"I think our area of assessment is problematic and needs to change dramatically. It must now cope with Al-Qaeda and ISIS, Salafists in Sinai, changes in Lebanon where now there is not only Hizbullah but also ISIS and Jubhat al-Nusra"*[ix] said a former Israeli Deputy Chief of Staff. Israeli Knesseth Member Ofer Shelakh commented that: *"It is an enormous intellectual challenge. But we are not changing our concepts… We continue to adhere to things that are past, we are not designing a policy or an army really built to deal with what is facing them"*.[x]

The American experience also shows the challenge to be intellectual and conceptual – as described in the opening of the RAND study on the American experience in Afghanistan and Iraq: *"The U.S. military recognizes that a great deal of intellectual work remains to be done to learn from these experiences"*.[xi]

This situation transforms dealing with the Islamic terror phenomenon into a task that extends beyond the usual preventative military and intelligence operations. The task is complex for the political leadership, but seems to be much more complex for the military, operating as a mission-oriented organization according to a very specific and defined logic. Some of the logic needed for this struggle is typical and natural for the military organization and some is foreign to its nature. Furthermore, there are tensions and contradictions between the logic and an overall strategy must include and mediate between them. It is dialectic and difficult to apply. [xii]

Israel's Operation 'Protective Edge' suffered from inconsistencies between the political goals and the military action:

> *"I think there was a new policy and that the army did not adjust its plans, stores and 'state of mind' appropriately… If you want to dramatically change the operating concept of the army, you must first conduct formal discussions in the government, decide what are the consequences of this change and prepare accordingly, not be surprised by a 50 day war." [xiii]*

Like other democracies, perhaps more than most, Israel must expend a significant effort to ensure that its policies and strategies are maximally suited to the challenges it faces. However, some argue that *"Israel has no strategy, political and military, to deal with its current enemies. To the north and to the south we are facing sub-state organizations, whose responsibility for the territory they occupy is not well-defined and that any arrangement with them is hard to reach"*.[xiv]

Creating an appropriate strategy while reducing the subjective dimensions of situation-assessment, requires a process of learning the unique characteristics of each situation and threat, interpreting these characteristics and creating a common terminology for describing them.[xv] The appropriate learning process is defined by Jack Levy as Complex-Diagnostic Learning.[xvi]

THE LEARNING PROCESS AS A PREREQUISITE FOR DESIGNING AN OVERALL STRATEGY RELEVANT TO THE CHALLENGE

Learning is extensively discussed in the literature of many disciplines. Jack Levy defined learning as a change in beliefs or the development of new beliefs, skills and procedures, resulting from observation and interpretation of experience. Levy regarded learning as an active process of acquiring knowledge and designing analytical constructs. He distinguished between causal learning – changing beliefs as a result of hypothesizing on cause and effect as they influence the results of actions, and diagnostic learning – changing beliefs as a result of defining situations or preferences, goals or relative capabilities of others. He also distinguished between two qualities of learning: simple learning – occurring when new information brings a change in means and courses of action, and complex learning – resulting from understanding the tension between values and causing a change in the definition of both goals and means.[xvii]

Simple causal learning can be defined as tactical learning – adjustment and adaptation, whereas complex diagnostic learning is strategic learning – reconstructing situational perception. In cognitive terms, tactical learning is the updating of existing cognitive structures, whereas strategic learning is the changing and expanding of these cognitive structures.

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Phillip Tetlock referred to learning as confronting cognitive complexity, with the individual developing more complex cognitive maps and structures of his surroundings and a greater willingness for self-criticism.[xviii] Tetlock tied the results of an individual's developing cognitive maps with the praxis of organizational learning. He argued that the essence of organizational learning is actually the learning process of the separate individuals in that organization, concluding that the assumption that organizations learn is not analytically founded. This understanding has unique significance in our discussion of the learning process in the discourse space between the political and military levels because that encounter is a more abstract and challenging form of the formal organizational structure.

The existing literature on learning does not discuss learning across organizational boundaries, such as the meeting between statesmen and commanders. It is assumed that in these unique profiles the lack of a formal organization makes the regulation of common cognitive structures more difficult in the informal discourse between the participants thus complicating the learning procedures. These conditions provide a certain advantage to the more developed knowledge of the military in the discourse with the statesmen. [xix]

Strategic learning is based on an abstract learning process.

This kind of thinking requires creativity and a wide holistic view. Over the past decade, the military has developed a literature and a knowledge infrastructure for this type of thinking as a necessary tool for improving the courses of action when facing the complex military challenges evolving in asymmetrical conflicts. This literature identifies abstract thinking as founded on the concept of 'design'; an architectural concept distinct from the engineering concept. The concept of 'design' treats the campaign as *gestalt*, enabling the design of the political concept followed by the designing of an operational concept as "a holistic whole of ideas and phases, even before beginning the planning process". [xx]

In contrast, the Israeli experience indicates the weakness and limitations of the political level in manufacturing knowledge. "*Observing Israeli governments over decades raises the concern that they were lacking and still are lacking the capability of learning… Israeli governments have not developed a relevant strategy in the fields of security, violent conflicts and war… A government that does not learn stays behind the regional changes*". [xxi]

The army has a tradition of learning, expressed in the organizational structure, in procedures and organizational cultures that emphasize learning as inherent to military professionalism. The political level lacks these functions. This creates an asymmetry of knowledge in the army's favor, making its knowledge authoritative. The knowledge created and developed by the army becomes a significant element in the government's knowledge and decision-making process. [xxii] This gap can be reduced by a sophisticated discourse between the levels which serve as a significant arena for creating relevant knowledge. This new knowledge should enable re-examining of the political goals and the military courses of action in order to ensure their maximal compatibility – i.e. strategy.

One hurdle in elaborating the discourse is the army's tendency to focus on operational and tactical issues, based on the military debriefing processes between operations. This focus exists because the army's purpose is to discover the gaps between planning and implementation and to learn what changes are necessary in courses of action (i.e. simple learning – adjustment or adaptation). The military debriefing mechanism is not suitable for dealing with strategic issues and does not aid the developing of knowledge and thinking in these complex contexts (thus, for example, the lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War which were applied in Operation 'Cast Lead' and caused numerous Palestinian casualties in addition to the Goldstone Report). This phenomenon is also known by other armies, such as the American case described by Allen and Coates:

> *"The military leaders focused on tactical and operational problems not connected to achieving the strategic goals of the civilian leadership. Focus¬ing on tactical problems that were not supportive of the strategic vision is an excellent example of EIII decisions by military leaders." [xxiii]*

In a similar vein, a comprehensive RAND study found that the American military tends to learn operational and tactical lessons from its wars and attempts to adjust them for new wars that require a wider strategic understanding and "out of the box" thinking beyond the implementation of past experience. [xxiv]

Therefore, learning from the military debriefing process is limited and does not sufficiently exploit the cognitive dimension in the context of fighting Islamic terrorism – a challenge that requires complex diagnostic learning. This type of learning is required every time, one must analyze strategic events because they are new and inherently different, so existing knowledge is not necessarily relevant to the new situation. It requires questioning and thinking critically. To ensure the appropriate learning environment the military must express its opinions, its expertise and the knowledge it has accumulated and the civilian leadership must listen to the army even when its advice contradicts the politicians' ideology. [xxv] Complex learning, defined in some places as system-oriented thinking, is not easy to digest. It undermines existing organizational structures, paradigms and discourse structures and arouses opposition. To think systemically, one cannot deal only with the data and principles (the descriptive level), one must also discuss the interpretation and critique and synthesize – thus creating a new understanding. Creating new knowledge is a circular process that begins with the existing system, moves to the evolving system, from there to the desired system and when that gradually becomes the existing system, one must start over.

This manner of strategic learning increases the probability of creating a concept of action that can be transferred from the abstract strategic environment to the concrete operational environment. These learning processes are similar in mode to those of the architect's creativity and design. They differ from the simpler learning process of the engineer, with its orientation on physical implementation. It is the difference between "problem setting" and "problem solving".

Strategy can be explained in terms of learning and described as the practice of systematic learning, thus enabling thoughtful navigation in a complex environment in order to identify what has changed, evolving aspects and potentials for more change. In a turbulent dynamic environment such as that of Islamic terrorism, the practice of learning becomes an endless journey of creating knowledge.

Learning and knowledge creation are essentially intellectual challenges [xxvi] requiring a partnership between the political and the military leaderships. The traditional distinction between the military and the political is not possible in this partnership because the challenge of Islamic terror creates a situation in which *"objectives of strategic value change frequently while operations are underway…"* [xxvii] so that the strategic purpose must be frequently adjusted in order to assure its relevancy.

CLOSED DICOURSE, OPEN DISCOURSE, LEARNING PROCESSES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN DESIGNING AN OVERALL STRATEGY

American experience in Afghanistan and Iraq proves that every time the discourse between the levels was a closed discourse, the strategy decided upon was not relevant to the complex challenges in those arenas.

"… why things had gone so badly wrong with America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan… Ours is the best-equipped fighting force in history, and it is incomparably the most expensive… Yet repeatedly this force has been defeated by less modern, worse-equipped, barely funded foes… At this point, it is incontrovertibly evident that the U.S. military failed to achieve any of its strategic goals in Iraq." [xxviii]

Only the strategies developed by instances of statesmen-commander partnerships, conducting open discourse lead, to improved results. Partnership and open discourse enabled the statesmen and the commanders to challenge existing concepts, to improve their knowledge and to interpret the operational environment more precisely, and this, in turn, enabled the reassessment of the relevance of the political goals, clarification of the political directive and the design of a more relevant overall strategy to achieve those goals.

The first and most important of the seven lessons identified by the RAND study regarding the American 13 year experience in Afghanistan and Iraq touched this very issue:

> *"The blurry line between policy and strategy requires both civilians and the military to engage in a dynamic, iterative dialogue to make successful strategy, but that often failed to occur… The ends, ways, and means did not align, whether because the policy objectives were too ambitious, the ways of achieving them ineffective, or the means applied inadequate." [xxix]*

Contemporary asymmetrical wars require thinking and planning patterns that are more holistic, complex and abstract

Contemporary asymmetrical wars require thinking and planning patterns ("*cognitive designs*") that are more holistic, complex and abstract. The difficulty of defining the problem and understanding its many dimensions makes defining the political goal and the relevant military achievements more difficult. A necessary prerequisite for dealing with this complex challenge is *"an extensive open discourse, creating competition between different ideas and different viewpoints in order to integrate them"*. [xxx] When the participants fail to create relevant "cognitive designs", military conservatism and insufficient situational understanding of the political leadership might lead to irrelevant fighting methods.

