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PARAMETERS US ARMY WAR COLLEGE QUARTERLY VOLUME 17  
NUMBER 3 SEPTEMBER 1987(U) ARMY WAR COLL CARLISLE  
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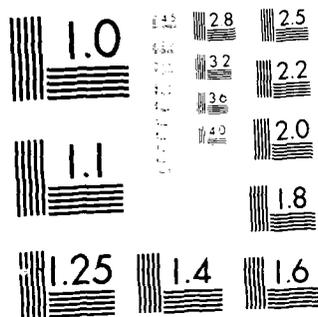
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# PARAMETERS

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US ARMY  
WAR COLLEGE  
QUARTERLY

VOL. XVII NO. 3

SEPTEMBER 1987

*Constitutional Bicentennial Feature*

Edward M. Coffman - The Army Officer and the Constitution

*Book Reviews*

By Lawrence Korb, Forrest Pogue, John Collins  
Also: Harry Summers looks at Edward Luttwak's *Strategy*

- America Things . . . . . *Donn A. Starr*
- Antitank*: A Case for Decentralized Battle . . . . . *John T. Nelson*
- Compromising: More or Less Time for a Change . . . . . *Michael A. Green & Paul Tibbitt*
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- General McClellan and the Politicians . . . . . *Brian Holden Reid*
- View From the Fourth Estate  
Bring Back Blood and Guts Patton! . . . . . *David H. Hackworth*

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# PARAMETERS

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*Parameters* is an Army professional bulletin published quarterly by the US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013. Telephone: (717) 245-4943, AUTOVON 242-4943. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official Army positions.

Second-class postage is paid at Carlisle, PA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Parameters*, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013.

Subscriptions are available from the Superintendent of Documents, US GPO, Washington, DC 20402. Current annual cost is \$7.00 for domestic or APO addresses, \$8.75 for foreign addresses. Single copies are \$4.50 domestic, \$5.63 foreign. Make checks payable to the Superintendent of Documents. Credit card orders may be placed by calling GPO at (202) 783-3238 during business hours.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome; optimum length is 4000 words. Author Guide is available on request. *Parameters* articles are indexed in *ABC Pol Sci*, *Current Military Literature*, and *Military Affairs*. Unless copyrighted, articles may be reprinted; please credit the author and *Parameters*.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 70-612062. US ISSN 0031-1723. USPS 413530.

This publication is approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

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# The Army Officer and the Constitution

EDWARD M. COFFMAN

*Thursday, 17 September 1987, marks the 200th anniversary of the United States Constitution. To ensure that this historic event is properly commemorated, Congress created the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. Its life has been extended through 31 December 1991 to cover the 200th anniversary of the signing and ratification of the Bill of Rights. As its Constitutional Bicentennial feature, Parameters here publishes Professor Coffman's article on the officer and the Constitution. The article was adapted from a lecture Professor Coffman presented at Carlisle Barracks as part of the US Army Military History Institute's lecture series, "Perspectives in Military History."—Editor*

**B**asic for any consideration of the officer and the Constitution is the relationship of civil and military power in the American military tradition. This point deserves emphasis because, too often, commentators who know little or nothing about that tradition substitute inappropriate foreign models which have the military contending for dominance in contrast with the actual and much less dramatic American experience. There is and always has been in the US Army officer corps an implicit—one could almost say instinctive—acceptance of the civil power's superiority to the military in government. Inherited from the English, nourished throughout the colonial period, and confirmed during the Revolutionary War, that understanding has prevailed throughout our history, with only one major threat. That was the Newburgh Conspiracy of 1783.

In his brilliant book, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (1975), Richard H. Kohn tells the story of that deviation from the norm of the American military tradition. It is worth repeating because it points up the difference of the American experience from that of so many other countries.

During the last months of the Revolutionary War, as George Washington struggled to hold the Army together in order to guarantee a successful end of that war, idleness fostered grievances. Among officers, the major complaint concerned money; they wanted their pay and assurance of postwar pensions. As it happened, their desires conveniently fit in with the interests of a group of political leaders who wanted to strengthen the central government. They thought they could use the officers' appeal for money as an argument for a national tax which in turn would enhance the power of the central government. With this in view, Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris, and the ever-ambitious Alexander Hamilton intrigued with and manipulated Major General Alexander McDougall and those other officers who petitioned Congress. As weeks passed and grievances festered, some of the officers began to consider the awesome step of threatening mutiny if Congress did not provide for them. The scene seems to have been set—almost in classic textbook terms—for a coup d'état. Yet it did not happen. The reasons for that result explain much about the American military tradition.

First, there was the great commander, George Washington, who set the right example. In responding publicly to the two anonymous letters which advocated extreme measures, he confronted the officers corps in blunt language:

Could the Army actually contemplate "something so shocking" as turning its swords against Congress, "plotting the ruin of both by sowing the seeds of discord and separation" between military and civil? "My God! What can this writer have in view by recommending such measures? Can he be a friend to the Army? Can he be a friend to this country? Rather is he not an insidious foe?"

This dramatic peroration stopped cold any notions of attempting to coerce civil authority with threats of military power or, in the extreme, of creating an independent military state.

There was more involved, however, than the charismatic appeal of this highly respected military leader. The officers and men were not rootless mercenaries operating in a political vacuum. They were American citizens

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turned temporarily to soldiering who were accustomed to the tradition of military subordination to civilian power. And, equally significant, there were in existence well-established, legitimate political institutions. Thus, the crucial elements which have so often led to military dictatorships as revolutions drew to a close were not present.

Concerning the importance of squelching this so-called conspiracy so near the birth of the nation, Kohn concludes: "Once civilian control is violated, even by the most halting attempts, a certain purity is irretrievably lost."<sup>1</sup> The American military tradition has thus come down to us in the 1980s unstained by the misadventures which blot that aspect of many other nations' histories. Much of the significance of this event, albeit unknown to virtually all officers since then, is that nothing happened to shake their intrinsic belief in the propriety of the American civil-military relationship. The Constitution, then, as the basic document of their government, remains paramount. Officers accept that civil-military relationship. Indeed, there is no reason to give it a thought; it is a concretely established fact.

Indicative of this innate acceptance is that the oath which officers took from 1790 to 1861 did not mention the Constitution. To be sure, Congress did require initially (in 1789) two oaths, including one to support the Constitution:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear and/or affirm (as the case may be) that I will support the Constitution of the United States.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) to bear true allegiance to the United States of America, and to serve them honestly and faithfully, against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever, and to observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States of America and the orders of the officers appointed over me.

Seven months later Congress dropped the first oath and added the words "according to the articles of war" to the second. Obviously, the men in Congress considered the first oath superfluous. For the next 70 years officers and enlisted men entered the Army by pledging their allegiance to the United States of America without reference to the Constitution. In August 1861, after the Southern Confederacy had become a reality and fighting had begun, our legislative leaders reflected the influence of those events by requiring West Point cadets and future candidates for admission to the Military Academy to take an oath that was much more specific:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States, and bear true allegiance to the national government; that I will maintain and defend the sovereignty of the United States paramount to any and all allegiance, sovereignty, or fealty I may owe to any state, county, or

country, whatsoever; and that I will at all times obey the legal orders of my superior officers and the rules and articles governing the armies of the United States.

The next year, in an effort to ensure that all loopholes were closed, Congress demanded that all officers, civil and military, take an even lengthier and more complicated oath:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen; that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto; that I have neither sought nor accepted, nor attempted to exercise the functions of any office whatever under any authority or pretended authority in hostility to the United States; that I have not yielded a voluntary support to any pretended government, authority, power, or constitution within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto. And I do further swear (or affirm) that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God.

Clearly, the men who required that oath did not want to leave anything unsaid about allegiance as they carefully included every possibility.

There were complaints, and even President Abraham Lincoln objected. As he explained in a note to the Secretary of War: "On principle I dislike an oath which requires a man to swear he has not done wrong. It rejects the Christian principle of forgiveness on terms of repentance. I think it is enough if the man does no wrong hereafter." Other northern political leaders were neither as tolerant nor as forgiving, so it was not until 1884 that Congress authorized a simpler version for all officers, which their successors have taken ever since.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.

This review of the oaths—the legally binding pledges which officers made upon acceptance of their commissions—points up the important

fact that neither the generation of officers who entered the turbulent decade of the 1860s had taken an oath to support the Constitution nor had their predecessors since 1790.<sup>2</sup>

This leads to the logical question: What did officers then know about the Constitution? As one would assume, they probably knew about as little then as officers do today! The issue of secession, however, caused many people to ask that question. It seemed reasonable to look to the Military Academy for an answer. After all, some 68 percent of the officers in the Regular Army were West Point graduates in 1861, and almost one third (28.2 percent) of the officers left to join the Confederate Army. Although the percentage of West Point graduates who went south (26.5 percent) was actually slightly less than that of the officer corps as a whole, this fact was ignored or considered a quibble by critics. In 1861 even Secretary of War Simon Cameron joined in the attack. As far as Cameron was concerned, the problem lay not in what cadets learned about the Constitution but lay rather in the cadet disciplinary code, which, he argued, deadened cadets' sensitivity to moral wrongs by equating such wrongs as treason and disloyalty to country with mere violations of Academy regulations. To give Cameron proper due, he did not advocate abolishing the Academy as did the more extreme critics. In his next report, five months later in December 1861, he recognized the value of West Point training and even called for an increase in the strength of the Corps of Cadets.<sup>3</sup>

There is no clear-cut answer to the question of what was taught about the Constitution at West Point. While a fire which destroyed many of the records prior to 1835 hinders research, the most significant obstacle is the obvious fact that little notice was given to that subject. Prior to the Civil War the Chaplain had the responsibility of teaching ethics, which, depending to a large extent on the inclination of the particular minister, might include varying amounts of instruction in constitutional and international law. Since that good man also had to teach philosophy, history, and geography, he certainly had to stretch himself. Apparently, when the academic curriculum was expanded to five years in 1854, there was a little more space for constitutional law. First classmen then met from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. five times every two weeks in a class which covered American history, international and constitutional law, military history, and military law. One gets the impression that a cadet by a few momentary lapses in alertness might miss completely any information offered on the Constitution.<sup>4</sup>

Both Leonidas Polk, who graduated in 1827, left the service to become eventually an Episcopal Bishop, and then wore the stars of a Confederate general, and the leader of the desperate charge at Gettysburg, George E. Pickett of the Class of 1846, claimed that they learned in a West Point classroom that secession was legal. Such statements fanned the flame of suspicion that the allegedly southern-dominated academy had taught

treason. Actually, northerners clearly dominated among the staff and faculty at West Point, and they did what they could to dampen what they considered dangerous agitation. In the 1840s the Superintendent thus put a stop to the plans of the Cadet Dialectic Society to debate the constitutionality of a state's refusal to obey a federal law. Later superintendents attempted to shield cadets from abolitionist literature. Indeed, generally, officers—be they northerners or southerners, West Pointers or non-graduates—were moderates who deplored shifts in the governmental status quo and who considered abolitionists the major threat to that stability.<sup>5</sup>

Those who sought to pin down the culprit thought that they had found it in a book by William Rawle, *A View of the Constitution of the United States of America*. Unquestionably, two sentences in that work plainly endorsed the legitimacy of secession. They are as follows: "The secession of a state from the Union depends on the will of the people of such state. The states then may wholly withdraw from the Union, but while they continue, they must retain the character of representative republics."<sup>6</sup>

Finding those words in a book which was used as a textbook at West Point would seem to settle the matter, but the issue remains problematic. It is very difficult to determine when and if a teacher used that book in class. Douglas Southall Freeman, the famed biographer of Robert E. Lee, apparently looked into this question more carefully than any other historian. His research indicated that the book was definitely used as a text during only one academic year, 1825-26. A clinching corroboration of that finding is a statement by Jefferson Davis. If anyone would hope to gain from the claim that he had learned that secession was legal at the Military Academy, it was Davis, a member of the Class of 1828. Yet, in a letter dated 1 July 1886, the former Confederate President wrote that although Rawle had been used previously, it had been replaced by another book when he took the course.<sup>7</sup>

After the Civil War, Davis, in his memoir, attempted to justify his and his fellow secessionists' actions with an elaborate argument to the effect that it was the northern leadership rather than southern leaders who violated the Constitution. None of the officers who resigned their commissions and took up arms against the federal government went to such lengths to justify that step through interpretations of the Constitution. When they reached what Robert E. Lee called that "fearful pass" during those bleak winter and spring days of 1860-61 as the Union broke up over their heads, officers, almost to a man, deplored the terrible situation. The overwhelming majority, including some southerners, simply did their duty as US Army officers. As a leading example, there was the Commanding General, Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, who at 74 had been a general for 47 of his years. Although a Virginian, he saw no reason to place his state above the Union. After the southern states had seceded, Scott believed the best course was to let them alone. He deplored the possibility of coercing them

back into the Union; nevertheless, when President Abraham Lincoln decided on war, the aged general followed orders to the best of his ability.<sup>8</sup>

Destiny focused attention on Scott's most famous protégé, Robert E. Lee, who took the opposite course. As he observed events and agonized over what he might have to do, there was never any question in Lee's mind that he would follow his state if it left the Union. Privately he deplored secession, and on 23 January 1861 he confided in a letter that he did not believe that the framers of the Constitution considered it a right. In this discussion, he indicated his lack of knowledge of that document by confusing some of the wording with that in the Articles of Confederation. After the war, when a British writer pressed him on his constitutional views, Lee contradicted his earlier stand by stating that he thought secession was a constitutional right, but one which he considered a mistake to exercise. Then, in a curious example of circuitous reasoning, he said that he believed Lincoln's coercive actions in the spring of 1861 were unconstitutional. One gets the impression that, for Lee, casting his decision in constitutional terms was forced and artificial. He and others did not make their decisions after careful study of the Constitution but on the simple basis of placing their home above the Union. With what was real opposed to what seemed abstract, there was no problem for many in making the decision. There was instead, as in the case of Lee, the agony of having to live with such a decision.<sup>9</sup>

In his epic poem, *John Brown's Body*, Stephen Vincent Benét caught the essence of what motivated these men when he described the thoughts of his southern hero, Wingate:

He brooded a moment. It wasn't slavery, . . .  
Nor even states-rights, at least not solely,  
But something so dim that it must be holy.  
A voice, a fragrance, a taste of wine,  
A face half-seen in old candleshine,  
A yellow river, a blowing dust,  
Something beyond you that you must trust . . . .

More succinctly, E. P. Alexander, who at 26 had to make the decision, summed up the basic reason: "I must go with my people."<sup>10</sup>

During that twilight period before war broke out, most officers demonstrated the predominance of reality over the abstract by their attempts to follow regular routines. Understandably, they concentrated on the reality of the immediate situation rather than the abstraction of future possibilities. By tending to the mundane, by acting as if they were not skirting the edge of the abyss, they could thus retain a sense of control over their destinies. In Lee's case, for example, despite the fact that he had been considering for months what he must do if his state seceded, he still formally

accepted his promotion to colonel (ironically President Lincoln signed the commission) on 30 March 1861, just three weeks to a day before he resigned.

Surely the most bizarre series of incidents on that order during those hectic days were the actions of P. G. T. Beauregard. As an indication of the apparent general obliviousness to the coming crisis, the Chief of Engineers, Brevet Brigadier General Joseph G. Totten, appointed the Louisianian to the Superintendency of West Point in January 1861, although Beauregard told him that he would go with his state if it seceded and there was war. On his part, Brevet Major Beauregard accepted the post, proceeded to the Academy, and assumed the office even though Louisiana's secession convention was meeting at the time. Totten had second thoughts, however, and revoked the orders on 24 January, the day after Beauregard arrived at West Point. As an officer would under normal circumstances, he protested such a sudden relief. Of course, the situation was hardly normal. To be fair, Beauregard acknowledged the immediate possibility of his state's secession (and, indeed, the convention did vote to leave the Union on the 26th), but argued that he did not intend to resign his commission unless there was war. In this instance, Totten showed a firmer grasp of reality by ignoring that protest. After only five days as Superintendent, Beauregard left for Louisiana where he promptly became a general in the Confederate Army. What makes this story almost fantastic is that he not only put in for mileage reimbursement for his trip from West Point to New Orleans but also pressed the federal government for his \$165 claim even after he took command of forces which threatened the federal garrison at Fort Sumter.<sup>11</sup>

Courtesy Roger D. Hunt



Courtesy USAMHI



P. G. T. Beauregard as a Union officer . . . then as a Confederate.

Turning to those who fought for the Union, one again finds few mentions of constitutional reasons for their decision in their memoirs. Two who did refer to the Constitution in their reminiscences were George B. McClellan and Ulysses S. Grant. As it happened, both had resigned their commissions some years before and were civilians in early 1861. In both cases, their comments, like those of Lee, appear to be forced. Curiously, a reader who did not know who these men were might assume, on the basis of their remarks on the Constitution, that they had fought against the Union. McClellan, who, it should be remembered, made his opposition to the policies of the government clear by running against Lincoln for the presidency in 1864, inveighed against what he considered the unconstitutional appropriation of power by the federal government. Grant, whose two terms in the White House may have caused him to take note of the constitutional aspects, seemed to contradict himself. On one page, he stated:

The fact is the constitution did not apply to any such contingency as the one existing from 1861 to 1865. Its framers never dreamed of such a contingency occurring. If they had foreseen it, the probabilities are they would have sanctioned the right of a state or states to withdraw rather than that there should be war between brothers.

On the next page he said:

The fathers themselves would have been the first to declare that their prerogatives were not irrevocable. They would surely have resisted secession could they have lived to see the shape it assumed.