> *"What we have is a combat method in which the relationship between the effort and its effectiveness is impossible. You enter a war without knowing its goals, and you fight in a manner which in a low intensity war will bring you to the red lines because of unrealistic planning, very conservative use of force, inexperience and professional problems". [xxxi]*

Reducing the discourse space will deny the political leadership the ability to understand the complexity of the context because it does not fully exploit the military's base of knowledge of that context. Conversely, when the political leadership reveals its political intentions to the military leadership, the latter can more fully explain the consequences, thus enabling the political leadership to analyze the relevance of its strategic intentions and to adjust them. [xxxii]

When discussing the 'discourse space', it is important to distinguish between a closed discourse process, characterized by discussions and presentation of alternatives in a permanently structured process, a ritual of sorts – which promotes only simple or tactical learning, and an open continuous discourse with ad-hoc structures and characteristics, formed by context and particular need. Open discourse challenges existing knowledge by testing new thinking on existing conceptual patterns and concepts, therefore creating strategic, diagnostic or complex learning. The challenge is created because the collision of existing logic enables synthesizing it into a new logic. It seems that this type of learning did not occur in Operation 'Protective Edge'. Despite the numerous (27 in total) political-security cabinet discussions, the impression is that the discussion between levels was closed with the traditional characteristics of structure and roles:

> *"Despite innumerable discussions, the cabinet apparently did not create new and worthwhile strategic insights during the operation… To advance learning requires presenting of products that encourage learning, not closed alternative operational plans from which one must be chosen". [xxxiii]*

WHY AN OPEN DISCOURSE SPACE? THE LOGIC AND THE THEORY TESTED BY EXPERIENCE

Open discourse enables travelling to imagined-worlds, which, in turn, enable the design of new cognitive structures necessary for a different and critical examination of existing knowledge. In the terminology of Phillip Tetlock, this is the process of learning. It enables the integration of political logic and military logic, leading to the development of new knowledge, which will enable the designing of an innovative, more relevant policy. RAND's study emphasizes the importance of an interactive discussion (what we call 'open discourse') between the levels to the process of strategic learning:

> *"The current process does not routinely produce effective strategy… Civilian policymakers require an active dialogue with the military and other sources of information to inform the diagnosis of the situation, as well as to develop realistic policy objectives… Formulating strategy is further inhibited because there is no established integrated civilian-military process that would rigorously identify assumptions, risks, possible outcomes, and second-order effects… The lack of such a process inhibited timely adaptation of strategy in response to the evolution of understanding and events. [xxxiv]*

Conversely, military thinking is focused on threats: "*without relating to a particular threat, real or imagined, armies do not have a basis for existing and acting*". [xxxv] If the statesmen are not sufficiently aware of this characteristic, the security threat will generally be deemed more serious and

tangible than other threats (demographic, social, political) [xxxvi] so that the military's thoughts and courses of action will be prioritized to a level that can sometimes make them undisputable.[xxxvii]

Preventing this requires dealing with the political and military environments as one and necessitates joint critical thinking by both levels of the hierarchy.

The Israeli cabinet's difficulty during Operation 'Protective Edge' to develop innovative strategic insights stemmed from the lack of such an examination. Actually, this merely repeats the pattern of Israeli cabinet discussions since the Yom Kippur War as described by Giora Iland, former chief of the IDF's General Staff Planning Directorate and former Head of the National Security Council (NSC), who participated in many of them.[xxxviii] Iland claimed that "*the dependence of the ministers only on the information the Defence Minister and the Chief of Staff chose to present in formal meetings creates a dangerous situation of group-thinking and an exaggerated acceptance of existing conceptions*". Most of the time spent in these meetings was allocated to presenting the intelligence summary and operational updates, whereas "*not enough time is spent debating what to do*". At the strategic level "*elaborating the details of the situation creates a shallow debate*".[xxxix] In fact, this is the type of discussion characterized above as closed and ritualistic. Opening the discourse "*requires, by definition, exposing the cabinet to people and organizations who have an opposing view and a different perspective than the security organizations*".[xl]

Alogic similar to that of the open discourse space can be found in the 'Targeted Partnership' model developed by Rebecca Schiff. She presents as a positive example, General Petreus, who, unlike Defense Secretary Rumsfeld – whom she cites as a negative example, chose to listen to experts from various fields and of varied opinions so as to create a heated, deep debate on all the aspects of the insurgency in Iraq.[xli] In fact, this model formalizes a process of creating relevant knowledge and a different decision making procedure – a more flexible structure or relationship between hierarchic levels creating open qualitative discourse between the levels, thus enabling the design of an overall strategy relevant to facing the challenge of Islamic terrorism.

Closed discourse quells the intellectual discussion required to respond to complex challenges such as Islamic terrorism. Whereas, open discourse between statesmen and commanders, serves as a bridge connecting the abstract political directive to the military praxis.

BARRIERS TO OPEN DISCOURSE, COMPLEX LEARNING AND THE CONDITIONS FOR CREATING A RELEVANT DISCOURSE ZONE

The challenge of the two hierarchic levels, the political and the military, is to merge the political logic with the logic of combat. The lack of this merger in the discourse between these levels explains the shallowness of strategy and the inconsistency of political and military efforts. The usual trend is to maintain stability, to cling to the known and familiar. A qualitative discourse between the levels should leverage the differences between them and exploit the tension between political and military thinking.

The challenge of the two hierarchic levels, the political and the military, is to merge the political logic with the logic of combat.

A series of inherent tensions interfere with the creation of this discourse in Israel and most other democracies. These blocks can be divided into four main categories: essence, structural, procedural and cultural.

- Blocks of essence include the leadership skills of the political level, the constraints and limits of maneuver within which the politicians work and especially the difficulty of defining political goals and the need for internal and external legitimacy.

- Structural blocks are those of organizational structure and the functional aspects of governments, armies and the other professional bodies the government depends on.

- Procedural blocks include the conduct of encounter when the levels meet, the characteristics of that encounter/discourse and how these influence the learning process.

- Cultural blocks reflect the influence of organizational culture and political culture on the meeting of levels.

Therefore, an open discourse that enables complex learning, characterized by an intellectual culture of openness, doubt, curiosity and study, cannot be taken for granted.

Open qualitative discourse between levels requires a cultural climate based on trust between the levels.

Another precondition for open discourse is the concept of 'shared responsibility'[xlii] of both levels, both in practice and backed by public legitimacy. Without the concept of shared responsibility, responsibility and authority separate and in cases of failure or even only partial success (such as Operation 'Protective Edge' in the view of part of the public, the media and political establishment) the military leadership might find itself exposed to criticism, examination and interrogation. The military leaders' fear of a lack of support from the politicians in the face of the Commissions of Inquiry on 'the day after', might constrain them to present to the political leaders only the alternatives they believe suit the politicians' agendas. This prevents the military from studying in depth the politicians' actual wishes and intentions and challenging them with the military's understanding of the actual situation.

ENSURING THE MILITARY OPERATION IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE POLITICAL GOAL AND 'TARGETED PARTNERSHIP'

How the statesman formulates his directives to the commander affects the ability of the commander to design

a military operation commensurate with the political goal. Therefore,

"The military must insist on knowing what the political goals are, which assumptions underlie these goals, what the means will be, and then insist on receiving them. And the country's political leadership and public must understand that it is their job, not the military's, to define victory and mobilize resources to achieve it – while holding the military responsible for winning on the battlefield." [xliii]

If we define the compatibility of the military action to the political goal as a variable dependent on the characteristics of the political directive and the discourse (independent variables), we will discover that the best compatibility between the military actions and the political goal is achieved when the political directive is clear and the discourse space between the levels is open, enabling qualitative diagnostic/strategic learning. Conversely, lack of compatibility between the military action and the political goal is created when the directive is blurred and the discourse is closed – conducted as limited simple/tactical learning. For the two other combinations, blurred directive and open discourse or a clear directive and closed discourse, the compatibility will be partial.

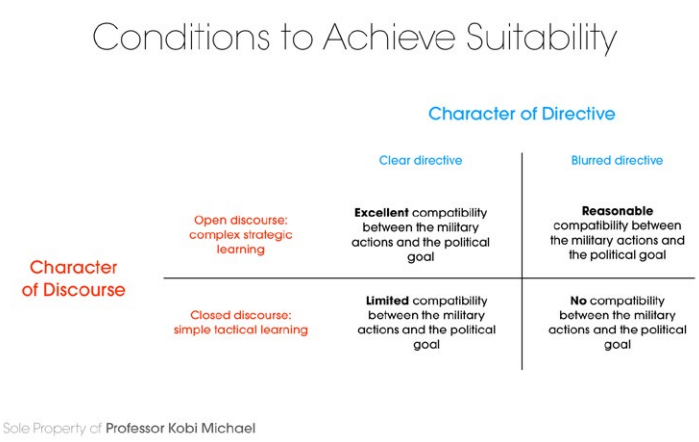

Diagram 1: Conditions to Achieve Suitability

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The spread of Islamic terrorism through the Middle East has created a very complex challenge to the Western democracies combating this threat. This is a multi-dimensional challenge that cannot be met with a purely military response. As the conflict progresses there has evolved a growing inconsistency between the military actions and the political goals. This inconsistency results from the difficulty of the political leadership to define the political goal and the difficulty of the military to define the military achievement required to achieve that goal. This inconsistency weakens the essential political control of the military and is creating a crisis of expectations.

Designing military operations capable of achieving the political goals requires diagnostic/strategic learning and is possible only with an open inter-level discourse. This article has presented definitions of open and closed discourse and the characteristics required for an open discourse to occur and explained the connection between a strategic learning process and open discourse.

Viewing the American experience in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Israeli experience, especially impressions of the conduct of Operation 'Protective Edge', we conclude that a strategy leading to positive outcomes was designed only in those cases where the hierarchical levels succeeded in developing partnerships and shared responsibility and opening the discourse between them. The partnership and the discourse challenged existing understandings, improved knowledge and interpreted the operational environment more accurately. This strengthened the ability to define political goals, to formulate a clear, relevant political directive and ultimately, to design an overall relevant strategy that fully and properly merged the abstract political logic and the military practice.

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Photojay | Dreamstime.com - Soldiers Wait For Helicopter In Iraq Photo

Coming Down from Olympus: A Call for Normative, Descriptive, and Phenomenological Distinctions in Strategic Theory

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Defense analysts often wish for better strategies and tactics. This lament has multiple legitimate sources, from the gap between expectations of strategic excellence and dismal realities to the seeming absence of coherent decision-making frameworks altogether. The cruel paradox, perhaps, is that we live in an era in which we have never been more aware of the importance of strategic and tactical knowledge, but nonetheless seem to make nothing but poor choices.

Not all strategic theories are created equal

I argue that this is an inevitable problem of failing to distinguish between different types of theories about how strategic decisions are made. Not all strategic theories are created equal; some are rooted in what strategists *should* do, others explain what science expects strategists *to do*, and the most traditional simply set out a framework for what strategists *should know*. While these separate bodies of knowledge may have enormous overlap, they should not be thought of as functionally identical.