To give General Grant proper credit, in a letter dated 19 April 1861 he said that a true patriot would "be for maintaining the integrity of the glorious old stars & stripes, the Constitution and the Union."<sup>12</sup>

From 1861 to the present, when researchers looked into the educational background of officers to ascertain possible influences on their decisions in the secession crisis, they have naturally focused their attention on the Military Academy. Yet one should ask about the other 31 percent of the officer corps. What, if any, knowledge of the Constitution did the War Department require of them? In 1839 Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett stipulated that civilian applicants for a commission had to show competence in an examination which covered mathematics, geography, history, and "knowledge of the political organization of the Government of the United States, as developed in the Constitution." In this apparently first specific mention of a requirement for familiarity with the Constitution, it is interesting to note that this section of the examination was weighted less than

the other three areas: mathematics-10; geography-10; history-8; and Constitution-6. Thirty-three civilians were commissioned in 1839, so presumably they passed that test. We cannot be certain that their successors had to do so. The regulations in 1847 are more general as they call for "an examination touching upon . . . physical ability, moral character, attainments, and general fitness for the service." It is not until 1854 that one finds another requirement for background in the Constitution on the part of applicants for a commission. At that time, in General Orders Number 17, dated 4 October 1854, the War Department stated the terms of the examination for non-commissioned officers who sought lieutenancies. In so doing, the Army did change the wording of the constitutional requirement in such a way as to emphasize more the document itself as well as to include an entirely new subject: "knowledge of the Constitution of the United States and of the organization of the government under it, and of the general principles which regulate international intercourse." There was also the addition of a section on English grammar to include "ability to read and write with facility and correction." The weighting was also different, with the Constitution, government, and diplomacy section worth 8 points along with English and history, while mathematics and geography still ranked higher with 10. Since only a dozen non-coms earned commissions in the years 1854 through 1860, such familiarity with the Constitution as they may have possessed presumably had little consequence in the secession crisis.<sup>13</sup>

It was not until 1867 that the War Department made the 1854 examination requirements specifically applicable to all candidates for commission. It would be interesting to see what questions the examining boards asked over the years. While I have not been able to find a set of questions from this period, I do have one from 1901. It is likely that these differed little from those asked prospective second lieutenants in the last third of the 19th century. This particular examination was given to a young VMI graduate. In its entirety, it read:

1. In whom are the executive powers vested and what are the qualifications for the office?
2. What is the provision of the constitution concerning the declaration of war?
3. To what cases does the judicial power of the United States extend?
4. What is the writ of habeas corpus? By whom may it be issued and for what purpose?
5. How can a state be formed from another state?

Fortunately for the nation, George C. Marshall, Jr. passed that examination.<sup>14</sup>

What are we to conclude about the Constitution and the officer? It is apparent that while our hypothetical officer was probably not particularly

familiar with that document, he accepted the order of civil-military relationship which had prevailed since 150 years before the Constitution was written. Even in the time of the greatest threat to the Union, virtually all officers made their decision to support or fight against the United States with little or no thought of the Constitution. Nor did most civilians of that day think in terms of the Constitution. As long as officers, however, accept the traditional civil-military arrangement and are willing to fight and die for the Constitution and the Nation, it really does not matter whether they are scholars of the founding document itself.

#### NOTES

1. Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975), Chap. 2. The quotations are from pp. 31 and 38.
2. I am indebted to William G. Eckhardt for suggesting this line of inquiry and for calling my attention to Thomas H. Reese's interesting article, "An Officer's Oath," *Military Law Review*, 25 (July 1964), 1-41. The last oath and Lincoln's comment on the 1862 oath are from pages 8-9. I found the other oaths in John F. Callan, *The Military Laws of the United States* (Philadelphia: G. W. Childs, 1863), pp. 87, 89, 483, and 508.
3. *Report of the Secretary of War, July 1, 1861*, pp. 27-28; *Annual Report of the Secretary of War, December 1, 1861*, pp. 8-9; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 45, 92; James I. Morrison, Jr., "The Best School in the World": *West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 132-34.
4. Morrison, pp. 92, 116-17, 161, 170; Walter Scott Dillard, "The United States Military Academy 1865-1900: The Uncertain Years" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1972), p. 120.
5. William M. Polk, *Leonidas Polk: Bishop and General*, 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915), I, 302; Arthur Crew Inman, ed., *Soldier of the South: General Pickett's War Letters to His Wife* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p. 2; Morrison, p. 130 and Appendix Six. For a general summary of officers' attitudes and actions at the time of secession, see Coffman, pp. 92-96.
6. As quoted by R. T. Bennett, "Morale of the Confederate," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 22 (1894), 83.
7. *Ibid.*; Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1937), I, 78-79; Dillard, p. 331; Edward S. Holden and W. L. Ostrander, "A Tentative List of Textbooks Used in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point," in *The Centennial of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York: 1802-1902*, 2 vols. (Washington: GPO, 1904), I, 441.
8. Freeman, I, 420; Charles W. Elliot, *Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 697-98, 706-07.
9. Freeman, I, 420-23.
10. Stephen Vincent Benet, *John Brown's Body* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1928), p. 77; Edward P. Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 6.
11. Freeman, I, 433, 440; T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 45-47.
12. George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story* (New York: C. L. Webster & Co., 1887), pp. 32-33; U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 2 vols. (New York: C. L. Webster & Co., 1885), I, 220-21; John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, multi-volume (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1969), II, 3.
13. The first regulation is as quoted in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 10 (14 May 1840), 313; *General Regulations for the Army of the United States: 1847*, Article VI #32; WDGO #17, 4 October 1854. The number of NCOs commissioned is from John J. Lenney, *Rankers* (New York: Greenberg, 1950), p. 134. Lenney's statistics also point up the dramatic impact of war on the number of civil appointees. In this period, there were 219 civilians who obtained appointments in the 19 years from 1839 through 1860, excluding 1846-47-48. In contrast, during those three Mexican War years, 565 civilians entered the Army through that route (Lenney, pp. 133-34).
14. WDGO #93, 31 October 1867. I appreciate Larry Bland's locating a copy of Marshall's examination in the George C. Marshall Research Library in Lexington, Va.

# Running Things

DONN A. STARRY

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**D**espite the differences between the military and industry, the practice of leadership and management in the two arenas is not so dissimilar as one might think. Cut to the bone, it's a matter of running things. That is what leaders and managers do, whether in uniform or mufti. They run things, do things, get things done. They take finite resources, organize them, and direct their application toward finite goals, tasks, aims, and objectives, always cognizant of what those goals are, always mindful of the resources at hand and what must be achieved.

It is not my purpose here to tell you how to run things; each of you will decide that on your own. That you are reading this journal testifies to your experience in the subject of leadership, which has doubtless helped you to form your own ideas about how to run things. So I will try not to bother you with things you already know. My purpose is to distill for you some observations from 44 years of running things and watching other people run things, in the hope that the product will be of some value.

One of the most elemental complications in running things is *change*. Change is constant, unceasing, and ever-accelerating. True, this has always been the case, but today the pace of change is much more rapid and we have to swallow it in much greater doses than ever before. Change is inherently confusing, upsetting; change is dysfunctional. It is imperative that leaders or managers accommodate to change while pursuing goals which don't change very much. And that brings us to an important second point: despite the pace and magnitude of change, some things don't change very much at all. In fact, if we are to be successful, our core objectives likely should not change at all; what changes is the variety of ways in which we seek to achieve those relatively static goals. With change swirling all about us, affecting much of what we do, consistency and stability are essential qualities of sound leadership and management.

Running things involves four fundamental factors that determine what is done and how it gets done:

- *Vision*. At the beginning must be some *vision* of what is being attempted. What are we trying to accomplish? Vision varies with perspective. Your vision if you are taking command of a brigade won't be the same as it will if you're about to take over as chief operating officer of a division or a company in industry, but presumably you will set goals in either case. What do you want to get done on your watch? Your answer to that question is what I call *vision*. Vision is expressed largely in terms of what the leader senses, what his intuition tells him, as opposed to some more rational process. Please understand, though, that what is required in this sense is informed intuition, not just some seat-of-the-pants guesswork. To be useful, vision must be believable; it must be something that those charged with achieving it can understand and believe to be a good, achievable idea, one they can eventually embrace as their own. In fact, one of the keys to getting anything done is to convince a lot of people that what is being attempted is a good idea; to really move things it is necessary also to convince them it was their idea in the first place. If you can do that, you can accomplish almost anything!

- *Strategy*. Next, you need a description of how the vision is to be achieved. How do we get from where we are to where we want to be? The answer is our game-plan—our *strategy*.

- *Operations*. Specific tasks must be accomplished to achieve the strategy. The strategy becomes a series of mission statements with accompanying tasks. These tasks describe the *operations* to be undertaken in order to get things done. In the business world, this includes how the company is to be organized. What market segments are to be embraced by what organizational divisions and in what segments of the market will each business entity operate, grow, and yield profit? In the military, campaign plans and their ensuing operational-level implementation determine how things get done at the operational level of warfare.

- *Tactics*. Finally, there is the set of business practices one employs to get things done. In the military these are called *tactics*, and so they might be called in industry. They involve the lower-level schemes which win the bid, the program; which take the hill, the objective; which mark success for the lowest levels of the organization as that success has been spelled-out in operations plans and orders, in budget plans and instructions.

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Long years ago, a new commander took charge of a unit in which I commanded a subordinate element. One of his first acts was to summon me to issue instructions. What he said went something like this: "I want you to understand why I am here. I am here because it is necessary for me to command this unit for a year—no more, no less—in order to get to be a general. I am going to be a general. Now, your outfit has a tendency to do things differently, to attract attention. I don't like that. For the year I am in command, I don't want anything to happen. I don't just mean anything bad—I mean anything that will call the attention of higher headquarters to us as being different from anyone else. We are just going to go along. That's my vision [his word] for the next year. Don't rock my boat. Do you understand?"

Of course, I affirmed that yes, I understood. Then I went back to my unit to report on our instructions. First, I relayed what the new commander had said to me. Then, after some discussion, we decided what we would do: We *would* rock the boat, and hard, but in such a way that our boss couldn't accuse us of screwing up his vision. We went right along as he had said, but with the firm determination to be the best, to win everything in sight. The boat was constantly rocking, but our commander really couldn't say much to stop us—*his* boss was forever congratulating him on how well we were all doing under his enlightened leadership! My commander never spoke with me again about this, but I'm sure that by his standards he had a very miserable year.

In another setting, at another time, a new chief executive officer took over a fairly large company with a diversified portfolio of businesses. In setting out his vision for his business units, the CEO issued the pronouncement that his vision for one unit was that it become, in five years, number three in the market segment in which it was involved. When asked how he arrived at the number three, he replied that "intuitively it seemed about right." At the time, the business unit in question was number 29 in an industry which had an annual growth rate of about eight percent. In order to achieve the number three position, that business unit would have to grow at a rate six times the market growth rate and invest a sum four times the total corporate allocation for that function. The CEO's vision was clearly out of sync with reality. As a consequence, the business unit manager and his staff ignored the vision. The unit did grow, and at a rate somewhat better than the market rate, but against a totally different set of criteria from those laid down by the CEO. His vision was simply not relevant; it may have been intuitive, but it was certainly not informed.

The management texts will tell you that the chief executive officer must be involved in strategy formulation. Several studies of military leadership cite the same notion. But it is very difficult to get the boss involved in the vision or strategy part of the operation. It is perhaps more

difficult in the business world, where the all-pervasive concentration on profit and the chief executive's inability to unharness himself from budget details distract his attention visibly, sometimes completely, and perhaps even fortuitously, from what in reality should be his fundamental role.

Military estimates call for a commander's guidance; military orders call for a commander's concept of the operation. Yet how many times have you ever seen a commander sit down to think and write about those things himself? He's too busy to think—the staff keeps him that way. Besides, he is almost always more comfortable with the nits and details than with the vision and strategy. The latter require that a commander think creatively; the former, only that he have an accountant's grasp of what's going on, and usually he's far more comfortable in that role.

In the automobile industry, Ford lost its market share lead to General Motors in the 1920s largely because of Henry Ford's unwillingness to give up the Model T and build the cars which technology was making possible and which customer demands were making necessary. Ford's dominant position in the auto industry was lost. While his vision of providing the car for the common folk may have been a correct one, Henry Ford was unable to tolerate the changing demands of the common folk. Chevrolet and GM overtook him, and it was not until 1986, 62 years later, that his successors were able to push his company's performance past that of General Motors.

The Ford Motor Company had a problem with its vision—its strategy—even into the recent past. One way to decide on a strategy is to watch carefully what the competition does and, if they're successful, then jump in and carve out your own market share before the competition's share grows too large. This was essentially the strategy followed by Ford in the 1970s. With the first oil crisis came the need to produce smaller, more fuel-efficient cars for the US market. GM moved off in this direction. The GM strategy was to seize the dominant share of that market. Ford's strategy was to see how well GM did, then jump in. The belated jump, ill-timed according to some, did not capture a sufficient market share, and only after huge capital investment and complete redesign has Ford begun to recoup the losses suffered by the wait-and-see strategy.

But let's face it: not many people in charge, in the military or in industry, are intuitively or consistently good at running things. It would be difficult to say whether there is more or less ineptitude on one side than on the other. Military people certainly have had far more formal education and schooling to equip them for running things than the chief executives in industry. By and large, they seem to do better than the average industry exec, but given the differences in background, education, and training specifically directed at the art of running things, one would expect a much better than average performance from the average military leader. Why doesn't it happen?

In large measure, it seems to me, the problem devolves to the need for an individual to take the time to figure out who he is and what his role is to be at each new command. If a CEO is managing programs, and many of them can't resist the temptation, then what in the world are the division general managers and operations directors doing? If a corps commander is running battalions, then what, indeed, are the division and brigade commanders doing?

Several years ago, I succeeded to command of V Corps, my predecessor having been relieved for cause. Assumption of command was by signature in the airport lounge on a Sunday. The following Wednesday, the G3 marched into my office to announce it was time to check the readiness of the corps. We went to a special room in the headquarters, a place called the "Cutting Edge Room." There, a major and several captains and sergeants were posting readiness data off the DA Form 2715 reports onto side-lighted plexiglass boards arranged around the room. Each company in the corps had a line; columns displayed the data from the readiness reports. There were reds, yellows, and greens to show at a glance how things were going. Deadlined vehicles were indicated in red by bumper number. The corps operational readiness rate for tracked vehicles was at about fifty percent, so there were lots of red entries. When I asked, the G3 reported that I was supposed to come here, look at the red numbers, then call the company commanders to see what they were doing about the deadlined vehicles, by bumper number. What, I asked, were the division, brigade, and battalion commanders doing? They were, I was told, waiting for the company commanders to call in reports of their conversation with the corps commander. Now, you'll recall that the corps commander is not in that reporting chain. Having listened and observed, I left instructions to get rid of the whole thing. I went to my office, called the division commanders, and explained that henceforth materiel readiness and its reporting system were in their hands, that I expected an operational readiness rate of 95 percent or better, and that if they had problems attaining and sustaining that rate they were to call me. The OR rate began a slow but perceptible climb. It reached 95 percent in a few months, and stayed at that level or better. Now and then I'd check to see that the numbers were real, that they were not just cobbled-up to meet my standards. Satisfied that the reporting was honest and fairly accurate, I concluded that the problem had been solved.

Another important thing to remember—after answering the question of the boss's role at each level of responsibility—is that at every level—strategic, operational, or tactical—everything that is done depends on people. So, success at running things is a function of getting people to do what is necessary to accomplish the vision and implement the strategy. Concurrently, we must realize that there are a whole lot of average people out there trying to get things done, and that the challenge of command, or of

being the chief executive, is to get great things done using those average people to execute the operational- and tactical-level schemes that implement the strategy, the vision.

An example. In V Corps, when I was its commander, there were 72 battalion-sized units. Twenty-six were maneuver battalions or squadrons; nearly 30 more were fire support units; the remainder were support battalions of various types. We spent the whole of our 16 months together doing two things. First, we went to the General Defense Positions, where the division and brigade commanders and I listened to each battalion-level commander tell how he intended to fight the battle, or provide the support, from his positions, with the resources he had been assigned. Then, we went to each battalion in turn and heard the battalion commander and his command sergeant major explain how they intended to train their battalion to fight the battle, or provide the support, we had just previewed on the ground. On a little score sheet, I noted that of the 72 battalions, about eight or nine of the commanders were so good at what they were doing that it probably was not necessary for us to go through the routine I just described. Another 15 were so poor at what they were doing that the commanders clearly should never have been posted to command. The rest were in the middle. In other words, 12 percent or so were okay, about 21 percent were unsatisfactory, and two-thirds were in the middle. The real challenge of command or management is this: to somehow bring the level of performance of the middle two-thirds up to something like the top 12 percent. The United States Army simply does not have enough battalions to afford having 85 percent of them less than exemplary. Nor in industry can you expect to run a company at above-market growth rates unless something is done to improve the proposals, performance on contracts, technology development, planning, and budgeting to some level well above the industry average. That is the challenge of management. There must be a willingness to replace the less-than-average performers, regardless of the system by which they were chosen. That also is the job of the management, the job of leaders; indeed, it is probably their toughest job of all.

**W**hat is it, more often than not, that's wrong with the folks who don't know how to run things? Why are the good leaders or managers and the not-so-good the way they are? The simplest explanation I know comes from our attempts to figure out how to fight outnumbered below the nuclear threshold and win. What became clear was the idea that regardless of the force ratios extant at the beginning, and regardless of who attacked whom, the winning side was the side which seized the initiative and held it to the end. The lesson for leaders is clear and unequivocal: to win it is necessary to seize the initiative; and the person running things is responsible for taking the initiative.

Taking the initiative is not easy. First, it requires some thought, and we've already noted the problems of thinking about things at the managerial level. Second, it requires the ability to describe one's vision in terms that cause the people who must realize that vision to say, "That's a damned good idea." Third, it requires the ability to lay down strategies for achieving the vision in terms that those people embrace, even to the extent that they come to believe they invented the strategies themselves. This takes time, a certain craft, and a well-developed skill in communicating with people. But it is essential. Finally, taking the initiative means doing something. Doing something means taking risk. He who would get out in front and lead things—take the initiative—does so at some risk to himself. It is always much easier to let the other guy go first and test the market, test the water, then jump in if it seems okay. It is always safer from the standpoint of making general to command an organization that just "goes along."

As an illustration of initiative in the vision-strategy-operations-tactics context, consider for a moment the military concept called AirLand Battle. Its basic vision is the notion that it is necessary for us to be able to fight outnumbered and win, below the nuclear threshold, at the operational level of war. The basic strategy is to so control and moderate the force ratios at the FLOT (forward line of own troops) that it is possible to seize the initiative by maneuvering forces to defeat the enemy. To do that, it is necessary to attack enemy follow-on forces at the same time the FLOT battle begins, and to do so in such a way that the FLOT battle is manageable and opportunities are created for forces to maneuver.

That fairly straightforward set of ideas forms the basis for the constellation of doctrine, organization, equipment, and training which the Army and the Air Force have been developing for several years.