First, I examine confusion in modern day defense analysis between strategy as we want it to be and strategy as it unfortunately often is. Next, I review a cross-section of challenges to both qualitative and quantitative theories and methods used to model strategic decision-making in conflict. Lastly, I argue for the importance of distinguishing between the purposes of different types of strategic theory. By keeping all of these theories distinct, those who care about strategy may select the right intellectual framework for the job.

The View from Mount Olympus

It may be questioned whether or not such parsing and distinctions are really justified in the first place. But consider, however, this recent Anthony Cordesman missive expressing frustration with American strategy:

> *In the real world, however, a government does not create a strategy by issuing wish lists and empty lists of its desires. A real strategy has to have a tangible plan, it has to have a clear program to implement that plan, and it has to have the budget and resources to make it work. This means making difficult trade-offs and setting clear priorities. It means establishing accountability and having measures of effectiveness. It also means justifying the choices with a clear analysis of the risks and costs involved.[i]*

Right away, Cordesman makes a strong *descriptive* claim: in the real world, governments do not make strategies by issuing wish lists and empty lists of their desires. However, it is empirically false that in "the real world," governments and other organizations avoid strategy-as-wish-list. It is, sadly enough, often the case.[ii] Next, Cordesman argues that a "real strategy" has to have a clear program to implement a tangible plan, with budget and resources allocated accordingly, and priorities, tradeoffs, and other important aspects specified upfront. This is also empirically suspect. Organizations have successfully "muddled through" without any of these things.[iii] Others have developed loose schemes for managing change, often incorporating scenario thinking.[iv]

There are also strong reasons to doubt that the kind of pre-formalized, rational design approach Cordesman envisions is feasible for many organizations and their problems.[v] In general, Cordesman's view of strategy is one that, as noted by organization theorists, takes an "Olympian" view of organizational strategic rationality.[vi] Like a mighty Greek god haughtily perched high up on the mythical home of Zeus and Athena, Mt. Olympus, Cordesman's strategist seems to be one that suffers from none of the frailties of mortal men

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and women.

Yet the biggest problem is that Cordesman's analysis mixes *descriptive* and *normative* claims about strategy. In an ideal world, a "real strategy" would constitute everything he discusses. But in the real world, real strategies do not resemble his vision for a variety of reasons. It would be a mistake, however, to peg this as just one analyst's confusion. The question of what strategy is "in the real world" – and the consequences of the answers for practical decisionmaking and achievement of desired goals – has dominated strategic debates for decades.

A consistent theme of the last few decades in particular has been a split between those that feel that, on the one hand, formalized and detailed theories of strategy are a useful tool and those that feel that strategy and strategic theorists merely rationalize the un-rationalizable. I will offer a short overview of different critiques of strategy in a variety of academic fields that either directly deal with strategic theory or overlap with it. While individual critiques of deviations from the notional "Strategic Man" can be combatted, collectively they are far more problematic.[vii]

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I will also argue that the difficulties in settling these debates suggest that different kinds of strategic theory may serve differing needs and functions, and these distinctions should be respected when evaluating the desirability of any one strategic theory.

The Ideal and the Real in Strategic Theory

Challenges to strategic thinking can be broken up into a variety of categories, from *individual* disputes over aspects of strategy such as instrumental reason to doubt whether strategy can survive the *collective* observed human impediments to sound strategic action.

First, the instrumental character of strategy itself has been challenged on multiple grounds. Anthony Burke, for example, argues that the strategic catastrophe that the Iraq War represents is a formidable empirical and normative strike against the idea of strategy as a process that bridges ends, ways, and means.[viii] Martin Shaw declares that strategic theory is too often a fig leaf for "slaughter," or at the very minimum downplays the connection between strategic thinking and transgressive activities such as genocide and mutual nuclear annihilation.[ix] As Hedley Bull has noted, much of this stems from anxiety over the perceived notion that strategy is not only inaccurate and fantastical in nature, but also immoral in character.[x]

Of course, much of this ignores that not all strategists cast war and conflict simply as an instrumental mapping of objectives to actions. The notion of the Clausewitzian "wondrous trinity," for example, suggests that attempts to instrument violence to policy is just one of the several guiding influences that act on war in general.[xi] Others acknowledge a central place for passions and cognitive-affective notions in general within strategic thought.[xii] Moreover, studies of civil war suggest that even fairly brutal and seemingly illogical forms of political violence can be accommodated by strategic explanations.[xiii] The fact that dynamics of revolt, oppression, and retaliation may be generated as emerging products of decentralized interactions between myopic agents with simple strategies should suggest some foundation for strategy as an explanation, even when it suggests uncomfortable things about war and conflict.[xiv]

similar challenges to strategic theory take issue with the idea of a single decision-maker, noting that decisions may be imperfect aggregates of groups, institutions, or other collective entities

Other perspectives have criticized particular notions of strategic decision-making for purported indifference to distorting cultural biases. Ken Booth has argued that ethnocentrism acts as a distorting influence on strategic decision-making.[xv] Of course, this is not necessarily a strike against strategic theory, as Colin Gray and others have persuasively argued that identity and strategic culture alone is a weak explanation and is best nested within strategic theory overall.[xvi] Other similar challenges to strategic theory take issue with the idea of a single decision-maker, noting that decisions may be imperfect aggregates of groups, institutions, or other collective entities.[xvii] But this, at best, suggests institutional constraints on strategic decision, something that many strategic theorists acknowledge.[xviii]

Decision theory, game theory, and rational choice theory, the most prominent mechanisms for mathematically modeling strategic decision, have legions of critics in the various sciences. Criticisms range from cognitive implausibility and mismatches with data and experiments to uncertainty over what kind of "game" decisionmakers believe they are playing in the first place.[xix] Others have focused increasingly on both structural and cognitive-affective explanations that might explain deviations from strategic rationality.[xx] Some also argue that more qualitative ideas of strategy disregard varieties of strategic reasoning and competencies that are often combined in practical strategic work.[xxi] Finally, others have argued that complexity theory has invalidated traditional notions of strategy and conflict.[xxii]

It is difficult to address these criticisms collectively, but while they pose challenges they also have problems of their own. First, while game theory and other mathematically rooted models of strategic interaction can mislead, critics have had far more success criticizing these models than proposing alternative mechanisms that are both realistic and may function as a replacement for "unrealistic" notions of decision. Second, while varieties of strategic reasoning and

competencies exist and ought to be taken seriously, isolating particular individual competencies and types of problems is an inherently fraught enterprise. It is true, for example, that logistical and administrative competencies concern tasks of accounting, estimation, and organization that may be treated as optimization problems. But the manner in which people solve them may not conform to stereotypes of bean counters.[xxiii]

Finally, treatments of complexity theory in military and policy settings are often developed with a studied indifference towards the mathematical and computational methods used to actually do complexity research in the social and natural sciences. This is not just misleading, but also actively pernicious, as the benefit of such research lies in making complex system interactions and foundations explicit. Without such explicitness (either in equations or running computer code), complexity functions as a pseudo-scientific, New Age-like explanation that analysts may twist at will.

If all of these criticisms have problems examined *individually*, they are more persuasive *collectively*. Richard K. Betts tallies up an enormous amount of theoretical and methodological problems with the way that strategic studies students think about their discipline, asking "is strategy an illusion?"[xxiv] Betts tries to answer his own question by asserting that it is not; strategy may be difficult but it is by no means impossible. This perspective is mirrored in Lawrence Freedman's recent survey of strategy and a Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments monograph, both of which imply that as haphazard as human strategic reasoning may be, strategic behavior happens by default and necessity. Our strategies may be uncertain, flawed, and bounded, but we strategize anyway because we must.[xxv]

The problem with these studies is that some succeed at exposing all of the human and organizational frailties that prevent strategic competence, without making convincing cases as to why we can achieve good strategic behavior at all. For example, it is certainly plausible that one's own strategy need not be perfect, but merely better than that of an opponent. But what, then, makes it better than the opponent's strategy, given all of the barriers to good strategic decision making? And how do we reconcile the imperfect and haphazard nature of strategy as practiced with the often lofty ideals of strategic theory?

how do we reconcile the imperfect and haphazard nature of strategy as practiced with the often lofty ideals of strategic theory?

Coming Down From Mount Olympus

The answer may be in realizing that a "one size fits all" approach to strategic theory has poorly served both scholars and practitioners. Without a distinction between the ideal, the real, and other types of theories, scholars will find themselves unable to answer in any real way the question of whether or not strategy is an illusion. The most obvious retort to such a question is "what kind of strategy?" Some strategic ideas may be illusions, but useful ones. Others may be harmful if they lead to confusion and mismatched expectations.

Are we talking about, say, the unbounded decision-maker envisioned by Daniel Bernoulli in 1738 or the flawed human that makes decisions bounded by cognitive limits as well as heuristics and biases?[xxvi] Is our strategist an individual that skillfully connects ends, ways, and means, or a collective groping its way through "dialogue and negotiation" to a consensus?[xxvii] When it comes to using strategy as "theory for practice," the notional strategist envisioned by theory need not be all of those things at once.[xxviii] There exist a variety of strategic theories, usable for a variety of purposes.

Some theories presume an "Olympian" level of competence and capacity in the decision-maker and thus do not explain *how* we make decisions.[xxix] However, just as the Greeks viewed gods and goddesses as models for mere mortals to emulate, we may use these unrealistic ideas as *normative* goals to strive towards in how we make our own decisions.[xxx] Checking *actual* decision-making against *normative* theories of strategy can be helpful in improving strategic performance, even if it is impossible for anyone but Zeus to attain the standard of Olympian capacity that these theories posit. As long as we are willing to settle for as close as imperfect humanity may get to the normative ideal and we do not conflate the ideal with the real, there is no harm in using normative theory.

Other theories are *descriptive* in that they describe how we *actually* make decisions, and may be rooted in observational data or experiments.[xxxi] While these theories may describe, at times, heuristics and biases that impede strategic decision-making, they also may suggest ways to exploit observed decision-making characteristics for better decisions (or at the very minimum be aware of common pitfalls).[xxxii] It is important that decision makers do not also conflate *descriptive* features of empirically observed decision and strategy for *desired* ones. Just because individuals and groups have a variety of heuristics and biases does not necessarily make these shortcuts desirable or useful.

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A counterpoint to this is a popular line of cognitive science research maintains that simple heuristics actually outperform more elaborate strategies, but as with all science there are certain limitations and qualifications for these findings.[xxxiii] Certainly it would be unwise to view *all* descriptive knowledge about decision making and strategy as uniformly negative narratives of bias, delusion, and ill-chosen shortcuts. However, a distinction must be made between the use of *descriptive* theories as a way of detecting error or having realistic expectations about strategy and a *normative* approach of valorizing certain decision making processes and theories as

desirable in and of themselves.