Broadening this concept to embrace the national level, there seems to me to be an urgent need for some fundamental initiatives and a baseline statement of vision-strategy-operations-tactics as the nation moves ahead to the turn of the century. The central aim of our nation is to preserve our democratic institutions, to foster their well-being, growth, and development. How that is to be done is a matter for debate. But the central point is that inherent in that goal is the issue of survival: for in order to preserve, foster, and grow, one must first survive. Survival is at the root of every corporate strategy in the industrial world. Other things will be laid on as goals, aims, and objectives, but the fundamental imperative is to stay in business. In the ever-changing global environment, our ultimate non-changing goal as a nation is survival.

Now, the problem we face in insuring achievement of that goal is that we are quite likely engaged in what will turn out to be a century or more of global conflict, for there is no objective evidence that the Soviet Union will cease to be a Leninist state, run by a collective tsardom, in which the

secret police enforce the will of the central authority. In my opinion, anybody who holds that Gorbachev is a political moderate and modernizer is just not thinking clearly. Gorbachev's Russia is a slightly modern version of the Russia of Nicholas the First. A Sovietologist friend once said to me that the frightening thing about studying the Soviet Union is just that—nothing changes. The basic system has remained in place, perhaps a little more grotesque under Stalin, a little less grotesque under someone else, but it is still the same system. If that is true, we must find the initiatives to contain the Soviet empire in order to preserve peace. If we are to do that, our national goals must not simply cope with the Soviets, they must accelerate our rate of change as a society so that we pull away from the Soviet system, leaving it, in effect, a modern-day Ottoman Empire. Remember the Ottoman Empire: in 1600, it was yet a great threat to Europe; by 1800, it was irrelevant; and by 1900, it was routinely described as the sick man of Europe. It could not adapt, could not make the cultural and economic changes necessary to cope with the changing world. Its leadership could not accommodate change.

Peace is a noble goal, one to be sought after, but it is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is survival in order that preserving, growing, fostering, and developing can take place uninhibited. Those who would have peace would be well advised to gird for conflict—political, economic, social, and perhaps even military—over the long term.

Cast in that framework, then, our national challenge is not at all unlike the challenge facing every company in the corporate world. The difference is, of course, that the nation must engage in a global competition over the next two or three generations to decide if the inhabitants of this planet are to be free or slave. If we lose that competition, the corporate world will have nothing to worry about, for it will not survive either. So the challenges inherent to running things extend to all levels of endeavor, from government to small business, from civilian to military.

In industry, success is built very much on common ingredients—the dedication and motivation of the workers, the quality of the leadership, and the excellence of the training provided to the working team. If the standards are high, the dedication to excellence ever present, the team working in concert, then better-than-average companies led by managers seeking always to take the initiative can go to battle in the bidding environment, fully confident of winning, growing, and prospering.

The military is not so different, after all. Wars are won by the courage of soldiers, the quality of leadership they are provided, and the excellence of the training the soldiers, leaders, and units have been through before the battle. If the training has been tough, demanding, unrelenting, then better-than-average units, led by officers seeking ever to take the initiative, are prepared to go to battle; and that's what it takes to win.

# *Auftragstaktik*: A Case for Decentralized Battle

JOHN T. NELSEN II

The main question this article attempts to answer is whether the US Army should formally adopt a concept akin to what is called "*Auftragstaktik*."<sup>1</sup> That this question needs answering may be surprising to many readers, since the much ballyhooed emphasis upon mission orders in the 1982 and 1986 editions of Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, has been linked to *Auftragstaktik*.<sup>2</sup> But the German concept means far more than mission orders. Indeed, it means more even than "task-oriented or mission-oriented tactics," which though certainly a more sophisticated definition is still a rough and imperfect approximation.

There are significant problems in attempting to identify the nature of *Auftragstaktik*. Chief among them is that not until after World War II did the term come into general use. At that time, former German generals coined the term to label certain aspects of the German army's approach to war in the past. Adding to the confusion, West Germany's *Bundeswehr* adopted the term but applied it narrowly to their own system of command and control, translating it as "mission-oriented orders." In short, the term *Auftragstaktik* is an artificial, after-the-fact construct whose meaning has never been defined with any precision. How then should one use the term? It is particularly useful as a rubric for denominating those aspects of German army methodology prior to 1945 which led to the exercise of such impressive initiative in battle by its leaders at all levels. To study these aspects, however, one must examine the German army's regulations and military literature of the period, as well as the writings of former German officers. One must be wary of focusing on any single aspect in isolation; what is now termed *Auftragstaktik* formed part of a seamless fabric in the German army's warfighting philosophy. Virtually all notions were interrelated in some fashion. They were not grafted piecemeal onto this philosophy, but evolved organically over a period of at least eighty years. Thus, the concept of *Auftragstaktik* is a useful analytical tool—the more so as one bears in mind its limitations and views it in its proper historical setting.

### *The Historical Backdrop*

*Auftragstaktik*, as demonstrated in World War II, was the product of an evolutionary process dating from the 19th century. The driving force for it was the necessity of developing greater initiative in leaders at all levels. At the tactical level, the Prussian army discovered both during the Austro-Prussian War (1866) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) that the increased lethality of weapons forced greater dispersion across the battlefield. Commanders of armies, corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, and often battalions could neither fully observe nor control their forces in the detail previously allowed. Frequently, captains and lieutenants were forced to employ their units in fast-moving situations without detailed instructions from superiors. In short, they had to make decisions on their own which in the past had been reserved for higher-level commanders. The results were frequently disastrous. Prussian junior leaders were untrained for this and often proved inadequate to the task.<sup>3</sup>

Of necessity, the new Prussian army studied the problem, seeking a way to better prepare leaders at lower levels for independent decision-making. Without allowance for this, decisions on the dispersed battlefield threatened to be too time-consuming. Speed of decisive action would be lost. The result of the study was a new provision in the Drill Regulations of the Infantry (1888). It stipulated that commanders should give subordinates general directions of *what* was to be done, allowing them freedom to determine *how* to do it. This approach, it was felt, would stimulate development of the "thinking leader" who was used to making tactical judgments in his own right. Such leaders would less likely freeze up when faced with new situations in the absence of detailed instructions from above. By 1914, the spirit of this provision had taken root.<sup>4</sup>

World War I saw pendulum-like swings in the application of this provision. In the initial campaigns, it was fully applied with good results. However, the high attrition rates and the great influx of reserve officers who had not received adequate training caused the application to wane. In the west, the more centralized nature of trench warfare also had an influence. Commanders issued increasingly detailed orders that gave subordinates few opportunities to exercise much initiative. Then, the German development of elastic defense-in-depth tactics (1916-1918) and assault tactics (1918) changed the situation. Both demanded great initiative and creativity from

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leaders down to the noncommissioned-officer level, often in fluid situations and in the absence of orders. The Germans trained hard for such leadership behind the lines and enjoyed impressive success at the tactical level. As a consequence, the German army of the post-World War I era evinced a strong institutional commitment to developing leaders who were willing and able to take prudent, independent action to handle the unexpected.<sup>5</sup>

This desire for increased leader initiative was in full consonance with the German army's perception of the nature of war. First, speed was considered imperative for victory at both strategic and tactical levels. German field service regulations emphasized that "the first demand in war is decisive action." As a country with a central position in Europe, Prussia/Germany always faced the specter of a two-front war. Rapid defeat of an enemy through offensive action was essential. This discouraged opportunistic countries from joining the conflict to gang up on Germany. It also reflected the view that in a two-front war, victory was possible only by defeating one foe quickly before the second one was ready to fight. This allowed the fullest concentration of German forces at chosen decisive points, in a way which favored a series of decisive victories. At the tactical level, the idea was to react after enemy contact with a series of rapid maneuvers to force the adversary into a largely reactive posture. He would then be vulnerable to defeat in detail through a series of subsequent engagements forced on him at great disadvantage.

Second, the Germans believed that the appropriate maneuvers to take in the face of the enemy could not be pre-planned in meticulous detail. They subscribed to the elder Moltke's dictum that "no operation plan extends with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the main body of the enemy." Since war was viewed fundamentally as a "clash of wills," enemy action would seldom conform to expectations. Added to this was a keen appreciation for the disruptive effects of friction on military activities.<sup>6</sup>

Third, the Germans considered every situation in war unique. This required competent leaders to make rapid estimates and decisions, and then to act on them swiftly. Furthermore, such decisions would always be made with incomplete, inaccurate, or conflicting information. Uncertainty and the fog of war stalked the battlefield. Thus the leader had to be a thinking soldier. He needed both intuitive powers to interpolate correctly and creative powers to devise a successful course of action. Each situation required a unique application of tactical principles which could not be prescribed by universal recipes or by detailed planning. This view of war was subsumed by the first article in the Field Service Regulations of 1933: "Leadership in war is an art, a free creative activity based on a foundation of knowledge. The greatest demands are made on the personality."

Thus the German view of war fully supported granting junior leaders great scope for initiative—if that was what it took to generate the speed necessary for victory. At the same time, this situational and artistic

perspective on war shaped the framework for the exercise of leader initiative. This framework provided for three essentials: proper leader character, sound methodology for issuing and carrying out orders, and enlightened senior-subordinate relations.

So far as leader character was concerned, initiative in a leader flowed from his willingness to step forward, take charge of a situation, and act promptly—completely on his own authority, if necessary. Not surprisingly, the German field service regulations stressed that the noblest quality of a leader was his willingness to assume responsibility. To do so under stressful conditions required considerable moral courage, self-reliance, and self-confidence—attributes the German army prized highly.

Closely related were the attributes which stressed risk-taking and decisive action. Since all decisions were made under conditions of uncertainty and since every situation was unique, there could never be a demonstrably perfect solution. Therefore, one should not demand one. There were theoretically several workable solutions for every tactical problem. "Many roads lead to Rome" was a common refrain heard in this regard. The object was to pick any reasonable plan swiftly and then to execute it with energy and dispatch. Leaders were cautioned against waiting to gather more information so as to reach a perfect decision, or even the best decision possible. Good leaders made a rapid estimate, adopted as sound a course of action as feasible, and executed it decisively. In this view, speed was more essential than precision; a decent plan carried out immediately was superior to a superb plan carried out much later.<sup>7</sup>

To operate in this way, a leader had to assume great risk willingly. To encourage this, the German army framed two rules. First, in situations clearly requiring independent decisions, a leader had not only the latitude to make them, but the solemn *duty* to do so. A good leader cultivated a will to action. Second, inaction and omission in such situations were considered much worse than judgmental error based on a sincere effort to act decisively. The former was the shameful antithesis of leadership. The latter was an honorable effort to practice the art of warfighting, in which no single action was guaranteed success. While errors in judgment might cause unsuccessful local engagements, the broad exercise of initiative by all leaders, it was felt, would carry the battle. Thus no opprobrium was associated with failure resulting from prudent risk-taking by the thinking leader. Such setbacks were simply the breaks of war.

The second part of the framework for exercising initiative consisted in the methodology of issuing and carrying out orders. In present-day terminology, this falls chiefly under the heading of command and control. As mentioned earlier, the Germans adopted a system of orders in 1888 giving subordinates as much latitude as possible in implementing assigned tasks. They refined the methodology over time. Insofar as he could, the commander told subordinates *what* tasks to accomplish, but not *how* to

accomplish them. He also gave them sufficient resources to accomplish those tasks, stated any restraints, and provided required coordinating information. The goal was to allow subordinates as much freedom of action as the situation permitted. Orders were brief and usually verbal.

Leaders so trained, it was thought, would better handle the unexpected in battle, where split-second decisions were often decisive. Such leaders would also feel more ownership for their actions, thereby stimulating greater determination in carrying them out. Self-reliant leaders would derive more personal pride and satisfaction from their duties, causing them to identify more closely with their units. This, in turn, would strengthen unit cohesion.

In issuing orders, the most important part was the statement of the commander's intent. This related the various assigned tasks and provided a vision of the desired result of an operation. In carrying out their tasks, subordinates were always to focus on the intent. It was virtually sacrosanct. Subordinates using initiative in response to the unexpected had to conform, insofar as possible, with this intent. Thus the commander's intent promoted unity of effort in fluid situations which failed to conform nicely to plans and expectations. The intent, therefore, both circumscribed and focused the exercise of initiative in subordinates.

Under exceptional circumstances, a subordinate could even modify or abandon tasks if he could still satisfy the commander's intent. This, however, was a serious matter. Prior approval was required if possible. If that proved impossible, the subordinate assumed full responsibility for the decision. He would have to justify his action later to his superior.

This system of operating did not lessen the need for commanders to control their subordinates. Commanders habitually positioned themselves well forward. They kept themselves informed of the situation as well as the actions of their subordinates, whom they visited frequently. In no way did commanders relinquish any command authority or responsibility. They would intervene when subordinates were doing something clearly unsound. They would add or delete assigned tasks, or change their intent, as they saw fit. In short, they supervised and controlled, but in a manner encouraging initiative and thinking in subordinates. Subordinates, on the other hand, made every effort to maintain contact with their commander and to keep him fully informed of the situation. They were expected to solve problems which could be surmounted at their level, and to recommend changes to orders based on a continual evaluation of the situation.

A third element of the framework for exercising initiative was that of senior-subordinate relationships. This falls under today's rubrics of leadership, command and control, and tactics. Commanders were responsible for developing in their subordinates the desired character and leadership attributes discussed earlier. Equally important, they spent much

time teaching subordinates how to think on their feet in making estimates of the situation and in applying tactical principles. The object was not only to train subordinates but to educate them. Leaders were taught not so much what to think about, but, more important, how to think. Superiors and subordinates spent time together in map exercises, terrain walks, sand-table exercises, and field exercises discussing tactical problems. A central focus of every field exercise was the development of subordinate leaders. This involved a close teacher-student, coaching-like relationship.<sup>9</sup>

The result was that the leader and his subordinate got to know how each other thought. This was important to the subordinate in helping him to read between the lines of his commander's intent. This was also important to the commander; it allowed him to anticipate intuitively how his subordinate would exercise freedom of action in various situations. From this close relationship flowed mutual trust, which in turn nourished initiative. The subordinate would feel confident that his exercise of initiative in battle generally conformed to his commander's intent. The commander would trust his subordinate with greater rein in accomplishing tasks.<sup>10</sup>

The training and education process, both in units and military schools, facilitated the exercise of initiative in another way. It promoted among leaders a common outlook on the nature of war, on desirable character and personality traits, on the importance of initiative, on proper senior-subordinate relationships, and on how to issue orders. It also taught a common approach in understanding and applying tactical principles to the different types of operations, emphasizing the peculiar features and characteristics of each. Military terminology was precise, standard, and widely understood. The result was a remarkably uniform perspective in tactical operations which facilitated concise orders, accurate but brief communication of intent, and a sensing of how the unit as a whole might respond in given situations. This common outlook and language reassured both leaders and subordinates, reinforcing that sense of mutual trust and dependability so conducive to initiative and freedom of action.

The standard approach for conducting critiques of tactical exercises promoted initiative as well. Since every situation was unique and since no training situation could encompass even a fraction of the peculiarities of a real tactical situation, there could be no approved solutions. One acceptable solution was as good as another. Critiques of leader actions focused on identifying the student's rationale for doing what he did. What factors did he consider, or not consider, in making his estimate of the situation? Were the actions taken consistent with this estimate? How well were orders communicated? Were the actions taken tactically sound? Did they have a reasonable chance of being successful? These questions served as the basis for critiques. The idea was to broaden the leader's analytical powers, experience level, and base of knowledge, thereby enhancing his creative ability to devise sound, innovative solutions to

difficult problems. Critiques were lenient and understanding, rather than biting and harsh. Mistakes were considered essential to the learning process and thus cast in a positive light. The focus was not on whether the leader did well or poorly, but on what progress he was making overall to develop as a leader. Damaging the leader's self-esteem, especially publicly, was strictly avoided. A leader's self-confidence, it was felt, was the wellspring from which flowed his willingness to assume responsibility and exercise initiative.

It becomes clear that *Auftragstaktik* was an extraordinarily broad concept, holistically embracing aspects of what today would be called a theory of the nature of war, character and leadership traits, tactics, command and control, senior-subordinate relationships, and training and education. In addition, these aspects were organically consistent, mutually reinforcing, and inseparably interwoven. *Auftragstaktik*, then, was much more than a mere technique of issuing orders. It was nothing less than a comprehensive approach to warfighting. Its first imperative was speed, to be achieved by the intelligent and aggressive exercise of initiative at all levels.