All of this would still preserve a prominent role for the most traditional form of strategic theory; *phenomenological* depictions of the nature of armed conflict that aim to serve as a body of objective knowledge for decision-makers to utilize as "theory for practice." It is easy to forget, but strategy is far more than just theories of how people make decisions in adversarial environments. Antulio Echevarria has argued for the notion of Clausewitzian theory as an attempt to provide future strategists with a body of correct knowledge about the nature and dynamics of war and armed conflict, a kind of mental toolbox that could compensate for lack of direct experience in war usable in a pinch by the wise leader.[xxxiv] Such an approach may seem old-fashioned, but it actually mirrors the thrust of recent research in artificial intelligence (AI) on strategy in both war and other areas.

a large-scale study of strategy across knowledge domains has shown that strategy may be seen as a "shared relational structure

Clausewitz's notion of strategic wisdom as a body of correct knowledge has allowed military officers and computer scientists to develop a Clausewitz AI that uses an ontology of war based on the American military doctrinal interpretation of Clausewitzian theory. While the interpretation itself is debatable, the manner in which the AI uses its knowledge base about the nature of conflict has some striking similarities with the manner in which Echevarria presents the task of Clausewitzian theory.[xxxv] More broadly, a large-scale study of strategy across knowledge domains has shown that strategy may be seen as a "shared relational structure" that generalizes from individual cases to classes of different similar cause and effect relationships about complex interactions with other human beings.[xxxvi] This is certainly plausible, as decisionmakers – for better or worse – draw connections, use analogies and cases, and otherwise query their mental databases for clues as to what kinds of decisions to make.[xxxvii]

Hence dismissing old-school strategists that often mirror Clausewitz in their analytical approach, as useless old fuddy-duddies is an enormous mistake. This has unfortunately been the approach taken by many young strategic theorists who have sought to tear down older antecedents without appreciating the methodology and purpose of these older approaches, and why they have remained useful to soldiers, analysts, and academics for so long.[xxxviii] They may be useful as long as the underlying purpose that motivated their work is appreciated, and as long as their concepts and approaches are also not regarded as useful by default simply because they are old and venerable. It may be trivially demonstrated that every strategic theorist anticipated X or Y situation without it being useful or meaningful.

One may also observe that, as a matter of both theory and practice, normative, descriptive, and phenomenological ideas about strategy may be combined. While this may seem difficult to imagine given the differences between these types of theories, it can be done. For example, though not by design or temperament, a social scientist in the manner of modern quantitative political science, Clausewitzian theory has informed the latest *descriptive* theories of decision-making in war in quantitative international relations.[xxxix]

Gods, Demigods, and Mere Mortals

a large-scale study of strategy across knowledge domains has shown that strategy may be seen as a "shared relational structure

Strategy is hard, and decision-makers need a variety of tools. Existing strategic analysis had not clearly differentiated between the nature, function, and optimal use of intellectual tools, hence the confusion of many observers pondering the future of American strategy. It is fine to look up to Mt. Olympus for inspiration and guidance as long as strategists do not themselves believe that they are or could be noble gods throwing thunderbolts from the sky. It is fine to use strategic theory as a way of understanding the nature, dynamics, and experience of human conflict so that when decisions are made correct knowledge may be utilized, as long as the purpose of theory is understood in these terms. It is acceptable to use social and behavioral science to predict what kinds of choices decision makers will make based on recurring observed trends, but not if doing so leads to conflation of expected actions with desired ones.

As difficult as strategy may be, it is not so difficult that a little clarity cannot go a long way. One does not have to be a god among men or women to understand what intellectual tools in the vast array of strategic literature is best for the job at hand.

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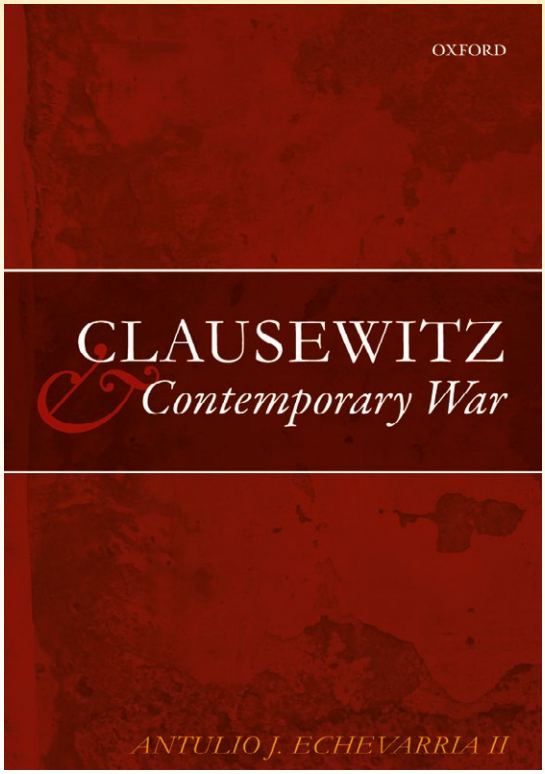

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Mass Effect: Information, Communication, and Rhetoric in Warfare

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Disclaimer: The views contained in this article do not represent the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, or the United States Marines Corps

War is a communicative act. It is the act of debating: a nightmarish negotiation conducted through battles, bombs, bullets and bayonets. It is, "…only a branch of political activity; that it is in no sense autonomous." [i] The strategist must use the means at his disposal, tactical victories gained on the battlefield by military forces, in appropriate ways to reach the ends set by policy. He must do so in a way that convinces the enemy that it is easier to give in than to resist. He must also convince potential adversaries that they had best refrain from their own struggle or their time will come. The strategist must tell a story, weave a narrative, of his or his nation's prowess at arms, endless resources, and strategic cunning. The plot is set by the policy, but the strategist must build on the policy foundation with strategic action. While war does not have its own logic, it does have its own grammar and with that general logic and specific grammar comes specialized rhetoric. As the technology of violence has proliferated and advanced, it has allowed even the smallest actor to speak the language of warfare, of decision, of will and coercion. The art of using that language of violence to communicate information and persuade adversaries - war's rhetoric - has become more important than ever. The information revolution has made this timeless aspect of war more obvious and powerful in modern warfare. Some strategic actors have obviously learned to utilize information in powerful ways. Those that have not must learn that information suffuses every act of warfare and rethink current ideas about information warfare.

The plot is set by the policy, but the strategist must build on the policy foundation with strategic action.

The professional canon on how information interacts with strategy, however, is a confusing milieu of haphazard terms, largely divorced from strategic theory. The United States, for example, defines "information operations" as, "the integrated employment, during military operations, of Information-related Activities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own." [ii] This definition says little and means less. It is also so broad that it infringes upon other areas of warfare, such as counterintelligence and operational security, instead of actually defining information operations in a clear manner. The popular acronym "DIME"- Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy - mentions information as something separate from diplomacy and military actions when it is inherently part of politics. This is a result of using the term information vice communication. Information is inert, objective, and technical. Communication, however, is dynamic, subject to interpretation, and an inherent aspect of the art of strategy. Information is nothing if it is not used. How it is used and presented, the rhetoric, is what produces strategic effect.

Emile Simpson does a better job. He describes the dynamics of information in warfare as a situation where, "The outcome of an action is usually better gauged by the chat at the bazaar the next day, and its equivalent higher up the political food chain, than body counts." [iii] He concludes that, "political considerations now drive operations even at the lowest level of command: the military dimension of war is pierced by political considerations at the tactical level." [iv] Of course, this has always been true: tactics are driven by a strategy intending to achieve a political end state. Further, Simpson writes that, "…war today is again being transformed by the information revolution, which forces liberal powers to reconsider strategic thought in relation to their use of armed force." [v] Again, this is not a new dynamic. It has always

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been more difficult to wage an unpopular war and effective polities have always taken steps to ensure wide support. What Simpson has identified, rather, is that the information revolution has made the connection between tactics and their strategic effect more obvious and the transmittal of that effect from the battlefield to political entities far faster - sometimes instantaneous. The "flash to bang" is seconds rather than days or months. The communicative aspect of strategy, its rhetoric, is thus more important, and potent, than ever.

This article will view the role of information and communication in strategy neither as something so broad that it is nonsensical nor as something new and not subject to classical strategic theory. Neither will it confuse the message with the medium: US information operations and doctrine talks about electronic warfare, cyber warfare, psychological warfare, and public affairs, amongst other media. Lost in this focus on the medium is any thought or discussion on the role of communication in strategy. Information is just a commodity. Its use to communicate intent, along with inherently communicative actions, is what produces strategic effect. The concepts of "information operations" and "information warfare" should be replaced by an understanding of war's rhetoric.

Clausewitz, Gray, and Aristotle

But how much currency each tactical event casts into the final accounting changes depending on its interpretation.

Tactical actions all have strategic effect, however miniscule. Each test of combat between combatants contributes to the overall strategic situation: whether that results in a surplus or a deficit for one side or the other. In the words of Colin S. Gray, "[Strategic effect] is the net result of our largely coercive behavior of any and all kinds upon the behavior of the enemy." [vi] But how much currency each tactical event casts into the final accounting changes depending on its interpretation. This is where the rhetoric comes into play. The post-event interpretation can be amplified or muted based on how it is presented by various combatants.

The wrestlers in Clausewitz's *zweikampf* analogy trade blows and holds in pursuit of enough net strategic effect to defeat the other. In any dialectic, the debaters trade point and counterpoint for the same reason. In debate, however, rhetoric interacts with logic - the underlying structure of an argument - and grammar - the rules and regulations governing the use of language. Aristotle, in *The Art of Rhetoric*, describes rhetoric as, "the counterpart of dialectic." [vii] In a debate, the way the logical argument is presented - the rhetoric - greatly influences the conclusion. Clausewitz did not explicitly identify rhetoric as a component of strategy but he implied it: "Is war not just an expression of their [the combatants] thoughts, another form of speech or writing? Its grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic." [viii] During the Middle Ages logic and grammar were two of three subjects that made up the trivium: subjects taught in advanced education. The third subject was rhetoric. Colonel John Boyd, USAF, echoed Clausewitz when it came to the importance of warfare as communicative. In his recommendations for a counter-guerrilla campaign, he recommended that counterinsurgents, "Undermine guerrilla cause and destroy their cohesion by demonstrating integrity and competence of government to represent and serve needs of people," and, "Visibly link these efforts with local political/economic/social reform in order to connect central government with hopes and needs of people, thereby gain their support and confirm government legitimacy." [ix] The fact that these actions must be done "visibly" is key: the tactical actions of the counterinsurgent produce strategic effect by what they communicate to various audiences.

Policy is the impetus of strategy and the strategist's task is to weave a narrative composed of means to achieve ends. War is not politics by violent means, but with the addition of violent means

Emile Simpson views the dynamic of war's rhetoric as non-Clausewitzian, but it actually rests easily in the Prussian's framework. Policy is the impetus of strategy and the strategist's task is to weave a narrative composed of means to achieve ends. War is not politics by violent means, but with the addition of violent means. Discourse between strategic actors continues through diplomacy and other forms of communication alongside violent communication and the threat thereof. The real value of Simpson's *War from the Ground Up*, then, is its further explication of Clausewitz's implication of the rhetoric of war.

At a higher level, Charles Hill's *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* tells the story of literature's role in western political history. Major works of literature such as Virgil's *Aeneid* can provide an underlying national identity to a state that has a considerable effect on their actions. In Hill's words, describing the actions of infamous French diplomat and politician Talleyrand, "[A]n idea can shape the fate of nations." [x] The strategic narrative followed by a state for a particular conflict will generally reflect aspects of its own story as a nation

The rhetoric of war can be used in a variety of ways. In an offensive context, it can be used to deplete enemy moral, discredit enemy intentions, or complicate his decision-making processes. In a defensive context, it can be used to enhance morale or defend the legitimacy of the effort. In both contexts, it can be used to deceive your opponent or, through omission, deny critical information from reaching your opponent. There are others, but these are major effects that can be used to illustrate its uses. Like fire support can be used to destroy, suppress, or neutralize targets, the use of information is best understood by its effects when integrated with military strategy. The strategic narrative is the strategy and tactical actions that are not integrated with it and are wasteful at best and counterproductive at worst.

Every tactical action is as a bit of information, and its occurrence is inherently communicative.

Those effects cannot be understood or integrated when information is sequestered to a planning cell at the highest levels of command. Every tactical action is as a bit of information, and its occurrence is inherently communicative. By delegating any thought of this aspect of warfare to staffs, tactical commanders make decisions in a vacuum, viewing the enemy as iconography on satellite images vice thinking, reacting combatants and local audiences as nothing but statistics. In this manner, western nations attempt to craft a narrative to explain the actions taken rather than taking actions in order to implement a strategic narrative. The difference is subtle but key: frequent attempts to explain missteps can twist the narrative beyond credibility.

Because the "flash to bang" between tactical action and strategic effect, enabled by the information revolution is now so short, each tactical action must be viewed as part of the contextual strategic plot; both in terms of its physical effect on the battlefield and its moral effect on the enemy and other interested parties. Gone are the days when the tactician could work in isolation from the strategist. Strategy must act as a forcing function, assisting the tactician in his plans by ensuring that the language of combat serves the rhetoric of the strategic narrative.

History

The rhetoric of war has always been present. In the Melian Dialogue, the Athenians succinctly capture the communicative act of their imminent destruction at Melos:

Athenians: The end of our empire, if end it should, does not frighten us: a rival empire like Lacedaemon, even if Lacedaemon was our real antagonist, is not so terrible to the vanquished as subjects who by themselves attack and overpower their rulers. This, however, is a risk that we are content to take. We will now proceed to show you that we are come here in the interest of our empire, and that we shall say what we are now going to say, for the preservation of your country, as we would fain exercise that empire over you without trouble, and see you preserved for the good of us both….

Melians: …So you would not consent to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side?

Athenians: No; for your hostility cannot so much hurt us as your friendship will be an argument to our subjects of our weakness, and your enmity of our power.[xi]

In another example Livy relates the effects of Rome's failure to protect its ally Saguntum, Hannibal's siege of which precipitated the Second Punic War. After notifying Carthage that a state of war now existed, Roman envoys crossed to Spain to attempt to woo Hannibal's Spanish allies to the Roman cause. An elder of the Volcaiani tribe responded thusly, "With what face, Romans, can you ask us to prefer your friendship to the Carthaginian, when those who did so have been more cruelly betrayed by you, their allies, than destroyed by their enemy, the Phoenician? You must seek allies, in my opinion, only where the disaster of Saguntum is unknown. To the Spanish peoples the ruins of Saguntum will constitute a warning, no less emphatic than deplorable, that none should trust the honour or alliances of the Romans."[xii]

In both cases, the action or inaction of a strategic actor communicates intent, capability, and credibility to a wide range of audiences: belligerents, allies, subordinates, and potential belligerents. In the case of Athens, they understood the need to communicate their will to their subordinate states to forestall as many desertions to the Spartan side as possible. The Romans failed to consider the message their inactivity sent to some of the Spanish tribes. Many of the great captains understood the inherent communication of warfare and how to exploit it. In 1775, American colonists raced to transport their version of events at Lexington and Concord across the Atlantic. That version beat the British military report to London, and British newspapers carried exaggerated reports of British Army atrocities and culpability for weeks.[xiii] The Americans used England's own newspapers against her. Napoleon wrote accounts of his battles and then had copies made and distributed, sometimes inflating his success such as after the Battle of Eylau in 1807.[xiv] Robert E. Lee, during his invasion of Maryland in 1862, distributed a notice to local civilians - an address "To the People of Maryland" - justifying his offensive and portraying the Confederate Army as one of liberation, apparently without irony.[xv]

Praxis

Ukraine is a stark example of the power of information and strategy. Russia's use of information was integrated with its military strategy every step of the way.

Russia's recent campaign to secure the Crimean Peninsula from neighboring Ukraine is a stark example of the power of information and strategy. Russia's use of information was integrated with its military strategy every step of the way. Russian Special Forces were almost certainly active in the Crimea and in mainland Ukraine, but repeated denials of their presence and frequent references to "local pro-Russian self-defense activists" clouded the information stream available to Kiev and outside observers.[xvi] The large military exercises executed by Russia along Ukraine's border with Russia also sent a message: that the threat of a larger military intervention was real.[xvii] Russian state television also executed an information campaign in support of Russia's threat of violence. Hosts and guests on Russian television shows spread misinformation about Ukraine's leadership and the United States, maintaining Russian public support for the annexation and most likely increasing pro-Russian sentiment in Ukraine.[xviii] Russia even hired PR firms, all in support of its military strategy.[xix] The cumulative effect of this sustained misinformation campaign prevented Ukraine and western

allies from getting a firm grip on the actual events on the ground in the Crimea. It infected decision-making processes at the highest levels of Russia's opponents until the intended target was obtained. While sporadic violence occurred at the strategic level, the mere threat of violence with a tightly integrated information campaign yielded decisive strategic effect. This effect was to keep the conflict limited - at the time of this writing - and thus in Russia's interest. Russia seems to be repeating this successful strategy in Eastern Ukraine. Seemingly minuscule tactical information operations on the part of Russia - news report in Russia Today, the resurrection of the term *Novorossiya* to describe parts of Ukraine, and repeated denials of Russian regular army presence in the area - combine into a form of strategic communication that has the mass effect of controlling the parameters of the conflict.

China is another nation that seemingly has mastered war's rhetoric in the modern operating environment. In recent years, China has laid claim to and expanded its actions in small but increasing increments of the South China Sea.[xx] This "salami-slicing" method accumulates strategic effect in China's favor but in small enough chunks so as not to alarm the international community. By using rhetoric that avoids the ire of interested adversaries, China shields itself from criticism while exposing potential adversaries to appropriation if they choose to directly confront Chinese expansion. In this way, China pursues its expansionist ends without tripping a violent conflict before it is ready. Again, the nascent conflict in the South China Seas remains limited in China's interest.

The current masters of using strategy as communication are, arguably, the Taliban.

The current masters of using strategy as communication are, arguably, the Taliban. The Taliban are outnumbered, outgunned, and probably out-funded by their opponent: initially the US led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and as of January 1, 2015, Headquarters Resolute Support (HQRS). Annual UN reports on civilian casualties in Afghanistan regularly show that the Taliban are responsible for far more civilian casualties than HQRS, yet Taliban approval ratings constantly rise.[xxi] This is because their strategic narrative is more effective, and they act in accordance with it. The Taliban even takes steps to protect their narrative by assassinating local religious leaders known to be pro-NATO, preventing their influential sermons from convincing civilians to support the Coalition.[xxii] The Taliban's strategic narrative of defending Afghanistan from external invaders has proven effective, despite their unpopular policies. The strategic narrative of HQRS - that of pursuing a stable, democratic Afghanistan that does not host international terrorist organizations - has proven less compelling and was constantly undercut by the corrupt Karzai administration. Top US commanders protest that Taliban gains are more smoke and mirrors than substance, but perception is of vast importance to local and international audiences.[xxiii] The Taliban have gained the communication high ground and only drastic measures can dislodge them.

Culture and Confusion

Current Western thinking on the role of communication in strategy is stove piped: information is viewed as a separate concern from military strategy rather than a vital component. This disables the ability to view tactical actions in terms of communication. It is a common problem. This "stovepiping" of efforts and capabilities is, according to Emile Simpson, a product of the idea that means combat, information, fire support, etc. have an "intrinsic value."[xxiv] They do not. Tactical actions only have value as part of a contextual strategy, and one of strategy's most vital functions must be to integrate varied and widely dispersed tactical actions so that they efficiently accrue into strategic effect. Actors that have mastered the communicative aspects of strategy - the aforementioned Russia, terrorist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, and China have had great success. Russia annexed Crimea without any meaningful resistance. The terrorist group formerly known as ISIS seized large swaths of Iraq after the Iraqi Army dissipated based almost solely on ISIS' reputation. In the South China Seas, China "rebrands" ships as coast guard vessels in order to allow them to operate without triggering resistance and has declared interdiction zones to achieve control without resorting to force.[xxv] Tactical actions coupled with an information campaign can achieve decisive strategic effects. Just as with Napoleon and Lee, those actions can be amplified or spun with rhetorically sound communication efforts.

Tactical actions coupled with an information campaign can achieve decisive strategic effects.

These actors understand the "Propaganda of the Deed": actions send a message of their own, and do so louder than pure information. This was well understood by the author's earliest strategic influence; his mother, who said actions speak louder than words. If the actions taken by a strategic actor clash with the information campaign, the entire effort will lose legitimacy and the strategic narrative will collapse. Take, for instance, the US effort in Afghanistan. The United States, truthfully, presents the strategic narrative that the war effort against the Taliban and global terrorist groups is not a war against Islam. This preserves the credibility of the United States and is intended to encourage non-extremist Muslims to support US efforts vice the efforts of their adversaries. When events occur such as the burning of Korans in Afghanistan, however, irreparable damage is done to the strategy as the actions clash with the narrative. The strategy may still succeed, but the road is now more difficult.