### *The Demands of the Modern Battlefield*

To what extent are the main features of *Auftragstaktik* applicable to the needs of the modern battlefield—today and tomorrow? Certainly speed of decisive action—the fundamental rationale for *Auftragstaktik*—is essential for success in contemporary war. Fluid situations, fleeting opportunities, and chaotic conditions will require rapid decisionmaking under conditions of great uncertainty. Furthermore, speed will often demand a conscious sacrifice of precision and will be critical for a smaller force to defeat a larger force. In the words of FM 100-5:

Agility—the ability of friendly forces to act faster than the enemy—is the first prerequisite for seizing and holding the initiative. Such greater quickness permits the rapid concentration of friendly strength against enemy vulnerabilities. This must be done repeatedly so that by the time the enemy reacts to one action, another has already taken its place, disrupting his plans and leading to late, uncoordinated, and piecemeal enemy responses. It is this process of successive concentration against locally weaker or unprepared enemy forces which enables smaller forces to disorient, fragment, and eventually defeat much larger opposing formations.<sup>11</sup>

There is a broad consensus that speed can result only from decentralized decisionmaking in conformity with *Auftragstaktik*. The exercise of initiative by subordinates at all levels is considered essential.<sup>12</sup> First, the general tempo of war has increased significantly since World War II. In many cases, junior- and mid-level leaders will have no time to request instructions from superiors before having to act. There is less time for

decisionmaking and communicating than ever before. Second, battlefield conditions will cause units at all levels to lose radio contact frequently with their headquarters or to become isolated physically from parent units. This will result from intense electronic warfare and from the fluid shape of the battlefield. To await reestablishment of contact with superiors before acting would court disaster by yielding the initiative to the enemy. Third, unit dispersal will be much greater than in past wars. Experiences at the National Training Center indicate that battalion commanders who attempt detailed control over even a portion of their force are usually overwhelmed by the tempo of the enemy's attack. Distances between subordinate units preclude this kind of control. As Major General E. S. Leland, former NTC commander, wrote: "A unit that does only those things the boss checks will have great difficulty." Initiative at all levels is a must.<sup>13</sup>

There is widespread agreement on the needed framework for decentralized decisionmaking. It is the system of mission-oriented orders. Commanders should tell subordinates *what* to do, but allow them as much leeway as possible to determine *how* to do it. The commander also communicates his intent—as well as that of his next senior commander—along with any pertinent restraints or coordinating information. The intent is the subordinate's guidepost as he strives to deal with unexpected threats or opportunities, friction, and the fog of war.<sup>14</sup> As FM 100-5 emphasizes, the leader must avoid dependence on constant direction. Rather, he should

conduct his operation confidently, anticipate events, and act fully and boldly to accomplish his mission without further orders. If an unanticipated situation arises, committed unit commanders should understand the purpose of the operation well enough to act decisively, confident that they are doing what their superior commander would order were he present.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, the leadership and character attributes commonly associated with stimulating battlefield initiative bear a strong resemblance to those associated with *Auftragstaktik*. Most important, the leader must be an aggressive thinker—always anticipating and analyzing. He must be able to make good assessments and solid tactical judgments. These must be based on a thorough grounding in doctrine, and on the creative ability to apply it to specific situations. He must take pride in his ability to solve problems at his own level, improvising as necessary to accomplish assigned missions without detailed, blow-by-blow instructions or continual supervision. He must be tough-minded, acting decisively and independently when contact with superiors is impractical or impossible. This behavior requires moral courage, self-reliance, and self-confidence. It also involves a willingness to assume responsibility and take risks in order to do the right thing at the right time. Finally, the leader must be both trustworthy and trusting. As a subordinate, he must faithfully adhere to his

commander's intent in exercising whatever freedom of action he is given. As a superior, he must trust his subordinates with as much freedom of action as possible and encourage them to exercise initiative.<sup>16</sup>

This composite view of war thus echoes an old German army belief. It is the ability of small units—acting with coherence and synergism in behalf of a central plan in chaotic and potentially panicky moments—to shape decisively the whole course of battles. This comment by S. L. A. Marshall is more pertinent today than in the late 1940s when he made it:

The great lesson of minor tactics in our time . . . is the overpowering effect of small amounts of fire when delivered from the right ground at the right hour . . . . The salient characteristic of most of our great victories (and a few of our defeats) was that they pivoted on the fire action of a few men.

The increased firepower, lethality, and ranges of modern weapons dramatically increase the effect that small units can have at pivotal times and places.<sup>17</sup> What emerges from this overall mosaic of future war is the strong suggestion for the need of an approach roughly approximating *Auftragstaktik*.

#### *Where Do We Stand Now?*

The Army, it can be argued, has two opposing traditions of exercising command—centralized and decentralized. They have developed side by side over time, although they have seldom been formally recognized. The personal inclinations of the commanding officer have been the greatest influence in determining which tradition would predominate in a unit.

The centralized philosophy of command visualizes war more as a science than an art. At its extreme, the centralized approach sees a higher-level commander attempting to make precise decisions in a virtual zero-defects fashion. He then devises detailed plans to carry them out, and supervises the execution by micromanagement. All key decisions are referred to this commander. Decisions are based on massive amounts of information designed to cut through uncertainty. Slow responses are compensated for by massing overwhelming men and material against the enemy. In this view, far-reaching initiative from subordinates is not critical to success. Massive relative combat power is. In fact, there is an inherent skepticism that subordinates can make judgments which are precise enough. The centralized plan is sacred. Decentralized decisionmaking is seen as likely to undermine this well-oiled plan. To make the wrong decision is worse than making no decision at all. This approach tends to produce junior leaders who are reactors rather than initiators and who are risk-averse. S. L. A. Marshall lamented that the Army in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam leaned too heavily toward this style of command.<sup>18</sup> One of the most

vivid pictures of it in action is seen in the following passage from Lieutenant General Dave Palmer's *Summons of the Trumpet*:

In the final analysis, the helicopter's most pernicious contribution to the fighting in Vietnam may have been its undermining of the influence and initiative of small unit commanders. By providing a fast, efficient airborne command post, the helicopter all too often turned supervisors into over-supervisors. Since rarely was there more than one clash in any given area at any given time, the company commander on the ground attempting to fight his battle could usually observe orbiting in tiers above him his battalion commander, brigade commander, assistant division commander, division commander, and even his field force commander. With all that advice from the sky, it was easy to imagine how much individual initiative and control the company commander himself could exert on the ground—until nightfall sent the choppers to roost.<sup>19</sup>

This tradition continues. Experiences at the NTC show that in many units subordinates lack a sense of responsibility as thinking actors. They are used to their commanders doing their tactical thinking for them. Since their role has been one of executing detailed plans, they do not feel they have the latitude to make on-the-spot adjustments demanded by the situation. Nor do they tend to make recommendations or suggest changes to established plans. Junior leaders often do things at the NTC they know are inappropriate because they were ordered to do them.<sup>20</sup> In 1984, the Army surveyed 23,000 officers from second lieutenant through colonel on a number of issues. Of those who responded, 49 percent said that "the bold, original, creative officer cannot survive in today's Army."<sup>21</sup>

The decentralized style of command, on the other hand, views war more as an art than a science. It values the initiative of subordinates, striving especially to harness their creative energies toward simultaneous problem-solving at all levels. The desired effect is speed based on sound judgmental ability developed by trial and error. Adequate, not perfect, solutions are sought. In this view, commanders issue general instructions, relying on subordinates to get the job done within a broad charter for action. Plans are viewed as provisional, with the understanding that no plan is ever implemented exactly as envisioned. The leader must continue to think on his feet, aggressively analyzing, recommending, anticipating, and adjusting.

This style has deep roots. Grant's instructions to Sherman during the Civil War bear its imprint: "I do not propose to lay down for you a plan of campaign . . . but simply to lay down the work it is desirable to have done and leave you free to execute it in your own way."<sup>22</sup> Lee operated similarly. In fact, as that war progressed, both sides relied increasingly on decentralized decisionmaking to tap the enormous resources of initiative in subordinates down to regimental and sometimes even company level.<sup>23</sup>

As Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School in the late 1920s, George Marshall did all he could to develop young officer-students into thinking leaders who could operate in a decentralized manner. He often issued students foreign or outdated maps, provided only sketchy intelligence, and compelled them to make their own decisions by cutting off communications with higher headquarters. He routinely made them face the unexpected in order to stimulate their imagination and ingenuity. One of his first orders was that "any student's solution of a problem that ran counter to the approved school solution and yet showed independent, creative thinking would be published to the class."<sup>24</sup>

Another supporter of the decentralized style of command was General George S. Patton. He allowed his subordinates great freedom of action, being tolerant and patient with their errors. He demanded speed and risk-taking. "Never tell people *how* to do things," he said. "Tell them *what* to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."<sup>25</sup>

This tradition, too, continues. Generally among subordinates today, the idea of a favorable command climate implies one in which their commanders allow them enough freedom of action, based on trust, to make their own decisions and perform their duties without over-detailed guidance or supervision. It is also a climate that readily forgives honest errors as part of the learning process. Furthermore, the growing number of journal articles advocating adoption of some sort of *Auftragstaktik* suggests that the decentralized tradition is alive and well. In one such article, the results of a poll of a number of former battalion commanders in Europe were reported: "All of them demanded that their company commanders be prepared to take appropriate action on the battlefield in the absence of specific orders." All of them wanted active, thinking leaders with the well-developed capacity to exercise initiative at every opportunity.<sup>26</sup>

There is thus plenty of fertile ground for an *Auftragstaktik*-like approach to grow in the US Army. But as long as the centralized command tradition remains alive and respectable, such growth will be uneven, confusing, and occasionally contentious.

#### ***What Is to Be Done?***

The strongest psychological impediment to *Auftragstaktik* in the US Army is fear on the part of the commander that his subordinates' mistakes resulting from their loosened rein would make the command look bad and thus jeopardize the commander's own success. Overcontrol, to be honest, is the reflex of the commander's own career insecurity. The antidote to such insecurity is a *top-down* command climate which deliberately tolerates the possibility of greater tactical error in confident expectation that the resulting explosion of initiative at all tactical echelons will provide a massive multiplication of combat effectiveness at the operational level.

To secure the manifest benefits of the decentralized approach, the Army should formally and systematically adopt an *Auftragstaktik*-like doctrine. Only thus, it might be added, will the centralized tradition ever be effectively confronted. Any process of formal adoption would require a codified doctrinal articulation of exactly what was meant. Without such an articulation, it would be virtually impossible for service schools and units around the globe to implement the approach in a uniform way. It should as a minimum articulate an integrated theory of the nature of war, desirable character and leadership attributes, command and control, senior-subordinate relationships, application of tactics, and leader education and training. The ideas linking all these aspects together are complex, reinforcing, and interwoven. By explaining fully the rationale for this approach and by thus tying it directly to warfighting and war readiness, formal adoption would facilitate acceptance, especially among many steeped in the centralized tradition of command.

Broad acceptance is particularly important since any *Auftragstaktik*-like approach must be implemented from the top downward in the chain of command. Implementation can be blocked by any commander who wishes to operate in a centralized fashion. Having the imprimatur of doctrine would increase the perceived legitimacy of *Auftragstaktik*, making efforts to circumvent general implementation clearly improper.

A concept like *Auftragstaktik*, if formally articulated as doctrine, offers advantages that range beyond the battlefield. For example, the concept could serve as a valuable prism through which one could better envision the development and integration of technology. The German army between 1933 and 1945 integrated the tank, the airplane, and other emerging technologies without changing or altering in any way their system of *Auftragstaktik*. The Germans recognized that man, not machine, was the first factor in achieving victory. To the extent that technology could support the notions associated with *Auftragstaktik*, it was integrated. If it worked against those notions, it was set aside or adapted. The German army credited their success against France in 1940 to the manner in which they integrated technology in their system rather than to the presence of the technology itself. One should not forget that the French and British had more tanks than the Germans did in this campaign. Besides that, the overall quality of most French and British equipment was better. The German view emphasized not what one had, but how one used it.

This has important ramifications for the Army today. For example, the Army is developing two pieces of communications equipment which could provide senior commanders with the capability of readily micromanaging subordinate units. One is Mobile Subscriber Equipment, a system of highly mobile radiotelephones which greatly increases battlefield communications but which would enable corps and division commanders to dial battalion commanders directly. Another item being developed is the

Position Location and Reporting System/Joint Tactical Information Distribution System Hybrid. Among other capabilities, this system would locate for a maneuver brigade commander by automatic, periodic electronic signal every platoon leader's vehicle in the brigade. Positions would be indicated on a computer screen that even a battalion commander would not have in his command post. One can only imagine the temptation a brigade commander would have to try to maneuver platoons, especially if he were an advocate of the centralized tradition of command. Such speculations are not to say the Army should refuse to develop these items, but rather that it must carefully consider how best to integrate them doctrinally.

The situation hearkens back to the old German army's special concern about any communications equipment which allowed a commander to bypass intermediate command levels. Over time, this would cause a withering away of initiative, of a sense of responsibility, and of imagination at those levels. The German army used *Auftragstaktik* as a framework to circumscribe the use of such equipment for the larger good of a healthier command climate.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps such notions in doctrinal form could serve as an equally valuable framework for command in the US Army.

The time for the formal adoption of *Auftragstaktik* by the US Army has arrived. The success of AirLand Battle demands it. FM 100-5 tells us so. But adoption entails more than occasional lip service. It entails a recognition by the Army's leadership of the all-encompassing application of an *Auftragstaktik*-like concept, and then the systematic, top-down implementation of the concept through command leverage, doctrinal and regulatory changes, and service school indoctrination. To generate the necessary change in command climate will be the work not of weeks or months, but of years.

In this monumental redirection of leadership philosophy, we would seek to develop thinking, tough-minded, self-reliant, confident, and courageous leaders who can respond to friction, the fog of war, and unexpected enemy actions with initiative and grim determination—but with no guarantee of success. Such leaders, to paraphrase Teddy Roosevelt, will at best know the triumph of high achievement, but even in failure they will at least fail while daring greatly.<sup>28</sup>

#### NOTES

1. This article is an abridged version of a monograph titled, "Where to Go from Here?: Considerations for the Formal Adoption of *Auftragstaktik* by the U.S. Army," School of Advanced Military Studies (Ft. Leavenworth, Kans., USACGSC, 5 December 1986). The monograph contains more comprehensive documentation of sources as well as a complete bibliography. It is on file in the Ft. Leavenworth Combined Arms Reference Library and in the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) system.

2. John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982* (Ft. Monroe, Va.: USATRADOC, 1984), pp. 58-59, 67.

3. Except where otherwise noted, the elaboration of the German concept of *Auftragstaktik* is based generally on the following sources: German army, *Exerzir-Reglement fuer die Infanterie* (Berlin: E.

- S. Mittler und Sohn, 1889), pp. 108-09; *Exerzir-Reglement fuer die Infanterie* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1906), pp. 78, 90-91; *Truppenfuehrung, Teil I*, Heeresdienstvorschriften 300/1 (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1936), pp. 1-5, 10, 15-16; *Fuehrung und Gefecht der verbundenen Waffen, Teil I* (Berlin: Verlag Offene Worte, 1921), pp. 6-9, 21-22, 30; Friedrich E. E. A. von Cochenhausen, *Die Truppenfuehrung, Teil I: Mittlere und untere Fuehrung*, 6th ed. (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1931), pp. 25-26, 105; and *Die kriegswissenschaftliche Fortbildung des Truppenoffiziers* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1926), pp. 1-30, 50, 91-97, 153-56; Burkhard Mueller-Hillebrand, *Deutsche und sowjetrussische militaerische Fuehrung im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, report prepared for the Historical Division, US Army, Europe, no date (c. 1954), pp. 24-25, 28, 31, 52-53; Friedrich von Bernhardi, *How Germany Makes War* (New York: George Doran, 1914), pp. 213-21.
4. Fritz Hoeng, *Inquiries into the Tactics of the Future*, 4th ed., trans. Carl Reichmann (Kansas City, Mo.: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Co., 1898), pp. 25-27, 43, 45, 220, 232-34, 267, and 311; Tim Lupter, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War*, Leavenworth Papers, no. 4 (Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, USACGSC, July 1981), pp. 15-21, 41-46.
  5. Herbert Rosinski, *The German Army*, ed. Gordon Craig (London: Pall Mall, 1966), p. 310.
  6. Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, *The Power of Personality in War*, trans. US Army War College (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Military Service Publishing Co., 1955), p. 91.
  7. Guenther Blumentritt, *The Dangers of Operational and Tactical "Systems,"* ed. A. Hall, trans. H. J. Baerwaldt, report prepared for the Historical Division, European Command, 1948, p. 6.
  8. Lothar Rendulic, *Combat Orders*, trans. US Army (Historical Division, US Army Europe, 1947), pp. 5, 11.
  9. Lothar Rendulic, *The Command Decision*, trans. M. Bauer (Historical Division, US Army Europe, 1947), p. 9. Reassuringly, the US Army's present emphasis upon "mentorship" in the superior's dealings with his subordinate leaders has many of the earmarks of *Auftragstaktik*.
  10. Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift* (London and New York: Brassey's, 1985), pp. 230-31, 239. Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 36.
  11. US Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington: GPO, May 1986), pp. 15-16, 24, 97. The quotation is from p. 16.
  12. Van Creveld, p. 35.
  13. US Department of the Army, "National Training Center: Lessons Learned," Commander's memorandum signed by Brigadier General E. S. Leland (Ft. Irwin, Calif.: National Training Center, 20 November 1985), p. 1.
  14. FM 100-5, *Operations* (1986), pp. 17-18, 21; John M. Vermillion, "Tactical Implications of the Adoption of Auftragstaktik for Command and Control on the AirLand Battlefield," monograph, School for Advanced Military Studies (Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.: USACGSC, 2 December 1985), p. 36.
  15. FM 100-5, *Operations* (1986), p. 22.
  16. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16, 26.
  17. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Washington: Infantry Journal, 1947; reprinted, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), p. 68.
  18. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.
  19. Dave Richard Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet: US-Vietnam in Perspective* (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1978), p. 142.
  20. Vernon W. Humphrey, "NTC: Command and Control," *Infantry*, 74 (September-October 1984), 36.
  21. Benjamin Schemmer, "Internal Army Surveys Suggest Serious Concerns About Army's Senior Leaders," *Armed Forces Journal International*, 122 (May 1985), 18-19.
  22. Quoted in Marshall, p. 189.
  23. F. W. von Mellenthin, *Armored Warfare in World War II*, Conference Report (Columbus, Ohio: Battelle, 10 May 1979), p. 5. Von Mellenthin likens Lee to the elder Moltke in the common approach of aligning their forces in the right direction for the decisive battle and then letting subordinates actually conduct the fight.
  24. Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1880-1939* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), pp. 248-57.
  25. Porter B. Williamson, *Patton's Principles* (Tucson, Ariz.: Management and Systems Consultants, 1979), pp. 36-38, 45-47, 104-08.
  26. John W. Mountcastle, "On the Move: Command and Control of Armor Units in Combat," *Military Review*, 65 (November 1985), 37-38.
  27. General Frido von Senger und Etterlin, *Neither Fear Nor Hope*, trans. George Malcolm (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1964), p. 220.
  28. The full quotation appears in Vince Lombardi, *Vince Lombardi on Football*, ed. George L. Flynn (New York: Graphic Society Ltd. and Wallynn Inc., 1973), 1, 16.

# Contingency Planning: Time for a Change

MICHAEL A. GREEN and PAUL TIBERI

**T**his article proposes changes in planning for future contingency operations. The aim is to improve direct linkage between campaign planning for contingency operations and the strategy that such planning must serve. No attempt is made at redressing joint doctrinal issues; libraries are replete with recent publications describing needed military reforms. Nor do we seek to blaze a new trail; we merely hope to straighten out one of the bends in the existing one. The method comprises three parts: a brief review of central geopolitical imperatives, a description of the problem, and some recommended fixes.