Conclusion

Any act of communication is suffused with rhetoric. So too this article. Its structure is based on the sermon structure developed by priests in Europe during the Middle Ages and used by Chaucer in "The Pardoner's Tale." This outline was chosen as an overarching structure to provide context to facts and assertions. Its strategic end state is persuasion. In strategy, tactics are sentences and battles are paragraphs.

The structure is the strategic narrative, providing meaning for the underlying actions in the pursuit of persuading the enemy to accept the strategist's will.

Current Western thinking on the information and communication in warfare has become quite obviously unsustainable. War as communication with an opposing force or forces is part of its nature. What has changed is the speed at which tactical actions are communicated and interpreted and the distance which that information can travel. The technology aspect of the information revolution is not as important as the effects that technology has on the operational environment. Focusing on the technology blinds strategists to the symbiosis between tactics and communication, thus encouraging the segregation of information from action. Segregating communication from tactics and tactics from strategy is a recipe for strategic disarray. Replacing information operations with an understanding of the rhetoric of war and connecting it with an overarching strategic narrative is a necessary task of the strategist. As we have seen, those strategic actors that have done so have been effective while those that do not struggle.

Disclaimer: The views contained in this article do not represent the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, or the United States Marines Corps

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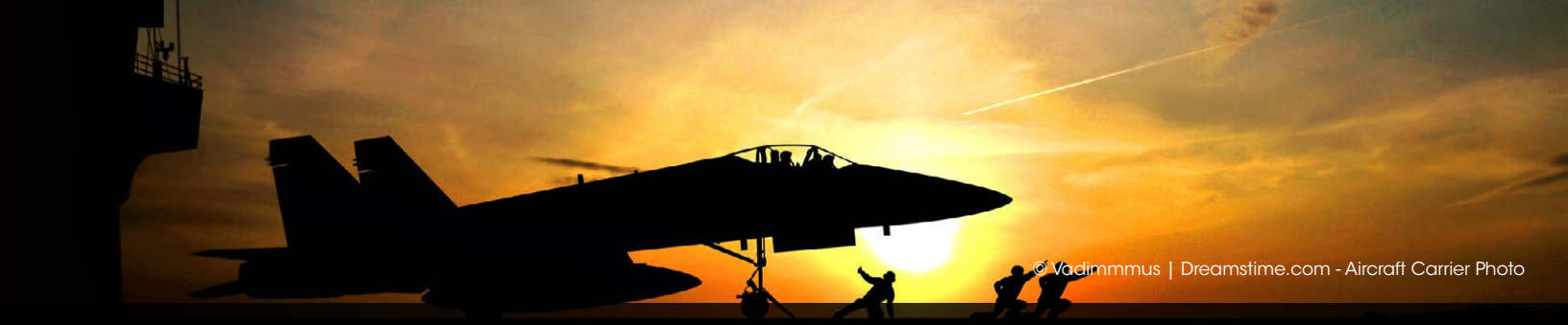

Will a President Approve Air-Sea Battle? Learning from the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis

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USA

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Air-Sea Battle and the Question of Authorization

The remarkable growth of Chinese military power has prompted the U.S. military to consider war plans that involve striking—possibly preemptively—military targets on mainland China.[i] Sometimes labeled "Air-Sea Battle," this operational emphasis on strikes into Chinese territory calls for the U.S. military to purchase military systems capable of conventional strikes on targets inside China.[ii] Advocates of Air-Sea Battle believe the increased strength of the People's Liberation Army, especially the Second Artillery Corps and its missile forces, means that any U.S. military efforts, especially early in a conflict, would flounder without mainland strikes.[iii]

Air-Sea Battle, devised to solve U.S. military-operational problems, has generated a range of detractors focused on alleged strategic defects. T.X. Hammes, a researcher at the National Defense University, has led the attack on Air-Sea Battle; he argues that Air-Sea Battle will be prohibitively expensive, could inadvertently trigger nuclear war, and would be less effective than a military strategy he calls "offshore control," which includes integrating a long-distance blockade with plans for a defense of the first island chain.[iv] Princeton scholar Thomas Christensen has also criticized these deep-strike war plans. He argues that the blurring of Chinese conventional and nuclear assets could translate into nuclear conflagration if the United States launched conventional attacks on the mainland.[v] David Gompert and Terrence Kelly, RAND researchers, emphasize their view that Air-Sea Battle increases the incentives for a first strike by both China and the United States and therefore "increases the odds that a crisis will turn violent."[vi]

But perhaps the most damaging criticism is that U.S. leaders, especially the President, will refuse to authorize deep-strike war plans against a nuclear-armed adversary such as China, sapping these plans of their operational potential. For instance, T.X. Hammes writes, "Given that Truman and Johnson refused to strike China when hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops were in combat, are we sure a future President will authorize an extensive strike campaign into China?"[vii] Thomas Christensen has similarly argued, "it is doubtful that an American president will be eager to become the first" to authorize "strike warfare attacks against missile sites on the mainland."[viii] These strategists are therefore arguing that regardless of the operational merits of Air-Sea Battle, the willingness of top leaders to employ Air-Sea Battle remains in doubt. A president and his or her advisers would be unwilling to authorize such escalatory strikes against a nuclear adversary. The U.S. military establishment, the argument proceeds, should therefore avoid relying on such plans, when they would be rejected by leaders in a crisis.

why do these strategists believe so strongly that mainland strikes will be rejected in a crisis?

But why do these strategists believe so strongly that mainland strikes will be rejected in a crisis? The published pieces debating Air-Sea Battle make little reference to any actual episodes in which top leaders have considered escalatory, deep-strike war plans. This debate about the likelihood of authorization has, in other words, mostly proceeded without regard for the historical record. Skeptics rely on the argument that because no U.S. leader has authorized conventional strikes against a nuclear power that future presidents will be similarly reluctant.[ix] Both T.X. Hammes and James Fallows separately invoke the Korea analogy in a cursory fashion, devoting no more than a passing thought to it.[x] Conventional strikes on China would be, Fallows writes, "a step so wildly reckless that the United States didn't consider it even when fighting Chinese troops during the Korean War."[xi] Air-Sea Battle proponents, to my knowledge, have not marshaled historical evidence to make the case that a President would approve mainland strikes on China. This paper examines the historical record, particularly the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, providing the first empirical investigation

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of the willingness of leaders to employ escalatory strikes on an opponent's mainland. This crisis between China, Taiwan, and the United States involved the Chinese shelling of the offshore islands, especially Quemoy, and the contemplation by American officials of tactical nuclear strikes against the Chinese mainland to stop a Chinese invasion of these islands.

Three arguments about mainland-strike war plans against nuclear adversaries emerge from a close analysis of the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis. First, top U.S. leaders, political and military, including the President, were willing to consider escalatory, deep-strike war plans. High-level officials, in the words of one modern scholar, "actively considered" the use of such strikes in the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis.[xii] Importantly, though, the ultimate decision-maker, President Eisenhower, never authorized the deep-strike plans. Second, these war plans received such active consideration because top military officers and some political leaders had adopted a strategic preference for the decisive use of nuclear weapons and perceived war plans involving only conventional defense as inadequate. Third, officials ultimately rejected these plans because the Chinese communists never mounted a direct invasion of Quemoy, there were acceptable military alternatives to strikes with tactical nuclear weapons, and American decision-makers greatly feared Soviet nuclear reprisal.

Of course, a single case study cannot definitively settle the debate over Air-Sea Battle's likelihood of authorization—the characteristics of the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis do indeed differ from the likely contours of a modern confrontation between China and the United States. But a well-chosen case study can anchor the debate in empirical analysis, a task not yet attempted. The 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis is such a case for three reasons. First, the broad outlines of that crisis and a hypothetical modern China-U.S. crisis resemble each other: two states that fear nuclear reprisal engage in a risky confrontation involving a third-party and one state considers escalatory military strikes on the homeland of the other. To be sure, China did not then possess nuclear weapons, but it was allied with the Soviet Union, a nuclear power capable of retaliation on China's behalf. Second, China's lack of nuclear weapons in 1958 is actually a methodologically useful difference. If U.S. leaders were reluctant to escalate against an ally of a nuclear state, then observers can expect even greater caution in a modern crisis with a China that possesses nuclear weapons. Third, studying a past U.S.-China crisis allows stronger inferences to be made about future U.S.-China crises than if the analysis focused on events in which nuclear opponents actually conducted conventional warfare against each other, such as the Indo-Pakisani Kargil conflict or the Sino-Soviet border war.

There does exist one glaring difference between the conventional strikes on the Chinese mainland envisioned in Air-Sea Battle and the plans debated by the Eisenhower administration: Eisenhower considered employing tactical nuclear weapons, not conventional strikes. There obviously exists a higher threshold for employment of tactical nuclear weapons. However, the Fifties were the age of the "New Look," a military strategy that emphasized nuclear weapons and treated (conceptually, at least) low-yield, "tactical" nuclear weapons as indistinguishable from conventional weapons.[xiii] Such "New Look" thinking potentially attenuates the difference between Air-Sea Battle's mainland strikes and the tactical nuclear strikes considered by Eisenhower. A later section returns to this consideration.

The implications for the modern debate over Air-Sea Battle are many. Most importantly, the U.S. military establishment should be cautious about relying heavily on Air-Sea Battle in a crisis with China. Evidence from the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis suggests that top leaders, though they might consider plans like Air-Sea Battle, will worry about nuclear reprisal. Second, that some American officials believe U.S. military operations against the Chinese military will fail should the President not authorize deep strikes likely ensures the survival of war plans relying on deep strikes and related force structure. Finally, the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis resembles the type of limited, coercive diplomatic crisis in which the United States and China will likely engage. That mainland strikes were never authorized in 1958 because the worst-case scenario, an invasion of Quemoy, never materialized should give contemporary military planners pause. Military plans designed only for the worst-case scenario, say, an invasion of Taiwan, might not be usable in the event of lesser conflict. Even a direct invasion of Taiwan, if nuclear fears loom large, might not lead the President to approve mainland strikes. This case study of a limited crisis, though, cannot settle the debate over the viability of Air-Sea Battle in all scenarios. Strategic studies researchers therefore should turn their attention to other historical episodes and continue to examine the authorization question.

The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis

After a summer of military preparations and mounting tension, Chairman Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China initiated heavy shelling of Quemoy in late August 1958. Intermittent shelling gave way to a prolonged standoff in which the Taiwanese and U.S. militaries struggled to resupply over 100,000 Taiwanese troops forward-stationed on Quemoy, an island just offshore the Chinese mainland. Throughout the crisis top U.S. leaders considered various military measures, including plans for tactical nuclear strikes against Chinese airfields near Xiamen and even extending to Shanghai.[xiv] All of this occurred against the backdrop of a military alliance between China and the Soviet Union, a nuclear power. The crisis eventually defused in October 1958 as Chinese artillery fire against Quemoy subsided.

An examination of this crisis and American contingency planning reveals three findings relevant to modern U.S. military strategy in East Asia. The first finding concerns the extent to which top leaders considered deep strikes against China, a military ally of the nuclear-armed Soviet Union; the second and third deal, respectively, with the reasons why the deep-strike war plan survived and why it was ultimately rejected.

The Eisenhower Administration Considers Mainland Strikes

President Eisenhower and his advisers approved military measures to enable tactical nuclear strikes on the Chinese mainland and considered plans to employ tactical nuclear weapons in a strike against China, an ally of the Soviet Union. That President Eisenhower did consider such plans conflicts with a strong version of the authorization argument made

by Air-Sea Battle skeptics that an American administration would be loath to even consider deep-strike war plans in the face of nuclear reprisal.

The military measures taken during the crisis to prepare for tactical nuclear use are well documented. The Joint Chiefs of Staff received directions from the president authorizing the military to prepare for nuclear use in any conflict larger than "a brush fire war."[xv] Furthermore, the Pacific Air Force received specific orders to concentrate on their ability to deliver atomic weapons.[xvi] Strategic Air Command B-47s at Guam were placed on alert and given the mission of targeting coastal airfields under conditions of darkness or inclement weather.[xvii] This evidence of military preparation admittedly does not prove actual intent of use since such moves could merely be the choreography of nuclear bluffing, but no evidence of these necessary steps would have contradicted the argument that the administration actively considered tactical nuclear strikes.

In addition to military preparations, the Eisenhower administration gave tactical nuclear strikes against mainland Chinese targets serious consideration in private meetings and internal documents. The strongest evidence comes in the form of an early September paper, jointly "studied, edited, and agreed on" by Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, that affirms that the United States would resort to nuclear use if conventional options could not suffice.[xviii] Though the paper acknowledged that atomic weapons would arouse "a strong popular revulsion against the United States," the paper viewed the failure to stand up to China as more damaging than the consequences of atomic weapons.[xix] Below the president, Secretary of State Dulles, Army Chief of Staff Maxwell Taylor, and Chief of Naval Operations Arleigh Burke privately came to a similar conclusion.They agreed that a "limited use of nuclear weapons" was preferable to a failure "to exert a maximum defense."[xx] Navy staff members also endorsed nuclear weapons, stating that they would "have to be used if the United States went into military action."[xxi]

The historical record does, however, show some opposition to tactical nuclear plans, especially from within the State Department. Gerard Smith, director of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State, repeatedly opposed war plans involving nuclear strikes on China.[xxii] The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Graham Parsons similarly applied the bureaucratic brakes to nuclear plans, though his opposition was specifically to a plan to make direct nuclear threats to China.[xxiii] A report from the Far East Bureau to the Secretary of State warned that a resort to nuclear weapons would have "disastrous" consequences.[xxiv] These statements indicate that some bureaucratic actors did seek to block the escalatory, deep-strike war plans during the crisis.

The concern of Air-Sea Battle skeptics that an administration will not even consider deep-strike war plans in the face of possible nuclear reprisal seems unfounded

However, the top echelons of the U.S. government, including the president, did not summarily reject escalatory, mainland strikes with tactical nuclear weapons but instead actively considered their employment. The concern of Air-Sea Battle skeptics that an administration will not even consider deep-strike war plans in the face of possible nuclear reprisal seems unfounded, though the historical record does show some bureaucratic resistance.

Why Did The Eisenhower Administration Consider Mainland Strikes?

Behind the active consideration of tactical nuclear strikes against China lay a widespread belief among American officials in the insufficiency of a purely conventional defense, and a nuclear mindset among top military officers.[xxv] Without these enabling factors, deep-strike plans involving tactical nuclear weapons would likely have remained in offices far from the president.

Across the American government, officials believed that an American intervention on behalf of Taiwan with only non-nuclear means would fail. Quemoy, if attacked, was deemed too close to the mainland, where the PLA could amass men and materiel, while the United States and Taiwan would have to operate at great distances and in the face of tough Chinese defenses. Tactical nuclear weapons, as a result of this belief, became the only viable military option to halt a Chinese invasion of Quemoy. Assistant Secretary of Defense Donald Quarles believed that only atomic strikes against mainland air bases could prevent Chinese control of the Strait.[xxvi] The U.S. Taiwan Defense Command believed that merely silencing the PLA guns across from Quemoy would require atomic weapons.[xxvii] The Joint Chiefs of Staff also thought conventional forces insufficient and so endorsed nuclear war plans.[xxviii] Officials outside the military concurred. Secretary of State Dulles, meeting with the Joint Chiefs, agreed that nuclear weapons would ultimately be necessary to defend Quemoy.[xxix] Even the mid-level State Department officials who opposed nuclear plans agreed that these appeared to be the only viable military option if a Chinese invasion of Quemoy was to be stopped; the same State Department memorandum mentioned earlier considered the use of one or two low-yield nuclear weapons against airfields in Fujian province.[xxx] Importantly, President Eisenhower agreed with this position when he approved a memo that stated that U.S. intervention would "probably not be effective if it were limited to the use of conventional weapons."[xxxi] Morton Halperin's research on the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, done for the military and with access to scores of top-secret documents, argues that the "consensus" was that "the United States simply did not have the conventional capability to hold Quemoy against a determined Chinese communist attack."[xxxii] That tactical nuclear plans survived the bureaucratic gauntlet should therefore be unsurprising; only tactical nuclear weapons would level the battlefield sufficiently to allow U.S. forces a chance at victory.

The second reason, arguably underlying the first, that tactical nuclear plans received extensive consideration can be found in the nuclear mindset of American military officials. A strategic belief that nuclear war had become the way of modern war pervaded the thinking of American general

officers. Believing that low-yield nuclear weapons were nearly conventional, American military officials felt it unthinkable to forego nuclear weapons in a conflict. For instance, Air Force General Laurence Kuter, the commander of Pacific Air Force, in an after-action meeting with other Air Force generals, stressed that the communists could only be defeated with nuclear weapons and that it was a "a priority requirement…to educate our various government policymakers that the very great spread in available nukes has made these weapons conventional." [xxxiii] General Kuter, in a letter to General Ernest LeMay, further critiqued the administration's reticence to employ nuclear weapons and noted the existence of "well known and irrefutable arguments that demand that all our war plans be based on the use of atomic weapons." [xxxiv] Furthermore, one well-positioned observer, Secretary of State Dulles, reflecting on the relationship between nuclear weapons and the 1950s U.S. military, wrote, "our entire military establishment assumes more and more that the use of nuclear weapons will become normal in the event of hostilities." [xxxv] Dulles himself evinced a predisposition toward nuclear weapons, complaining that "there was no use having a lot of stuff and never being able to use it" after the administration's late August decision to continue to hold nuclear weapons in reserve. [xxxvi]

A strategic belief that nuclear war had become the way of modern war pervaded the thinking of American general officers.

Plans for deep strikes against China, an ally of the nuclear-armed Soviet Union, reached the President's desk because of the ubiquitous belief among high-level U.S. officials that purely conventional plans were militarily insufficient to stop a Chinese invasion of Quemoy and because of the nuclear mindset of American military officials. But if conventional plans were deficient and the strategic zeitgeist was nuclear, why were tactical nuclear strikes against China not authorized?

Why Was the Thinkable Still Not Doable?

Tactical nuclear strikes never received authorization because the Chinese never attempted an invasion of Quemoy, naval resupply efforts provided a less escalatory military alternative to deep strikes, and, critically, because the fear of Soviet nuclear reprisal weighed on U.S. decision-makers.

Most importantly, American leaders set a high threshold for tactical nuclear plans: an invasion of Quemoy by the Chinese. President Eisenhower, in one memo, linked the potential use of nuclear weapons only to invasion attempts of the offshore island. [xxxvii] In another meeting, President Eisenhower considered nuclear weapons only in the context of a Chinese "invasion" of the offshore islands. [xxxviii] China never crossed this line. American decision-makers therefore avoided the decision over nuclear employment.

Additionally, military measures less escalatory than mainland strikes presented themselves to American policymakers. Certainly by the end of September American military officials believed that the blockade of Quemoy had been broken and that resupply operations could continue indefinitely. [xxxix] Even earlier in the month, American officials had believed the resupply problem was not "insurmountable." [xl] On September 15th the Commander in Chief, Pacific Forces, and commander of the Taiwan Defense Command had expressed their belief that resupply presented a difficult but solvable problem. [xli] In fact, as early as September 7th, the day of the first successful U.S.-escorted resupply mission, American officials had harbored "some hope that the crisis was at an end." [xlii] The success of resupply operations therefore rendered deep-strike war plans unnecessary.

military measures less escalatory than mainland strikes presented themselves to American policymakers

Finally, the fear of Soviet nuclear reprisal on behalf of their Chinese communist allies undoubtedly weighed on U.S. decision-makers. There is ample evidence of Soviet warnings to the Eisenhower administration. Soviet media and direct letters to the U.S. president all warned that the Soviets would "not stand idly by." [xliii] Eisenhower heard this message. In one meeting he wondered if Soviet retaliation might extend past Quemoy to Taiwan or even beyond. [xliv] Director of the CIA Allen Dulles also worried that Soviet nuclear reprisal posed "a grave risk." [xlv] Allen Dulles's pessimism reflected a recent CIA estimate that contained this exact worry. [xlvi] Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also worried that tactical nuclear strikes would create a "possibility" that the war could extend into a "general war." [xlvii]

The lack of a Chinese attack on Quemoy, the success of resupply operations, and fear of Soviet nuclear reprisal combined so that tactical nuclear war plans were never put into action. Additionally, these same factors likely contributed to a similar reluctance to employ even conventional weapons against mainland targets in the crisis. During the crisis the U.S. Navy operated under strict rules of engagement barring strikes on mainland targets and U.S. Admirals took greats pains to persuade the Nationalist military to likewise refrain from conventional mainland strikes. [xlviii]

From Historical Analysis to Policy Implications

The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, though it has largely receded from memory, offers a number of instructive points to modern military strategists crafting war plans and force postures in response to a rapidly modernizing Chinese military. Before discussing these lessons, the next section compares the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis and a potential future U.S.-China confrontation and argues that the crises are sufficiently similar to enable useful comparison.

The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the tactical nuclear war plans considered by the Eisenhower administration bear more than a passing resemblance to a future U.S.-China crisis and Air-Sea Battle. These crises and the American war plans, beyond involving China and the United States, share

two essential characteristics: the threat of nuclear reprisal and the consideration of strikes on the Chinese mainland. That China did not itself possess nuclear weapons in 1958 does not negate the utility of this case study; in fact, that U.S. leaders showed such caution about striking the mainland of a state that was merely allied to a nuclear state suggests that a nuclear-armed China will induce even greater caution.