## *The Geopolitical Context*

The world approaching the 1990s is a dramatically different world from that of 1914 or 1939. Indeed, the world is more advanced and more complex than it was in the early years of the nuclear age; and global instability threatens the United States and its interests in ways heretofore unapparent. While the Soviet Union continues to pose the major military threat to the United States and its allies, terrorism, regional conflicts, and Marxist-sponsored insurgencies pose tremendous challenges to our national security. In 1985, the military forces of 29 countries were involved in conflicts in five major areas of the world: Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Each of those areas and many of the countries involved are of strategic importance to the United States. This heightening of global tension and instability creates increased opportunities for Soviet adventurism throughout the Third World. Moreover, the proliferating transfer of conventional armaments to surrogates portends even more ominous challenges in the years ahead.<sup>2</sup>

As long as the geopolitical interests of the United States remain inherently global, the military strategy that serves those interests must also be global. The forward deployment of US military forces reflects this thread of continuity between national policy and military strategy. Forward defense undoubtedly strengthens the deterrence of aggression. Accordingly, the United States deploys ground and air forces in Europe, Japan, and Korea, and naval carrier battle groups and amphibious forces in the Atlantic, the western Pacific, the Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean.

Forward deployment of our forces also makes them immediately available for combat in coalition with our allies, permits their integration with allied forces in peacetime, and represents a clear manifestation of the US commitment to the common defense. In essence, forward deployment gives unmistakable credibility to US policy and increased capability to directly confront the major Soviet military threat. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, however, offers this sobering caveat to war planners:

Few illusions are more resilient, alluring, and dangerous than the idea that we can forecast with confidence all the threats we will face. Technicians seek certainty. But if the past is any guide to the future, it will be the unanticipated conflict in an unexpected place or form that poses the most difficult challenge.'

The significance of this geopolitical sea-change can be illustrated by the following analogy: the preventive and defensive measures firefighters must take against an advancing range fire are radically different from the defensive techniques required when confronting an arsonist. In the former case, the defense is deliberate, linear, designed for containment. The latter case calls for aggressive detection and prevention, rapid reaction, and a pre-packaged array of firefighting tools to meet any contingency. Similarly, the linear, forward-deployed military posture of the past meets only part of our overall defense requirements. The increasing spontaneity of current security

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threats requires the flexible, rapid-reaction capabilities of an anti-arson squad. The important point is that the world is changing, and in all likelihood the tempo of change will increase in the future. So, too, as our national policy evolves beyond all-or-nothing simplicity, the planning process which aims at deriving the optimum campaign design in response to global contingencies must evolve concurrently. The full effects of the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 are yet to be felt in this area, but certainly they will be important. By strengthening the authority of the CINCs at the expense of the separate military departments, for example, the act is likely to increase substantially the contingency planning responsibilities of unified and specified commanders.

### *Defining the Problem*

The nature of the geopolitical environment facing the United States in the future suggests that global contingencies requiring military intervention will entail, *inter alia*, the following characteristics:

- US interests at stake
- Pressure for quick, clear victory
- Uncertain mission, situation, and threat
- Centralized control
- Constrained air and sea lift
- Diverse operational options, e.g. forced entry, noncombatant evacuation, peacekeeping, extended combat operations

It seems plausible that in situations where the use of military force is being considered, the risk associated with applying that force is least during the onset of the crisis. At that time, the potential adversary will have had the least opportunity to develop his own options and counter-options. Consequently, the early insertion of military force tends to paralyze the enemy's initiative while restricting or narrowing his options. Applying the wrong force or applying a force for ill-conceived purposes, however, can lead to military defeat, hence political disaster. Similarly, simply getting there—to demonstrate national resolve, for example—can be equally catastrophic.

One need look no further back than to 23 October 1983. A lone terrorist penetrated the Marine compound in Beirut and detonated explosives which killed 241 servicemen. The painful memory of that act has been etched indelibly in our minds. Lost in the rhetoric which ensued is the proposition that the disaster might have been avoided had the Marines been sent into Lebanon with a clear objective—one that defined their strategic purpose more explicitly than "to provide a presence."

Congressman Newt Gingrich, citing Clausewitz, asserts that "anyone who would take the first step without having thought through the last step is a fool and should not be allowed in the councils of war."<sup>4</sup> No one

perhaps has documented the case better than Lieutenant General Dave R. Palmer when writing about the escalating military stalemate in Vietnam:

The frightening vision of years of fighting and tens of thousands slain, with nothing to show for it all, sobered Washington's strategists. Rather late in the game Department of Defense wordsmiths began casting around for a definition of victory, for the meaning of "win." In response to a query from Secretary McNamara, a Pentagon study group, comprised both of officers and civilians, had written in mid-1965, "Within the bounds of reasonable assumptions there appears to be no reason we cannot win if such is our will—and if that will is manifested in strategy and tactical operations." The working definition used by the study group said victory "means that we succeed in demonstrating to the Viet Cong that they cannot win." McNamara himself tried to wriggle off the hook in February 1966, saying he preferred to avoid "color words" like "victory" or "win." He suggested using the euphemism, "favorable settlement" . . . . With that kind of thinking at the top, it is not surprising that a debate raged for the duration of the war over just what would constitute a win.<sup>4</sup>

The point is clear: the political predilection for a rapid insertion of military forces to safeguard US interests must be weighed carefully against the need to define success unambiguously. If only we could feel confident that current plans, having had the benefit of historical examples and analyses, in fact do define this condition. Given the dilemmas and dichotomies which confront the National Command Authority (NCA) during crisis situations, moreover, it is paramount that our military leadership press for a definition of this crucial condition early in the planning stage of a contingency operation.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, strategic planners have progressed light-years in pursuit of both means and methods for deploying US military forces. Clearly, the Army of Excellence design is a move in the right direction.<sup>7</sup> Actually, it is a return to the structure employed in World War II where lower levels of command fought the battle while higher levels of command provided them the wherewithal. The adoption of light infantry also recognizes strategic reality. While some might argue that light infantry forces should not be grouped as divisions, the unique capabilities and deployment characteristics of light infantry can serve US strategic needs well. Airlift and sealift enhancements during the past decade, particularly the conversion of former commercial container ships to Navy sealift vessels, are further indicators that our leaders recognize the need to deploy military forces worldwide rapidly.

Unfortunately, the progress made in strategic thinking has not effected a commensurate evolution in the way we plan for military contingencies. The actual planning cycle goes about like this: from an analysis

of national security objectives and detailed global threat assessment, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assign responsibilities to commanders of the unified and specified commands. The CINCs then embark on the deliberate planning process by issuing the commander's concept. Detailed planning then continues through a series of steps including development, coordination, dissemination, review, and approval. While details of the Joint Operations Planning System (JOPS) are widely available and in use, there are two fundamental characteristics of the system that are not described in any of the instructional material: first, the employment concept drives the whole train; second, the process is endless. With each refinement of assumptions, or reallocation of forces, or change of CINC, or revision of the threat assessment, the planning begins afresh.

Such deliberate plans do serve many useful purposes. They play a vital role in our national policy of deterrence, for example. They also serve as resourcing blueprints for potential regional contingencies. Further, they can induce greater cooperation among service components and focus their attention on regional peculiarities. And they can serve as conduits to enhance international relations by encouraging liaison visits, exercises, and other bridge-building contacts.

These benefits notwithstanding, the deliberate planning process constitutes an intellectual as well as a physical impediment during a crisis. The deliberate planning sequence may be well-suited for those forward-deployed units that live, train, and plan to fight on familiar terrain in a mature theater, e.g. Europe and Korea. Because forces in these theaters respond to a narrow range of mission-enemy-terrain-troops-time (METT-T) variables, detailed employment schemes are both feasible and useful. Given the scope of US interests, however, these situations are atypical. Hence, for most regional contingencies, the deliberate planning process is too cumbersome to meet real-world needs.

To see further why this is so, let's examine deliberate planning in action. A crisis develops in a CINC's area of responsibility. He gets his mission to counter a threat or react to an emergency. Forces are alerted while the CINC and JCS consider possible courses of action. When they look at the approved operations plans for the region, they review the

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products of the deliberate planning cycle—detailed force lists, operational and support concepts, and detailed employment schemes—all based on precarious assumptions and particularized METT-T factors. *If* the assumptions are realized and *if* all METT-T factors have remained valid—manifest improbabilities—then the approved plan need merely be executed. But it is virtually certain that many variables, including guidance from the NCA through the JCS, will lead the CINC to discard the approved plan in favor of an ad hoc operation order produced in the heat of crisis. History confirms that plans on the shelf are the *least* likely to be executed.

The result of this predictable gap between pre-written, pre-approved plans and actually executed plans is a system gone awry. Elegant plans sit on shelves. Not only are they not executed, they are not properly exercised. The associated Time-Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD) and related deployment documents are not evaluated because, among other reasons, peacetime lift resources and competing operational requirements preclude it. The TPFDDs themselves have become bureaucratic monstrosities. Often the regional planning effort is also impeded by reluctance to define unambiguously the military condition that must be produced to achieve the strategic goal (itself rarely expressed clearly by national authorities). Realizing that for most contingencies in his theater the enemy will not present an orthodox array of forces, the CINC may be unable to plan with any degree of accuracy an explicit series of tactical maneuvers that would produce a decisive battle under terms most advantageous to the friendly force.

Accordingly, only *after* receipt of the warning order (and its concomitant distribution of intelligence) can commanders begin deriving appropriate employment concepts. Because these concepts must be produced in a tense and compressed time frame, the analytic process assumes enormous importance. Just as reapers winnow the harvest to separate the grain from the chaff, so must the analysis of data be purpose-oriented. It is imperative that analysts have a clear understanding of the commander's operational concept so they can isolate the golden grains of strategic-operational-tactical opportunities from the endless stream of raw information. The deliberate planning process is ill-suited to fulfill all these needs in the "fast-forward" pace that contemporary reality imposes.

Overall, then, there is good reason to doubt that approved operations plans can ever play a significant role in the deliberations that lead to contingency deployments. And this is not surprising, since such plans do not give the decisionmakers what they need. No doubt the decision whether to respond to some threat or other crisis is a difficult one for the national leadership. But it is surely no easier to decide how or with what to respond. A central purpose of the military operational planning system should be to facilitate such decisions.

### *Potential Fixes*

As noted, many military reforms have been implemented already. We suggest four refinements of the present military operational planning system to accommodate timely and sound decisions by the NCA and unified commanders:

- Change the focus of regional campaign planning for contingency operations.
- Improve force packaging modules.
- Strengthen joint operating procedures.
- Redirect training and exercise methodologies.

Let's discuss each of these in turn.

**Regional Planning Focus.** Owing to the CINC's operational dilemmas, the regional planning focus must be oriented differently from what is appropriate for a forward-deployed force. Attempts to put on the shelf a series of detailed plans are onerous endeavors; and, because any resemblance they might have to actual contingencies is practically coincidental, the benefits incurred are hardly worth the costs. The time and effort spent on developing such superfluous plans can be used with greater benefit to enhance the staffs' skill in the critical aspects of operational method. To achieve the primary objective of military planning—effective application of military force in the service of strategic goals—the whole military command structure must reorient its emphasis toward crisis-action planning. Rather than producing series of cumbersome and unessential documents, the system would better serve unified commanders by presenting each with *one* regional (“omnibus”) plan. That the plan should be oriented toward *winning the war* seems almost too obvious to state, but experience shows that this simple truth cannot be emphasized too often.

Victory, as an absolute set of military conditions, will depend on the strategic policy expressed for that theater of operations once the crisis develops. Consequently, a regional plan must accommodate the possibility of more than one war-winner. For example, the best-case victory may be the complete destruction of the enemy's war-making capabilities, while the minimum acceptable case may be the *status quo ante bellum*. Between these two points exists a continuum of intermediate victory conditions as well. The unified commander can and should define the probable war-ending conditions as gradated options, or branches, to his regional plan. Each option, of course, should define its related military conditions for victory and the force required to produce those conditions. Then, during an actual crisis, the CINC selects the appropriate branch of the plan consistent with the stipulated strategic aim. If the subordinate command structure is proficient in crisis-action planning, the CINC's selection will be tactically supportable and strategically sound.

Crises typically develop over a period of weeks or months. But the decision process that leads to the initial commitment of military forces often occurs in hours or days. We must pursue every means available to ensure that the unified command structure is responsive to the legitimate, time-sensitive requirements of the NCA. It is encouraging to note that "omnibus" campaign planning for possible exigencies is establishing itself in certain of the unified commands.

**Force Modules.** The need to balance the contingency force against available deployment assets is another operational dilemma that a unified commander faces during a crisis. More often than not, limitations in strategic lift and at debarkation points will require the force to be divided into assault, support, and follow-on echelons. Clearly, each of these echelons must fully integrate all deploying combat, combat support, and combat service support forces consistent with the tactical commander's operational employment concept. Current TPFDDs, however, do not lend themselves to this task.

Pre-tailored force modules can be the means by which the tactical commander develops a detailed deployment schedule during time-sensitive planning consistent with the unified commander's intent. The CINC's choice of one branch of his plan, coupled with a clearer picture of METT-T factors, provides sufficient parameters for tactical commanders to refine their force packages. What we are proposing is a series of improved US Army force modules ranging from various brigade- to corps-size packages completely integrated with accompanying combat support and combat service support components.

In fact, the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan already requires the services to codify various force modules for file in the Joint Deployment System Force Module Library. These serve as base documents to be individually tailored during time-sensitive planning. However, we suggest that these modules be built and maintained *by the units themselves* and pre-tailored for specific contingency operations.<sup>9</sup> This method contrasts with the present system which employs standard generic data from Tables of Organization and Equipment.

The net effect of these enhanced modules is the capability of the tactical commander to tailor his entire force rapidly (in less than 24 hours) consistent with the operational concept. Using tailored automated unit equipment listings as base data to produce force modules and interfacing these records with current Joint Operation Planning System software represent a simpler and more rapid means of tailoring TPFDDs to meet contingency requirements. Furthermore, force modules, once tailored, more accurately identify the right type and size of force for responding to the particular crisis, the deployment cost, and the force deployment times—three pieces of analysis that will assume great importance as the CINC, the

JCS, and the NCA deliberate over which course of action to select. Just as significantly, when these packages are part of the Joint Deployment System data base, for the first time the CINC will select forces from an array of packages designed by the tactical ground commander whose force will be required to do the fighting.

**Joint Procedures.** Almost by definition, campaign planning is a joint undertaking. Service interoperability, therefore, is the third area that needs fixing if we are to achieve the optimum effect from the commitment of a military force to a contingency operation. This is another area where much has been accomplished already.

The spirit of increased Army-Air Force interoperability has been made manifest by a number of joint initiatives, e.g. the proliferation among Army units of Air Force tactical air control parties, the institutionalization of battlefield coordination elements, and the promulgation of joint procedures for suppression of enemy air defense and attack of the second echelon. The Navy's and USMC's endorsement of JCS Pub 26 is another major step in unifying the campaign effort.<sup>10</sup> But while these major endeavors are a necessary condition for effective service interoperability, they are insufficient to assure the degree of interactive compatibility required for contingency operations.

Establishing a joint Army-Air Force approach to warfighting is clearly a high-water mark, but it isn't enough. More has to be done to integrate Navy and USMC procedures more fully with those of the Air Force and the Army. Even between conventional and unconventional Army forces, we must bring about a fusion of procedures at the tactical as well as the operational level. Each component's methods and techniques must permeate the others' standing operating procedures. And the exact means by which one service discharges its functional responsibilities must be correlated with the systems of the other services. A joint systems architecture can help identify these critical nodes of interoperability.<sup>11</sup>

Service interoperability may very well be the operational commander's most important task as the architect of the campaign. Only in so doing can he minimize the associated risks and ensure the synchronization of the unified force toward a singular objective. The dynamics of our profession and constantly shifting global conditions dictate further that these procedures be refined continuously lest they ossify to brittle documents relegated to another shelf to gather dust.

**Exercise Methodology.** The redirection of training and exercise methodologies is the last of the four recommendations aimed at improving campaign planning. First, all major unit training should incorporate joint operations. This principle is axiomatic; it simply requires us to be more forward-looking and more outward-looking—to effect earlier and better coordination. Its corollary is equally compelling: exercises should be conducted under a joint umbrella *with a warfighting orientation*.

The joint contingency community presently "exercises" deliberate plans. But the fact that these plans will not be executed as written suggests that exercises should be preceded by time-sensitive planning. That is, a scenario should be presented before each joint exercise which causes components to examine and modify an existing plan, or to develop a new one altogether. At the same time, service components should be required to develop a tailored and detailed force package sequenced according to the concept of operations. *Then the force should be required to deploy.* Resource constraints may prevent the entire force from actually embarking. Nonetheless, all of the force should displace sufficiently to permit a valid evaluation, and that part of the force that can deploy should actually be loaded in proper modules and moved according to proper time phase as it would were the contingency operation itself being executed. Gaming the force deployment as part of the overall exercise will provide some assurance that the regional joint deployment concept is not significantly flawed. Most planners have committed to heart the elder von Moltke's assertion that plans will not survive the initial stage of a war. Fewer recall his corollary that an error in initial disposition of forces cannot be overcome.

In all likelihood, our suggestion would if adopted result in fewer joint exercises—perhaps a disturbing proposition for some CINCs. But the benefits of the type of exercise we propose would transcend regional peculiarities and have a more profound impact on the warfighting potential of the contingency force. Having joint exercises less frequently does not mean less beneficial exercise in the aggregate. Since international circumstances may require strong, rapid US military response, our exercises must be tailored to prepare our forces to meet that need. Current exercises, with their focus predominantly on employment phases, can produce an incomplete if not misleading picture since there is insufficient analysis to confirm whether in fact the force can be deployed and arrayed as required by the approved employment scheme.

The fundamental thrust of this recommendation is that contingency exercises must be conducted under conditions similar to those expected at the outbreak of hostilities. The intellectual as well as the physical agility of the warfighting elements must be practiced. Moreover, all of this must be done under the stress of a compressed period of time—hours and days, not weeks and months.

### *To Conclude*

The ideas proposed here are not altogether original. Many have been previously discussed; some have been implemented in some places to varying degrees. Our purpose has been to establish the overall context that gives them meaning and to substantiate the need for their adoption and institutionalization.

The conclusion is clear. If our *raison d'être* as a fighting force is to promote national interests, we must adopt an approach to warfighting that accommodates rapid refinements to operational concepts, assumptions, and conditions, an approach evolved long before hostilities commenced. We must also develop the mental agility to overcome the tendency toward paralysis when confronted with ambiguity or unexpected situations.