The implication, then, is that Air-Sea Battle will not meet the same political resistance as 1950s mainland strike war plans since it does not involve strikes with nuclear weapons.

Admittedly, there is a fundamental difference that strategists should keep in mind: in the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis, Eisenhower and his advisors considered tactical (low-yield) nuclear strikes; Air-Sea Battle, on the other hand, proposes mainland strikes with precision conventional weapons.[xlix] Eisenhower, therefore, might have shelved these escalatory war plans merely because of the inherently escalatory nature of employing nuclear weapons, albeit "tactical" ones, not because the targets were located on the Chinese mainland. The implication, then, is that Air-Sea Battle will not meet the same political resistance as 1950s mainland strike war plans since it does not involve strikes with nuclear weapons. This counter-argument overlooks, however, the blurring of tactical nuclear weapons and conventional military power in 1950s military doctrine.[l] For instance, one classified national security document, approved by Eisenhower himself in 1953, specifies that in the event of hostilities with Russia or China, "the United States will consider nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other munitions."[li] He elsewhere stated, "the tactical use of atomic weapons against military targets would be no more likely to trigger off a big war than the use of twenty-ton block busters."[lii] Tactical nuclear strikes then and conventional strikes now might therefore be similarly escalatory to top decision-makers. Nevertheless, the question remains whether Eisenhower, in a crisis, would have continued to believe in the absence of a distinction between tactical nuclear weapons and conventional munitions. This key difference requires that researchers examine other similar crises, a priority explained shortly.

Several policy implications for U.S. security officials concerned about war plans and force planning flow from the historical arguments made earlier. First, U.S. leaders might be reluctant to authorize escalatory, deep-strike war plans against a nuclear adversary. Admittedly, Eisenhower and his top advisers, both military and civilian, did actively consider strikes on the Chinese mainland, a finding that should modestly comfort Air-Sea Battle supporters. Mainland strike war plans against an enemy capable of nuclear reprisal are not entirely unthinkable. Air-Sea Battle skeptics will find much more comfort, though, in Eisenhower's ultimate decision against the employment of mainland strikes. American officials involved in the 1958 Crisis, including the President himself, worried that the Soviet Union would escalate to nuclear war if the United States was to strike mainland China. The Director of the CIA also acutely worried about the prospect of nuclear retaliation. American officials in a future crisis with China could experience a similar fear, making U.S. officials reticent to actually authorize strikes on the mainland. A similar historical case study of several crises between Pakistan and India also found that the presence of nuclear weapons dampened conventional escalation once fighting began.[liii] The U.S. military should therefore also attend to operational plans other than Air-Sea Battle (or any plan that heavily relies on mainland strikes) since authorization might not be forthcoming, either tactically on account of a temporary delay or initial political reluctance, or strategically due to an outright refusal by senior leaders to authorize mainland strikes.[liv]

A first step ought to be reducing the vulnerability of forward-deployed Air Force and Navy forces. Specific military improvements that will reduce the military's reliance on mainland strikes include options such as designing air bases less susceptible to missile damage, ensuring that the Air Force can rapidly repair runways, increasing the range of the carrier air wing, and developing a larger submarine fleet.[lv] A military cottage industry on this exact subject—alternatives to Air-Sea Battle—has generated many other ideas.[lvi] These alternative plans often call for avoiding investments in so-called long-range strike platforms such as stealthy bombers. While reducing investment in long-range strike forces might be sensible, military leadership could also take a middle ground and ensure that platforms designed to strike deep into an opponent's territory can also contribute to a peripheral fight. For instance, stealthy bombers and cruise missile submarines, while useful for putting targets on the Chinese mainland at risk, can also strike the Chinese navy and other off-shore targets, provided the military outfits these platforms with anti-ship munitions and possesses sufficient means of tracking Chinese naval assets.

Second, Air-Sea Battle will likely continue to find support among government officials if strategists continue to believe that non-Air-Sea Battle options will fail against the Chinese military in a brute-force conflict and to the extent that a deep-strike orthodoxy influences military strategists. Tactical nuclear plans proposed during the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis survived the bureaucratic gauntlet largely because purely conventional operations were considered militarily insufficient to be war-winning and because of the widespread nuclear mindset among military officers. That some strategists, within and outside the government, similarly find strategies other than Air-Sea Battle deficient in wartime and believe in a deep-strike way of war likely means that Air-Sea Battle will remain a war plan with supporters. Skeptics ought to defend the military adequacy of other strategies.[lvii] For instance, Michael O'Hanlon and Richard Bush assert that even should the U.S. military abstain from mainland strikes the United States would "very likely prevail unambiguously in a conventional conflict."[lviii] This assertion must become orthodoxy if skeptics want Air-Sea Battle, or at least its more extreme versions, shelved.

Third, some might argue that because the Chinese never attempted to invade Quemoy, this case study is not an ideal test of the odds that Air-Sea Battle would receive authorization. Air-Sea Battle would surely be authorized, these critics would contend, if China mounted a full-scale

amphibious invasion of Taiwan, exactly what China did not attempt in the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis. A military historian might point to the authorization of unrestricted submarine warfare after Pearl Harbor as an episode when previously unthinkable, escalatory tactics became necessary.[lix]

Air-Sea Battle would surely be authorized, these critics would contend, if China mounted a full-scale amphibious invasion of Taiwan

This contention, however, overlooks that much of the tension between China and the United States is more likely to resemble the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis than the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Those crises that never devolve into brute-force conflicts will require the U.S. President to possess options that are less escalatory than some proposed versions of Air-Sea Battle. War plans involving strikes only on offshore targets or a long-distance blockade are examples of less escalatory plans; the military should also consider variants of Air-Sea Battle that restrict strikes to a certain portion of the mainland, certain targets, and to the later stages of a campaign.

Nonetheless, the critics have a point: the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis can only illuminate so much of the debate. McGeorge Bundy has opined, "We do not know—he may not have known either—exactly what Eisenhower might have done if a Chinese invasion of Quemoy or Matsu had seemed about to succeed in either crisis."[lx] It is therefore the duty of the national security community to better understand the usability of deep-strike war plans against nuclear adversaries. Researchers ought to begin exploring other cases including the Korean War, the 1954 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the Sino-Soviet border war, the Vietnam War, the Yom Kippur War, and the Kargil Crisis. In addition to studying these crises and wars, scholars could turn their attention to peacetime war planning and instances in which political leaders consider plans that call for mainland strikes against nuclear adversaries; political leaders' reactions could be telling.

Likelihood of Authorization: One (Important) Part of the Air-Sea Battle Debate

The Air-Sea Battle debate, merely one part of a larger strategic debate over the proper U.S. response to Chinese military modernization, admittedly hinges on more than the likelihood of authorization. Sophisticated observers will argue that the value of Air-Sea Battle is primarily realized before a crisis when the mere potential to unleash mainland strikes deters bellicose Chinese behavior.[lxi] Analysts of this persuasion argue that Chinese leaders might believe U.S. leaders will authorize mainland strikes, rendering Air-Sea Battle a potent deterrent. Another astute scholar maintains that Air-Sea Battle will be a cost-imposing strategy that will shape Chinese military investment to U.S. advantage.[lxii] Both arguments are logically sound and deserve further consideration. Some strategists will also chafe at any war plan that accords the Chinese mainland "sanctuary" status.[lxiii] They will sensibly argue, for instance, that Chinese land-based missiles, if left unmolested, could prove a grave danger to the American military. War-games, combat models, and defense analysis can help resolve this question.[lxiv] Finally, those who see the role of the military as providing "options" to the President will worry that not preparing a war plan involving mainland strikes needlessly forecloses a strategic option. Not offering the President the possibility to strike mainland targets, according to this logic, amounts to military malpractice and could even paint the President into a strategic corner. Of course, thinkers of this worldview also hold that a U.S. military prepared to wage Air-Sea Battle can by default also put into action all manner of less demanding war plans, a proposition in need of further consideration.[lxv]

The evidence from the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis suggests that Air-Sea Battle might prove too escalatory for a President to authorize in all but the most dire crisis.

But the question of whether a U.S. president would consider and then authorize conventional strikes on the homeland of a nuclear power such as China ought to be crucial to this debate. The evidence from the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis suggests that Air-Sea Battle might prove too escalatory for a President to authorize in all but the most dire crisis. Admittedly, top decision-makers did actively consider tactical nuclear strikes against the ally of a nuclear power; however, the nuclear capability of China's Soviet ally weighed heavily on decision-makers and contributed to Eisenhower's decision not to authorize mainland strikes. Top leaders, both civilian and military, must therefore ensure that operational solutions to Chinese military modernization, such as Air-Sea Battle, are also strategic solutions—plans that can reliably be put into action in moments of crisis.

Toward this end, frank conversation between military planners and top civilians could help prevent a situation where top brass propose a war plan that the President rejects, leaving the U.S. military in the unenviable position of fighting with severe geographic restrictions and without a backup plan.[lxvi] This conversation will help military leaders assess whether the military's preferences are different from those of its political masters'. If this conversation convinces some that a China war plan involving mainland strikes might not be authorized in a future conflict, then far-sighted generals and admirals should compensate for potentially restrictive rules of engagement by fashioning alternative war plans, procuring appropriate weapon systems, and ensuring that the U.S. Navy and Air Force can engage in successful combat short of mainland strikes. Should these top officers conclude that successful war plans demand mainland strikes, however, political leaders ought to know. Perhaps a far-sighted president might even see reason for boosting the overall military budget so that the U.S. military could fight without resorting to mainland strikes. In that case, Air-Sea Battle advocates might welcome the high-level political oversight hitherto endorsed mainly by skeptics.

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[xii] Nina Tannenwald, The Nuclear Taboo (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.5-6.

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[xvi] Ibid. pp.126-127.

[xvii] Ibid. pp.126-127.

[xviii] Ibid. p.64.

[xix] McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years (New York: Random House, 1988) , p. 279; Appu Kuttan Soman, Double-edged Sword (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000), p.181.

[xx] Soman, Double-edged Sword, p.181.

[xxi] Ibid. p.179.

[xxii] Halperin. "The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis: A Documented History," p.110.

[xxiii] Soman, Double-edged Sword, p.174; Tannenwald, The Nuclear Taboo, p.184.

[xxiv] Shu Guang Zhang, Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), p.246.

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[xxx] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis: A Documented History," p.xi.

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[xxxii] Soman, Double-edged Sword, p.274.

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[xl] Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis: A Documented History." pp.438 & 366.

[xli] Ibid. p.423.

[xlii] Ibid. p.423.

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[xliv] Ibid. p.x.

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[xlvii] Ibid. p.248.

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[xlix] Bruce A. Elleman, High Seas Buffer: The Taiwan Patrol Force, 1950-1979 (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Newport Papers No. 38, 2012), pp.103-105.

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[lii] Gaddis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War, pp.147.

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