As in the past, success in future contingency operations will depend on the insight, imagination, selflessness, and resourcefulness of a joint force that prepares for operations well before the execution order arrives. We should exploit these preparatory efforts so that we are ready systemically and intellectually to deviate from on-the-shelf plans when faced with overwhelming logic to do so. At a time when the likely use of military power again threatens to create its own pattern of compulsions, making rational force projection all but impossible, it is surely worthwhile to adopt that process which promises our pressed decisionmakers the soundest possible operational design for military response.

#### NOTES

1. *The Global 2000 Report to the President* (Washington: GPO, 1980, 1981), Vols. I-III. Other sources reach similar conclusions. For example, see William J. Taylor and Steven A. Maaranen, eds., *The Future of Conflict in the 1980's* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1983) for a series of articles on this subject by James R. Schlesinger, Robert Komer, Robert S. Leiken, and others.

2. See, for example, Secretary of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to the Congress, on the FY 1987 Budget, FY 1988 Authorization Request, and FY 1987-91 Defense Programs* (Washington: GPO, February 1986), p. 70.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

4. Speech by Rep. Gingrich at the Infantry Conference, Fort Benning, Ga., 10 April 1986.

5. Dave R. Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1978), pp. 108-09.

6. The definition of victory as the first step in developing a campaign plan is also a pillar of the US Army's Airl and Battle doctrine. Specifically, the doctrine points out the need for the operational commander to define his vision of success by answering three critical questions: What military condition must be produced in the theater of war or operations to achieve the strategic goal? What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition? How should the resources of the force be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions? (US Department of the Army, *Operations, Field Manual 100-5* [Washington: GPO, May 1986], p. 10).

7. The 1984 "Army of Excellence" study recommended streamlining of divisions and strengthening of the corps (by reducing organic division elements and centralizing them at corps), thereby increasing operational flexibility.

8. "Omnibus" as used here is an approach to theater planning that includes a baseline plan which accounts for the most probable METT-I factors, and a series of options at identifiable decision points to account for METT-I variations or changes in the specified strategic purposes for the campaign.

9. Specifically, we suggest the use of Computerized Movement Planning and Status System (COMPASS) data, especially the Automated Unit Equipment Lists (AUEL), rather than the indiscriminant Type Unit Characteristics (TUCHA) files. Whereas TUCHA portrays unit profiles inexactly in unfamiliar JOPS format based on Tables of Organization and Equipment for whole units, the force modules we propose are constructed on the basis of Modification Tables of Organization and Equipment and AUEL data, pre-tailored for probable contingencies.

10. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for Theater Counterair Operations (From Overseas I and Areas)*, JCS Publication 26 (Washington: GPO, April 1986).

11. XVIII Airborne Corps has made considerable strides in this area. For nearly a year, its systems and procedures have been interwoven with those of I Marine Amphibious Force, II Marine Amphibious Force, and 1st Special Operations Command to produce a Joint Operations Procedures manual. Indications are that 9th and 12th Tactical Air Forces and III Marine Amphibious Force will join this effort. Corps planners hope to fuse these procedures with those of the numbered Navy fleets and equivalent headquarters to integrate detailed joint procedures which apply each service's warfighting doctrine.

# Clausewitz's Elusive Center of Gravity

JAMES J. SCHNEIDER and LAWRENCE L. IZZO

Sir Edward Grey, Great Britain's foreign minister through most of the First World War, once opined that "discussion without definition is impossible." Today we observe a growing tendency throughout the Army to use certain theoretical terminology in a casual fashion. This tendency assumes a universal understanding of the definitions of such terms. But the use of this terminology in professional discourse suggests the contrary: we are nearer mutual confusion than common understanding.

The 1986 edition of FM 100-5, *Operations*, is significant with respect to our discussion here because it provides the Army for the first time with a set of "concepts central to the design and conduct of campaigns and major operations." Found in Appendix B, they include the theoretical concepts of the "center of gravity," "lines of operations," and the "culminating point." The manual thus now provides the Army with a good starting point for discussion, but the definition of center of gravity there presented cries for refinement. If it is indeed the "key to all operational design," as FM 100-5 claims,<sup>2</sup> then soldiers are going to have to start using the term correctly and with uniform understanding.

## *Clausewitz and the Center of Gravity*

The concept of the center of gravity (the German term is *schwerpunkt*) forms a principal building block in Clausewitz's edifice *On War*. In order to understand this we must consider his mechanistic view of war. Clausewitz develops this theme quite early on in Chapter 1 of Book One with a definition of war. It is important to realize that, though the manuscript we know as *On War* was in fact an unfinished draft, this first chapter is regarded as the most refined and complete.<sup>1</sup> It forms the touchstone for the rest of the work. He begins by comparing war to a duel:

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers.

Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will; his *immediate* aim is to *throw* his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance.<sup>4</sup>

Here Clausewitz firmly establishes the physical analogy that is used throughout the remainder of the treatise. He continues:

*War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will. Force, to counter opposing force, equips itself with the inventions of art and science . . . . Force—that is, physical force, for moral force has no existence save as expressed in the state and the law—is thus the means of war; to impose our will is its object . . . . War, however, is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass (total nonresistance would be no war at all) but always the collision of two living forces.<sup>5</sup>*

Having early established the physical nature of war as a collision between armed forces, Clausewitz explicitly develops the concept of the center of gravity in Book Six. There, he discusses the dynamic relationship between the attack and the defense from the particular standpoint of the defender. This dynamic continues the physical analogy of two forces in collision, one—the defender—exhibiting the force of resistance, the other—the attacker—manifesting the force of impulsion. In Chapter 27 of Book Six, Clausewitz develops a relationship between these dynamic forces in collision and their locus of action in space, the theater of operations. It is at this point that the formal development of the center of gravity begins.<sup>6</sup>

Since one cannot concentrate land as one can an army, it will be necessary to divide the army to defend the land.

Only in the case of small and compact states is such a concentration of force possible and probable that its defeat will decide everything. If the area involved is very large and the frontier long, or if one is surrounded on all sides

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by a powerful alliance of enemies, such a concentration is a practical impossibility. A division of forces then becomes inevitable, and with it several theaters of operation.

... For this reason, the *blow* from which the broadest and most favorable repercussions can be expected will be aimed against *that area* where the greatest concentration of enemy troops can be found; the larger the force with which the blow is struck, the surer its effect will be. This rather obvious sequence leads us to an analogy that will illustrate it more clearly—that is, the nature and effect of the center of gravity.

A center of gravity is always found where the mass is concentrated most densely. It presents the most effective target for a blow; furthermore, the heaviest blow is that struck by the center of gravity. The same holds true in war. The fighting forces of each belligerent—whether a single state or an alliance of states—have a certain unity and therefore some cohesion. Where there is cohesion, the analogy of the center of gravity can be applied. Thus these forces will possess certain centers of gravity, which, by their movement and direction, govern the rest; and those centers of gravity will be found wherever the forces are most concentrated.

In the last sentence Clausewitz is saying, for example, that if the center of gravity of a carriage is moved, the movement will also affect the seats and wheels because of the coherent relationship among its parts.

To summarize the explanation thus far, Clausewitz presented war as a duel between two opponents who seek to unbalance and throw one another. Each of the opponents has a certain mass with a center of gravity. On the literal battlefield, it is two armies in collision that seek to throw the other. They, too, each have a certain mass with a center of gravity.

In Chapter 28 of Book Six, Clausewitz resumes his discussion of the centers of gravity from the standpoint of the defense. He says that it is the decision to join battle “that changes the centers of gravity [the armies] on each side, and the operational theaters they create, into *active agents*.” He continues:

A major battle in a theater of operations is a collision between two centers of gravity; the more forces we can concentrate on our center of gravity, the more certain and massive the effect will be. Consequently, any partial use of force not directed toward an objective that either cannot be attained by the victory itself or that does not bring about the victory should be *condemned*.<sup>4</sup>

Clausewitz then continues with a strictly tactical discussion of how one strikes at the enemy's exact center of gravity. Of significance is that he clearly distinguishes between what he views as the center of gravity—i.e. the army itself—and those things which FM 100-5 erroneously cites as being examples of centers of gravity. Thus, for instance, he notes that the

attacker's lines of communication, rather than themselves constituting a center of gravity, are merely a means through which commanders "aim at an immediate decision, a confrontation of the two centers of gravity."

Clausewitz broaches the concept of the center of gravity again in the final book, Book Eight, in his discussion of war plans. He says that the first task in planning for any war "is to identify the enemy's centers of gravity." It is in Chapter 4 of this book that he establishes the terminology quoted directly in FM 100-5, Appendix B. Clausewitz begins by asking "what exactly does 'defeat' signify?" He answers by listing historical examples as "proof that success is not due simply to general causes." He then goes on to elaborate:

Particular factors can often be decisive - details only known to those who were on the spot. There can also be moral factors which never come to light; while issues can be decided by chances and incidents so minute as to figure in histories simply as anecdotes.

What the theorist has to say here is this: one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, *the hub of all power and movement*, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed.

Small things always depend on great ones, unimportant on important, accidentals on essentials. This must guide our approach.

For Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, the center of gravity was their army. If the army had been destroyed, they would all have gone down in history as failures.

Here we encounter the root of much of the confusion surrounding the center of gravity. Throughout the discussion of the concept in Book Six, it is clear that Clausewitz is referring to the opposing armies as constituting the centers of gravity. This is consistent with the physical analogy of the duel established in Chapter 1 of Book One and the relationship among space, time, and mass discussed in Chapter 2 of Book Five. In Book Eight the physical aspect of the concept becomes much less precise, as is indicated by the preceding quotation. Now, at the level of war plans, or what is classically called grand strategy, he simply carries the analogy too far. The army, according to Clausewitz, may be one of several centers of gravity. He continues the passage by citing other possible candidates:

In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally the capital. In small countries that rely on large ones, it is usually the army of their protector. Among alliances, it lies in the community of interest, and in popular uprising it is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion. It is against these that our energies should be directed. If the enemy is thrown off balance,

he must not be given time to recover. Blow after blow must be aimed in the same direction: the victor, in other words, must strike with all his strength and not just against a fraction of the enemy's. Not by taking things the easy way . . . but by constantly seeking out the center of his power, by doing all to win all, will one really defeat the enemy.

Having, however briefly, carried his physical analogy beyond its applicability into the psychological realm of "personalities" and "public opinion," Clausewitz quickly reestablishes the analogy of the center of gravity in its proper physical domain:

Still, no matter what the central feature of the enemy's power may be—the point on which your efforts must converge—the defeat and destruction of his fighting force remains the best way to begin, and in every case will be a very significant feature of the campaign.<sup>17</sup>

Down through the years the Germans adopted the concept of the center of gravity (*schwerpunkt*) as a useful operational design tool because of its close association with the principle of concentration of mass or force. In the German language, "concentration of mass" is translated as *schwerpunktbildung*. As the Germans began to articulate their blitzkrieg doctrine, the term became particularly relevant. The success of the blitzkrieg depended largely upon the rapid shifting and deployment of concentrations of armored forces. These armored forces, thus concentrated, constituted in the German view the *schwerpunkt* or center of gravity of the operation. In efforts to explain the nature of blitzkrieg theory, Western analysts during World War II began to confuse *schwerpunkt* with another key element of operational design—the *decisive point*.

#### ***Jomini and the Decisive Point***

It was Baron Antoine-Henri Jomini, a contemporary of Clausewitz, who developed the concept of the decisive point in its relationship to the concentration of force. In his *Summary of the Art of War* (1838), Jomini defined the fundamental principle of war as consisting of the following maxims:

1. To throw by strategic movements the mass of an army, successively, upon the decisive points of a theater of war, and also upon the communications of the enemy as much as possible without compromising one's own.
2. To maneuver to engage fractions of the hostile army with the bulk of one's forces.
3. On the battlefield, to throw the mass of the forces upon the

decisive point, or upon that portion of the hostile line which it is of the first importance to overthrow.

4. To so arrange that these masses shall not be only thrown upon the decisive point, but that they shall engage at the proper times and with ample energy.

In these four maxims we find the same basic elements that form a common denominator with which to associate the work of Jomini to that of Clausewitz. Where Clausewitz emphasizes the importance of mass, Jomini stresses the importance of concentration at *decisive points* within the theater of war or upon the battlefield. In Jomini's theoretical system, a decisive point may be a portion of the enemy, such as a flank, or it may be a piece of terrain, the destruction or seizure of which will lead to a decision in the operation.<sup>14</sup> Clausewitz makes a similar distinction, but from the standpoint of his peculiar emphasis upon concentration and the destruction of the enemy masses: "Destruction of the enemy forces is the overriding principle of war."<sup>15</sup> For Clausewitz this destruction is the first precedent objective of all offensive and defensive action, not the seizure or retention of terrain.<sup>16</sup> Yet Clausewitz, despite his emphasis on concentration, understood the importance of the decisive point:

Strategy decides the time when, the place where, and the forces with which the engagement is to be fought, and through this threefold activity exerts considerable influence on its outcome . . . . It thus follows that as many troops as possible should be brought into the engagement at the decisive point. . . .

We believe then that in our circumstances and all similar ones, a main factor is the possession of strength at the really vital point. Usually it is actually the most important factor. To achieve strength at the decisive point depends on the strength of the army and on the skill with which this strength is employed. . . .

Consequently, the forces available must be employed with such skill that even in the absence of absolute superiority, relative superiority is attained at the decisive point.

To achieve this, the calculation of space and time appears as the most essential factor. . . .

Relative superiority, that is, the skillful concentration of superior strength at the decisive point, is much more frequently based on the current appraisal of this decisive point, or suitable planning from the start; which leads to appropriate dispositions of forces, and on the resolution needed to sacrifice nonessentials for the sake of essentials—that is the courage to retain the major part of one's forces united. . . .

The best strategy is always *to be very strong*: first in general, and then at the decisive point.<sup>17</sup>

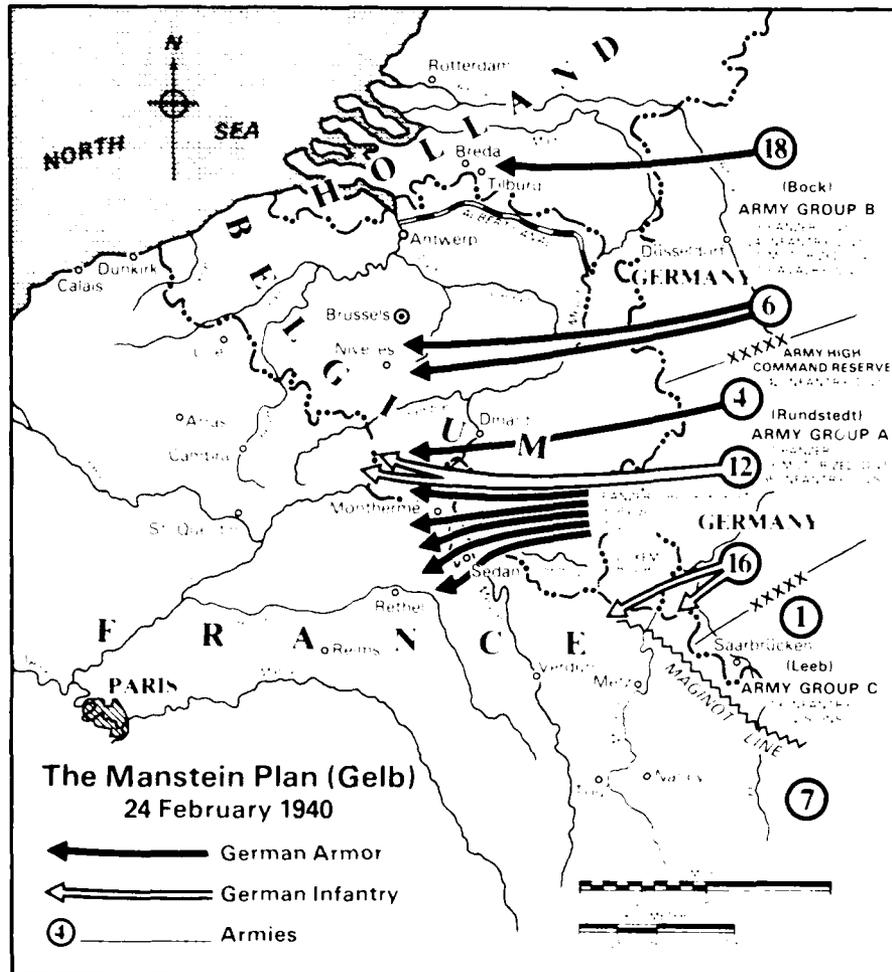
At the beginning of World War II, Jomini's influence on military theory and practice was virtually nonexistent. But in Germany, a doctrine for the integrated employment of armor, armored infantry, artillery, and aerial forces—with its combined emphasis directed toward the destruction of the enemy masses—quickly discovered an implicit utility for the concept of the decisive point in operational design. One of the first thinkers, and perhaps most influential, who sought to unravel the secrets of the German blitzkrieg was Czech Lieutenant Colonel F. O. Miksche. In 1942 he published the now classic book *Attack*, with an introduction by Tom Wintringham. In the brief introduction, Wintringham attempted to define and clarify several German operational terms that were associated with the blitzkrieg. Among these was the term *schwerpunkt*. It is clear from a close reading of Wintringham's words that he understood the term in the Clausewitzian sense as it relates to the concentration of force:

The concentration that forms the *schwerpunkt* is continually maintained by pressing reserves up to it through the gap it has created in the enemy's defenses. It is, as it were, a rolling concentration, force flowing into it from the rear and spreading out through it to find the easiest channel in which the concentration can move forward.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately he translates *schwerpunkt* into the English term "thrust-point." This term is used throughout Miksche's book. It is easy to see how a reader could misconstrue the concentrated forces (the center of gravity) for the *point* against which their attack is directed. Miksche himself contributes to the confusion when he parenthetically equates an objective with the concept of *schwerpunkt*.<sup>19</sup> FM 100-5 falls into the same semantic trap. It suggests that, since "a key piece of terrain . . . , the mass of the enemy force, the boundary between two of its major combat formations, a vital command and control center, or perhaps its logistical base or lines of communications" can be ideal objectives for attack, they are therefore centers of gravity.<sup>20</sup> In fact, they are decisive points. The entire sense of the German concept is destroyed. In its place, FM 100-5 arrives at a meaning of center of gravity that can be applied to anything worthy of being attacked.

### ***France 1940***

In order to add flesh to the theoretical discussion presented thus far, let us examine a historical example. Even before the final destruction of Poland in September 1939, German planners began to ponder how best to defeat France and her main ally, Great Britain. By October, the German Army High Command had produced the basic plan (code-named "Yellow" [Gelb]) which, after several iterations, became the basis of one of the most decisive campaigns in military history.<sup>21</sup> Comparison of the evolving



versions of this plan, which was finally executed in May 1940, demonstrates the utility of the concept of “center of gravity” in operational planning.

The three strategic objectives established in campaign plan Gelb were: first, to decisively defeat the British Expeditionary Force in battle; second, to seize air and sea bases for attacks against England along the Channel coast; and finally, to provide a buffer for the Ruhr area with the seizure of Holland. The center of gravity of the attack was to be directed primarily into Holland. However, this version was almost immediately scrapped because it was viewed as being too attrition-oriented and because of widespread fears that the Dutch would flood most key avenues of approach. Another key factor was the pervasive pessimism throughout the entire Army High Command concerning the chances of success.

On 29 October a new version was drawn up shifting the weight of the attack slightly to the south and setting an execution date in November. Under this new version virtually all of Holland was to be bypassed. Army Group B (Bock) would skirt Holland and attack instead into Belgium with a force consisting of 30 infantry, nine panzer, and three motorized divisions. Army Group A (Rundstedt) would deploy 22 infantry divisions, while Army Group C (Leeb), facing the Maginot Line, would have 19 infantry divisions. Thus the strategic center of gravity of German forces lay with Bock's army group. Because of numerous postponements caused by footdragging among the General Staff and weather delays, the plan was not executed in November as originally intended. This allowed time for the plan to evolve into its final form.

One of the loudest critics of the original plan was the brilliant chief of staff of Army Group A, Erich von Manstein. In his critique he cited several reservations about the plan which, if accurate, seemed to preclude decisive success. His recommendation for a new version stressed: first, the shifting of the center of gravity of the operation as a whole southward; and second, the commitment of strong motorized forces to thrust into the rear of the Allied troops in northern Belgium.

Stirred by such rethinking, the German High Command developed a final revision. In this version the center of gravity of the attack was decisively shifted to Rundstedt's Army Group A in the center (see map). Where previously he had 22 divisions under his command, Rundstedt now had 35 infantry divisions, seven panzer divisions, and three motorized divisions. The weight of Bock's Army Group B in the north was correspondingly lightened. He now commanded 24 infantry, three panzer, one motorized, and one cavalry division. The significance of this shift in the center of gravity can be seen by comparing the *concentration* of the opposing forces, the ratio of divisions to linear kilometers of front.

Under the Allied Plan "D," major portions of the First Army Group were to swing into Belgium to link up with Belgian and Dutch forces and defend along the Dyle River. The "hinge" for this maneuver, in the vicinity of Sedan, was provided by Corap's 9th Army along with Huntziger's 2nd. The weakest or, more properly, the *lightest* sector of the Allied line lay where these two armies were linked, where Allied troop density was about one division for every 12 kilometers of frontage. Poised ready to smash at the hinge was Rundstedt's Army Group A. Its density was one division per *three* kilometers of front.

The significance of Sedan as the *decisive point* must therefore be considered in terms of its relationship to the opposing forces. In and of itself Sedan was just another piece of terrain. What made it decisive was that the Allied center of gravity, located with the mass of forces to the north, was about to pivot around Sedan eastward into Belgium. Seizure of Sedan would place German troops on the flank and in the rear of the Allied center of

gravity. Movement into their rear would immediately impose a *decision* upon the Allied high command: Should the defense along the Dyle be continued, or should it be abandoned? The further west the Germans could penetrate, the more critical the decision would become. The *speed* of this movement would ensure the paralysis of Allied command and control.

The fact that the position was weak did not necessarily make Sedan the decisive point. Had the Allies decided not to advance eastward to the Dyle, this weakness would not have led to a decision. To be decisive, successful attack against the point in question must have some adverse impact on the enemy's center of gravity—his main forces.

Within Army Group A, the strategic center of gravity of the entire German army, an operational center of gravity was also created under the command of General Ewald von Kleist. This force, *Panzer Gruppe Kleist*, consisted of Heinz Guderian's XIX Panzer Corps with three panzer divisions, Hans-Georg Reinhardt's XLI Panzer Corps with two panzer divisions, and Gustav von Wietersheim's XIV Motorized Corps. The tactical center of gravity lay with Guderian's panzer corps.

It was Heinz Guderian, perhaps more than anyone else in the German army, who epitomized in his operations the principle of concentration (*schwerpunktbildung prinzip*) at the decisive point. Napoleon once said, "There are in Europe many good generals, but they see too many things at once. I see only one thing, namely the enemy's main body. I try to crush it, confident that secondary matters will then settle themselves." This quotation, according to David Chandler, is "the kernel, the central theme, of Napoleon's concept of warfare: the *blitzkrieg* attack aimed at the main repository of the enemy's power—his army."<sup>22</sup> And the same could be said of Guderian, who saw only *one* center of gravity, the main enemy force, and always sought to unhinge or unbalance it by seeking the decisive point. He achieved dislocation through the maximum concentration of his own forces at this point.

In this context we find Guderian constantly exhorting his subordinate commanders to "*kleckern, nicht klotzen!*"—meaning roughly, "concentrate, don't disperse!" At Sedan, Guderian concentrated three panzer divisions with a reinforced infantry regiment along with artillery and nearly 1500 Stukas on a six-kilometer front. The weight of this hammer fell on the French 55th Infantry Division, smashing it in three hours.

The Germans began their offensive at 1500 on 13 May 1940 with Stuka and artillery attacks. German infantry from the panzer divisions began their river assault across the Meuse at 1600. By 1830 the 55th Division had disintegrated and most of Sedan had fallen. There were sufficient French troops in the vicinity to resist the attack, but they were not concentrated in space and time to defend at the decisive point.

Guderian had moved through the Ardennes dispersed, hiding his true power. He quickly swarmed at the decisive point, Sedan, generating a

center of gravity before the enemy could react with its much-depleted reserves. After the collision Guderian scattered his forces and rapidly advanced deep into the rear of the Allied armies to the north, thus ensuring retention of initiative.

### ***The Center of Gravity and the Decisive Point***

What, then, is the center of gravity in modern terms? *The center of gravity is the greatest concentration of combat force.* This is the hub of all power and movement. The precise size of a center of gravity will vary with the level of war within which it resides. For instance, at the operational level in a strictly conventional theater of operations, the center of gravity might be no more than an operational maneuver group along with its air assets.

As Jomini reminds us, a center of gravity is directed against one or more decisive points. *A decisive point is a physical objective for which we are willing to expend combat power, either in defense or in attack.* The decisiveness of such a physical objective is in direct proportion to the combat power the commander is willing to spend in its defense or attack *and* the impact its loss or seizure would have on his decision process. Decisive points may be attacked and defended directly or indirectly. Examples of decisive points might include towns, bridges, hilltops, command posts, air bases, POMCUS sites, supply bases, lines of communication, and so forth. The exact nature of the decisive point will be determined by the level of war within which it resides. In any event, we must move away from FM 100-5's unfortunate equation of the center of gravity with the decisive point.

Yet the two concepts are inextricably linked. Decisive points are decisive only in relation to the center of gravity. The seizure of decisive points must somehow attack or threaten, directly or indirectly, enemy concentrations of combat power just as the seizure of Sedan threatened the entire Allied center of gravity to the north. The retention of decisive points must somehow defend or protect, directly or indirectly, the friendly center of gravity. During operations the centers of gravity become present means allocated to achieve future ends. In order to defeat the enemy's overall plan and ensure the efficient expenditure of our own concentrations of combat power, we must determine the relationship between the enemy centers of gravity and the decisive ends they aim to achieve. We must deny these decisive points to the enemy, while at the same time seeking to shatter his own concentrations of power. This is accomplished directly or indirectly through the proper identification of those decisive points that lead ultimately to the enemy centers of gravity. Unless we are able to identify the enemy's concentrations of power and the decisive ends they seek, then our own precious centers of gravity will be wasted.

In war we often see the collision of centers of gravity, great concentrations of combat power at decisive points. These collisions—these

battles—can occur sporadically throughout the depths of the theater of war with one ultimate *moral* objective. This is the raw destruction of the enemy's will to resist. For it is the strength of will to resist that provides the cohesion, the coherence, to these centers of gravity in collision.

But the essence of operational art is the avoidance of these head-on collisions. The operational artist seeks to maneuver dispersed. He swarms to create a center of gravity faster than his opponent (*agility*). He creates this concentration of combat power at a decisive point and time (*synchronization*). After the blow is delivered he quickly disperses in preparation for the next encounter. His forces continue the maneuver of swarm-fight-disperse sequentially and simultaneously throughout the *depth* of the theater of operations. The cumulative victories of each encounter, governed by an overall strategic framework, serve to set the terms of the operation and so maintain the *initiative*. Thus, ideally, the operational artist erodes and ultimately destroys the enemy's will to resist, but he does so, again ideally, without paying the price in blood and treasure that he would have to pay if he maneuvered his center of gravity into a violent head-on collision with the enemy's. Such collisions make for dramatic and colorful military history, of course, but they are not the mark of an operational commander who expects to fight outnumbered and win.

#### NOTES

1. US Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington: GPO, May 1986), p. 179.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 53-70.
4. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), p. 75. All italics in quotations from Clausewitz hereinafter are his own unless otherwise indicated.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 77.
6. Aron, pp. 157-60.
7. Clausewitz, pp. 485-86.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 488-89.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 491.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 619.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 595-96. Italics supplied.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 596.
13. Antoine-Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. H. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill (1862; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971), p. 63.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.
15. Clausewitz, p. 258.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-97, 204.
18. F. O. Miksche, *Attack*, Art of War Colloquium rpt. of Random House edition (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: US Army War College, December 1983), p. 3. Note that the colloquium edition has different pagination than the Random House edition.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
20. Field Manual 100-5, pp. 179-80. However, the manual correctly identifies "the mass of the enemy force" as a true center of gravity.
21. Jellord Taylor, *The March of Conquest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), pp. 155-86.
22. David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: MacMillan, 1968), p. 141.

# Army Unit Cohesion in Vietnam: A Bum Rap

ROGER KAPLAN

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In a 1981 essay Richard H. Kohn attacked the idea that any “phenomenon could possibly explain the motives of soldiers” in battle. Singled out for specific criticism were studies of primary group cohesion. He argued that differences in time and place rendered invalid comparative studies, and that existing literature had “never clearly shown whether solidarity with the group acted as a psychological prop to bolster men to endure the stress or as a motivation to carry out the mission and perform effectively in battle—or both.”<sup>1</sup> While Kohn is correct in questioning the value of comparing such disparate groups as German soldiers of 1945 and American GIs of 1970, his second criticism overlooks one critical aspect of combat—results. It matters little whether primary group cohesion acts as a “psychological prop” or as a performance motivator, because the net effect of reducing combat inhibitors (stress, fear, isolation) or promoting esprit, morale, and teamwork is the same—enhanced fighting power.

The recently implemented program of the Army regimental system perhaps best typifies the current perception of the linkage between primary group cohesion and fighting power. Curiously, the US Army decided on this program based on one of the very factors Kohn cited in support of his argument, the loosening of unit ties caused by personnel policies during the Vietnam War.<sup>2</sup> By being assigned individually and without regard to previous unit association, it was reasoned, the soldier did not develop personal or unit loyalties and perceived his environment only in terms of his own security, an egocentric creed which the one-year tour accentuated.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, several commentators, particularly Richard Gabriel and Paul

Savage in *Crisis in Command*, maintain that unenlightened personnel policies—individual rotation among them—caused US Army, Vietnam (USARV), to all but disintegrate in the final years of that conflict.

Yet, is it true that Army personnel policies had such an inimical effect on unit performance? There are no conclusive studies of cohesion and fighting power during the Vietnam War, or for World War II and the Korean War. Even Samuel Stouffer's highly acclaimed work on World War II servicemen, *The American Soldier*, failed to ask many of the questions pertinent to such a study. Neither the Korean nor the Vietnam War stimulated works comparable to Stouffer's, and the limited studies that did result from the latter conflict were often colored as much by political content as they were by scientific method, John Helmer's *Bringing the War Home* and Gabriel and Savage's *Crisis in Command* being prime examples.

Nevertheless, there exists a body of literature critical of individual rotation policies during the Vietnam War and their deleterious effects. With few exceptions, the writers are civilian. Uniformed writers, in both the Army's *Vietnam Studies* series and the military journals, largely ignore cohesion and generally deny that personnel policies reduced American combat performance.

Interestingly, critics of individual rotation have failed to demonstrate with case studies how primary group cohesion was impaired. While comparing soldiers of different nationalities 25 years removed from one another, Gabriel and Savage failed to contrast the American GIs of 1968 with those of 1970. Could it have been that rotation policies did not cause the "disintegration" in fighting power observed in the final years of the war, or could it even be that they possessed some beneficial aspects? For example, the one-year tour caused neuro-psychiatric casualty rates to be substantially lower than those of World War II, a factor which could only have reduced personnel turnover and enhanced cohesion.

Although no authoritative research exists, a large body of personal memoirs and incidental studies does provide the basis for an examination of the interrelationship between personnel policies and unit performance in Vietnam. I contend that individual rotation did not adversely affect the unit cohesion which sustained American soldiers in combat throughout most of the Vietnam War even though other personnel policies did not take adequate cognizance of group dynamics.

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American Army units on the eve of intervention in 1965 were far better prepared for battle than their counterparts prior to Korea and World War II. Benefiting from President Kennedy's policy of flexible response, the Army was able to field highly trained, well-equipped, and fully manned divisions. Additionally, several units such as the 25th Infantry Division had prepared specifically for jungle combat.

Anticipation of the intervention, a well-honed replacement system, and a stretched-out troop buildup schedule obviated the frantic mobilization that characterized the first month of the Korean War. (Units were spared the experience of the 1st Cavalry Division in Korea, for example, which lost 750 noncommissioned officers—infantry companies retained only their first sergeants—to help man the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions following the North Korean invasion.<sup>4</sup>) Alerted divisions required only a few filler personnel, all of whom could easily be integrated during the seaborne journey to Vietnam. Nor was there a need for the hurried mobilizations of World War II. Deployment of the 1st Cavalry and 25th Infantry Divisions still left eight divisions in the continental United States, half of the Army's total. The Johnson Administration's policy of gradual escalation plus the localization of combat in one theater allowed the Army to avoid using draconian manning measures for almost all of the war. Not until the Tet Offensive of 1968 was the Army forced to rush troops to Vietnam, and then it sent just one brigade. Thus many of the problems that had impaired unit cohesion in the initial stages of the previous two wars were avoided. Yet, the circumstances of Vietnam were so different from those of the earlier wars that one cannot credit the Army's mobilization techniques to an enlightened awareness of group dynamics.

Opportune operational circumstances enabled the Army to avoid sending the first ground units in Vietnam directly into major combat. Instead, units began operations in the relatively quiet coastal enclaves before moving inland against North Vietnamese regulars. Later units were usually assigned less active sectors upon arrival, to the dismay of the forces they displaced, in order to get acclimated, a policy which favored cohesion.<sup>5</sup>

Replacement techniques also showed some improvement over the past. During World War II replacements spent months virtually alone in the personnel pipeline. They were assigned to a theater as individuals, rarely knew any of their fellow replacements, and were totally unaware of the identity of their future divisions until they left the corps replacement battalion. Once overseas the replacement spent one to three days at each of the five replacement units through which he had to pass on his way to the front, a process that provoked psychological disturbances and damaged morale.<sup>6</sup> Soldiers reported to the Army's overseas terminal in Oakland and were then flown to Vietnam. Once in country, replacements were quickly processed by computers at Long Binh or Cam Rahn Bay and sent directly to their division

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*I contend that individual rotation did not adversely affect the unit cohesion which sustained American soldiers in combat throughout most of the Vietnam War.*

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or separate brigade. Soldiers received only an abbreviated orientation and were en route to their units within 24 hours. This system reduced much of the stress soldiers experienced in the past, but it did not relieve the sense of isolation felt by replacements proceeding as individuals.<sup>8</sup> Thus, changes in the system were essentially intended to facilitate administration. Indeed, an article by a former commander of USARV replacement operations concentrated not on what the system did for the soldier but on how administratively efficient it was.<sup>9</sup>

Once at their division or brigade, replacements were further reassigned and, in some units, given additional training. Operational requirements governed how long a unit had in which to integrate its replacements. For example, S. L. A. Marshall noted that companies of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, were in combat only days after each had received 35 new personnel. Since it had been established in previous wars that more combat fatigue resulted from a soldier's first combat than all other situations, concern for cohesion apparently took a back seat to operational necessity.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike soldiers of earlier wars, the Vietnam replacement (and those arriving as part of a unit deployment) knew when he would return to the United States. Even before the first ground combat troops arrived in Vietnam, American rotation policy had been decided. Personnel would return to the United States upon serving 12 months in Vietnam regardless of one's proximity to the fighting. Several factors, mostly bureaucratic, influenced this modification of Korean War policy (where tour length had been flexible, depending on type of assignment).<sup>11</sup> First, the standard length of other unaccompanied tours was one year. Second, military personnel in Vietnam already were serving one-year tours. Army planners also opted for a 12-month maximum for health reasons. (In the environment of the Southwest Pacific area in 1943, tropical diseases alone caused a hospital admission rate of 1032 per 1000 soldiers.<sup>12</sup>) Given the constraints of President Johnson's war policy, Army planners had no other choice. Unit rotation was feasible only for a small force; to accommodate the projected force level of USARV, a major mobilization would have been necessary (something Johnson would not authorize). Since tour length in country for

Vietnam War soldiers was on average three months longer than for front-line soldiers in Korea, Army planners could justifiably feel that they had enhanced unit cohesion, in-country experience, and thus fighting power. As noted earlier, respected combat commanders in their lessons-learned literature do not mention rotation as a problem. Similarly, Douglas Kinnard did not see fit to query Army generals who served in Vietnam about rotation (see *The War Managers*) even though he posed a great number of questions dealing with sensitive and often embarrassing policies and actions.<sup>13</sup>

Yet military pundits and sociologists severely criticized individual rotation, just as they had during Korea. John Paul Vann, a former US Army lieutenant colonel, complained that "the United States had not been in Vietnam for ten years but for one year ten times." Peter Bourne saw rotation as breaking down cohesion by individualizing and encapsulating the war for each soldier. Charles Moskos, Charles Cotton, Gabriel and Savage, and others concurred, only grudgingly conceding the enhanced morale and lower neuro-psychiatric casualties that resulted from the one-year tour. None of the critics of rotation supported the accusations with data. Even Gabriel and Savage, whose *Crisis in Command* contained tables for almost every argument, were unable to provide figures linking reduced cohesion and combat power to individual rotation.<sup>14</sup>

Implicit in all such criticism was the assumption that the Army possessed alternatives to individual rotation, and that it idly accepted the ill effects of its chosen policy. But as we have seen, unit rotation was feasible only within the context of a major mobilization of reserves—a policy President Johnson considered and rejected. Except for two divisions during the Korean War, unit rotation has never been part of the American experience in wartime, and the costs in terms of mobilized forces make it an unlikely future course of action. Alternatively, the Army could have opted for longer tours, but such a policy would have created serious problems of its own. Prolonged tours during World War II had a devastating effect on troop morale and the neuro-psychiatric health of infantrymen in particular. *Combat in North Africa and in Italy* clearly indicated that psychiatric breakdown in combat units was not a question of who but when, a conclusion later substantiated in France and Germany. Based on European theater casualty rates, postwar researchers determined that 180 days of combat represented the "burn-out point" for infantry and other front-line troops. Of equal note was the discovery that after 180 days the neuro-psychiatric casualty rate of the survivors exceeded that of untested replacements.<sup>15</sup> Since a soldier could easily reach burn-out within a year, it was detrimental to *unit* efficiency to subject individual personnel to long tours. Not surprisingly there were 927,307 cases of "battle fatigue" in World War II, of whom 320,000 were discharged. This exceeded the number of combat deaths (292,131) and aggravated the Army's chronic shortage of

infantrymen, who accounted for the vast majority of battle fatigue casualties (the rate for infantry units was forty times that of service units). \*

In contrast to critics of individual rotation in Vietnam, many post-World War II writers considered such tours to be the only solution to high levels of neuro-psychiatric casualties. They did not regard it as detrimental to unit cohesion because in their experience the infantry population of European theater units had been in constant flux anyway. Such units suffered casualties equal to their total personnel authorizations every 85 to 100 days in combat! This meant that the typical infantry unit was "destroyed" at least twice a year. Fifth Army casualty rates, which were average for the European theater, substantiate this estimate. Its infantry battalions possessed less than 18 percent of their original soldiers after 180 days, the majority of whom were cooks, clerks, and other support personnel. Thus there was no point to rotating units because the originals had long ceased to exist after even one year.

Despite extremely high turnover, infantry units in World War II and later in Korea were able to function and sustain themselves in combat. Researchers noted that men fought together to survive and were forced to establish primary groups at the squad or platoon level to provide the security that was lost upon entry into military service. In other words, men formed ersatz families and by so doing developed loyalties to their units and comrades. \*



Four length in Vietnam was an important factor in the unit cohesion equation. The message on the radio operator's helmet above: "Stop!!! Don't shoot. I'm short."

Critics of individual rotation to the contrary, personal accounts of combat veterans of Vietnam indicate that unit cohesion did exist and for the same reason that it existed in Korea and World War II—it was regarded as being essential to survival on the battlefield.<sup>19</sup> This view is not restricted to early participants of the war, most of whom arrived as part of a unit deployment, but is shared by those who fought during Tet 1968 and well into 1969. Soldiers who served in the latter years of the war disagree, but by then the nature of the war had changed. As Vietnamization proceeded, Army units operated in the field less and less, becoming responsible only for locating but not engaging the enemy (close air support and South Vietnamese units were entrusted with the latter mission). By 1972, units merely performed base security operations.

The differing perceptions of the veterans, however, provide the key to understanding unit cohesion in Vietnam: it was a function of the unit's exposure to combat operations. Individual rotation had provided the American soldier with one overriding goal—to survive his tour. However, this had little effect on unit cohesiveness. After all, survival had been the primary goal of World War II soldiers as well.<sup>20</sup> Of far greater importance were the clear distinctions between the field and the rear. In the large base camps to which the combat units periodically repaired, survival was chiefly an individual affair. Triple concertina wire, claymore mines, manned perimeters, and other visible means of protection provided the soldier with relatively good security. Additionally, the rear bases and the Vietnamese economy offered the soldier almost all the amenities of American life and sometimes more—privates could even afford servants.<sup>21</sup> The soldier's unit could hardly compete with the rear in providing for his basic needs. Even the unit mess hall had competition, its foes being the cafeteria and service clubs. Thus, the basic requirement for any primary group—the ability to insure survival—did not exist in garrison.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, personal accounts do not refer to cohesion in the rear, emphasizing instead association with a small circle of friends. Significantly, most of the drug, morale, and disciplinary problems associated with unit disintegration in Vietnam sprang from experience in the rear.

In the field, however, the soldier was totally dependent on his unit for all support whether it be food, ammunition, or medical care. Most important, soldiers regarded their units as the only means of returning safely to base.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, primary groups formed during combat, and soldiers sought to enhance the viability of their units. Shirkers were often threatened or socially ostracized, and racial and other prejudices were instinctively suppressed (only to flare up in the safety of the rear).<sup>24</sup> The close interactions demanded by field duty created personal loyalties as well, and a pervasive hatred of the enemy further added to cohesion in the field. Additionally, new people were taught how to avoid mistakes that could cause

themselves and others to be killed.<sup>24</sup> S. L. A. Marshall demonstrated through his studies of three wars that more soldiers would fire their weapons if they better related to one another. He noted that some 25th Infantry Division units in Vietnam had significantly higher percentages of firers than elite units of World War II.<sup>25</sup> The assertion that primary groups arise from the design of military organizations rather than from the peculiar chemistry of the battlefield is not substantiated by the Vietnam experience.<sup>27</sup>

Although cohesion was, to some extent, a self-sustained phenomenon, there still existed several ways in which Army policy could affect it. For example, the policy of returning in-country hospital discharges to their former companies did reduce turnover, thereby facilitating the security of interpersonal relationships and continuity of experience. Other policies, however, were harmful. As late as 1967, some units permitted rear area assignment after a soldier had received two wounds. Since 50 percent of those wounded required no hospitalization, some of the personnel who qualified for reassignment hardly suffered the pain this program attempted to redress.<sup>28</sup> The price in any event was a needless increase in personnel turnover. Policies that USARV imposed on its medical command were equally destructive. In order to maximize present for duty rates, wounded soldiers who could otherwise have been treated in country and eventually returned to their units were instead evacuated to Okinawa or the continental United States. Increasing the incidence of unnecessary medical evacuations was the creation of manpower spaces for temporary-duty personnel in USARV, which counted against the overall troop ceiling. These were achieved by reducing in-country hospital patients from 3500 to 3000 despite an Army hospital capacity of 5000.<sup>29</sup>

More damaging was the retention of the Korean War practice of assigning commanders to most line units for just six months. This enabled the Army to get as many officers into combat as soon as possible, thus broadening the experience base and spreading the risk, but there was a price. Enlisted soldiers who had to serve 12 months in a company often perceived this as an indication that they alone were expendable, a view probably reinforced by the fact that short-term commanders would likely feel a greater need to produce immediate results. Six-month command assignments also destroyed a critical component in the maintenance of cohesion that the sociologist Roger Little noted—mutual risk between the leader and the led. The resentment on the part of the enlisted soldiers constituted a handicap for the commander not of his making, and often such attitudes eroded their confidence in the leader, thus adversely affecting unit performance (a theme common to many personal accounts was that confidence in one's officers was vital to successful unit operations).<sup>30</sup> Abbreviated command tours also inhibited cohesion because they resulted in increased combat casualties in units, thereby further aggravating personnel turnover.

Studies in 1965 and 1966 revealed that "US maneuver battalions under experienced commanders suffered battle deaths in sizable fire fights at only two-thirds the rate of units under battalion commanders with less than six months' experience in command."<sup>1</sup>

Why did the Army institute personnel policies that risked the impairment of unit cohesion? Probably because Army leaders tended to associate success in combat not so much with cohesion as with morale. Indicative of the Army's high regard for morale was the creation of a formidable array of recreational activities. Moreover, to support those activities, USARV readily diverted personnel, resources, and even construction units from the war effort. Similarly, units indulged in liberal awards programs and other practices to bolster morale.<sup>2</sup> Yet none of these measures was able to prevent the disintegration of USARV combat units during the final years of the war, *a period when combat operations and casualties actually declined.*<sup>3</sup>

Despite uninspired Army personnel policies and the inability to rotate units, cohesion did exist throughout most of the Vietnam War. The integrity of the deploying units can hardly be credited with sustaining cohesion because losses and eventually tour completions quickly changed the character of each formation. Rather, cohesion was the product of necessity and group dynamics, the same factors that bolstered unit cohesion in World War II and Korea. Soldiers understood that the unit represented survival and instinctively built its cohesion. Relatively good leadership further cemented cohesion as did widespread support of the war until 1968. Only when combat declined and disengagement became the American goal did cohesion deteriorate.

In attempting to remedy in the future the perceived deficits in unit cohesion during Vietnam, the Army has focused on peacetime personnel policies. Although programs such as the Army's regimental system may enable strong, cohesive units to enter combat, they will not alleviate the real systemic personnel failures common to Vietnam-type war. USARV neglected to institute policies that would *sustain* high levels of cohesion. It denied soldiers experienced commanders, needlessly evacuated sick and wounded servicemen who could have rejoined their comrades, and created morale support services that undermined the importance of the unit. Unless the Army formulates sound wartime personnel policies that accommodate individual rotation as well as the realities of group dynamics, soldiers again will be condemned to fragmented units, with the high casualties and other dire implications for combat effectiveness that such a situation entails.

#### NOTES

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# Peacekeeping by Wishful Thinking

JAMES H. TONER

**P**ollyanna is a young heroine in a novel by Eleanor H. Parker. Today we give the character's name to anyone who seems excessively or persistently optimistic. In the important public debate about arms control and disarmament, there are invariably a number of Pollyannas whose sincere if misguided faith that everything is almost certainly going to turn out well may, in fact, be dangerously counterproductive.

Certain popular nostrums, for example, crowd the usual public commentaries about disarmament. These nostrums, despite—or perhaps because of—their popularity, coexist rather tentatively with reality. The popularity of such political placebos as *The Fate of the Earth*, by Jonathan Schell, testifies to the broadly felt yearning for an end to all our troubles. Schell offers this remedy for the ills of contemporary nuclear politics:

If we are serious about nuclear disarmament—the minimum technical requirement for real safety from extinction—then we must accept conventional disarmament as well, and this means disarmament not just of nuclear powers but of all powers, for the present nuclear powers are hardly likely to throw away their conventional arms while non-nuclear powers hold on to theirs . . . . We must [therefore] lay down our arms, relinquish sovereignty, and found a political system for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

For those who might have missed his point, Schell elaborates in unmistakable terms: “In sum, the task is nothing less than to reinvent politics: to reinvent the world.” Now no person of any sense or sensitivity will argue against what Schell entirely correctly fears and deplors: The

human race *is* in jeopardy of extinction by its own hand. But Schell's breathtaking assertions about reinventing politics call for serious analysis rather than the mere orchestration of high emotion.

Schell is hardly alone. Consider the recent book by Dr. Helen Caldicott, *Missile Envy: The Arms Race and Nuclear War*. The temper and tone of her book are revealed in such remarks as this: "When I visited Europe two years ago, I was shocked to discover that NATO was not really our 'Western allies' but was, in fact, controlled and run by the US government." Or this: "By this act of war [invading Grenada], the United States simultaneously violated international law and deeply offended the people of Great Britain." This spectacularly obtuse book indicates that, after all, one FDR adviser found Stalin to be a "reasonable man"; the Korean War was really "a conflict inspired overwhelmingly by local problems"; and "Cuba now has one of the best medical schemes in the world." Dr. Caldicott has gained a highly deserved reputation as a crusading physician, investing enormous time and energy to tell us (entirely correctly) that nuclear war means the very probable end of humanity. "Preventing nuclear war," she writes, "is the ultimate parenting issue; nothing else matters."

Let us imagine a new crusade against something which all human beings—regardless of their religious, ethical, or political convictions—can truly hate: cancer. Suppose that one writer informs us that cancer can kill and urges us to end this dread disease at once. Are we to dispute that? Another writer tells us that we must inform humanity about cancer and laments its insidious and deadly spread. Are we to dispute that? Yet a third writer implores us to denounce cancer; we must hold rallies and march and sign petitions and urge our representatives in Congress to vote against cancer. Would some thinking individual at that point not say something to this effect: "I understand and wholly agree that cancer is a vile thing. I too desire its immediate end. But the question, after all, is *how*." How, Mr. Schell, are we to reinvent politics? How, Dr. Caldicott, are we to prevent nuclear war? One seeks without success for Schell's answer. Dr. Caldicott, apparently, has the answer, although she offers it through Walter Cronkite. Preparing for nuclear war, she suggests, is "total immorality"; hence the solution, presumably, is not to prepare for war:

Newsman Walter Cronkite recently told me that for years he has been in favor of unilateral nuclear disarmament. He thinks that America should totally

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disarm within ten years and some of the money saved should be used to create satellites and communications systems to educate the people of the world about how to live in peace. The money could also be used for food programs and to help the industrial conversion process from weapons to peace. He said that he favors passive resistance—that if tens of thousands of people just sat down in front of Soviet tanks, what could they do? He said we should make the arms negotiators sit at the table, and stop the clock and lock the door until they achieve appropriate arms reductions.<sup>4</sup>

There is much in Caldicott's book that will sadden the reader. Helen Caldicott is a woman who, very much to her credit, is deeply worried about the lives of us all. But one wonders whether she ever seriously reflects upon the idea that the kind of, well, ingenuous balderdash just quoted might very well undermine or destroy the foundation of the nuclear peace we have enjoyed these forty years. One replies, plaintively, "For the sake of God and humanity, madam, will you not recognize that the peace we all prize so dearly is preserved best by the prudent management of power, not naively wishing it out of existence." Scientists and medical researchers, after all, perhaps hate cancer far more than anyone else; they have made its control and elimination their life-long study. Yet they know that detesting cancer (however justified), fearing its contraction (however understandable), and desiring fervently to rid the earth of this plague (however admirable) will not make the disease vanish. We need not Pollyannas, but research in reality.

And so it is with nuclear weapons. Three or four years ago, deeply concerned about the terrible simplicity of the nuclear arms debate, a nuclear study group was formed at Harvard University. Led by scholars such as Albert Carnesale, Paul Doty, Stanley Hoffman, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joseph Nye, Jr., the group published *Living With Nuclear Weapons*, the purpose of which was to provide "necessary information and an overall approach to aid concerned citizens in addressing the central problem of our time."<sup>5</sup> Their central conclusion was this:

Atomic escapism must be avoided. One form of escapism is to believe that nuclear weapons will go away. They will not. Because they will not, mankind must learn to live with them if we are to live at all. The other form of escapism is to think that nuclear weapons can be treated like other military weapons in history. They cannot. And because they are different, humanity must live with them carefully, vigilantly, gingerly, always displaying the utmost caution.<sup>6</sup>

As political scientist Michael Mandelbaum has so well pointed out, there are two fundamental approaches to altering the international system. The Schell-Caldicott themes conform to what Mandelbaum labels the "radical approach," which calls for the abolition of national armaments altogether. Mandelbaum explains:

This, in turn, requires abolishing the incentives for states to have armaments. They have them because of the insecurity that arises from the anarchical structure of the international system. So the requirement for disarmament is the disappearance of anarchy, in favor of an international system organized along the lines of the state in domestic politics. States must give up sovereignty.

Unfortunately, as Mandelbaum says, "Sovereignty has stood, from the time of Thucydides to the present, as the unbudgeable obstacle to disarmament."<sup>10</sup> Desperate appeals for the elimination of nuclear weapons, for an end to sovereignty, and for the creation of universal brotherhood are indeed understandable and perhaps commendable. But like the Dickensian character Micawber, we may err in too readily expecting that "something will turn up." Mandelbaum continues:

The second way of changing the international system to prevent war is more modest. It is less certain to stifle international conflict than is disarmament, but it has proven easier to carry out. It accepts anarchy. It accepts the idea that political differences among sovereign states will arise and that these will give grounds for conflict. It tries to keep conflict within bounds in two ways: by promoting rules of conduct to govern relations among the most important states, and by arranging the distribution of military might in the system so that no single state can hope to gain preponderance. This approach has historically been known as the "balance of power."<sup>11</sup>

The international system that now exists offers a precarious balance of terror, to use the Churchillian term. It was Churchill's grandson who recently pleaded with us not to destroy the very system which has effectively deterred the horrors of nuclear war by abandoning it in the pursuit of paradise.<sup>12</sup> One is reminded of the dictum of the 18th-century French diplomat Talleyrand: "Above all, not too much zeal." "History," Paul Johnson observes, "shows us the truly amazing extent to which intelligent, well-informed and resolute men, in the pursuit of economy or in an altruistic passion for disarmament, will delude themselves about realities."<sup>13</sup>

This quixotic quest to abolish nuclear weaponry is highlighted by such beliefs as these: (1) the danger of war is in direct proportion to the number of weapons in the world; (2) arms reductions would make war less destructive if it came; (3) the application of science and technology to the development of weapon systems is in itself a threat to peace and should be inhibited; and (4) arms control provides an alternative—a preferable alternative—to armament as a means of ensuring international security. These conceptions are the kind of generally accepted nostrums which "inform" public debate about arms control. But what appears simple can

be, in fact, simpleminded. As Michael Howard points out, politicians should repudiate these simple-minded illusions. As to the causal effects of armaments, for example, "Some wars have been preceded by intensive armaments competitions; others—and the great majority over the past 150 years—have not."<sup>3</sup> Wars occur because nations think they can win.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Howard suggests that "the destructiveness of a war is determined not so much by the capacity of belligerents to inflict punishment as by their readiness to endure it." Are science and technology merely evil? Professor Howard points out that "had all nuclear tests been abandoned 30 years ago, nuclear stockpiles would still consist of the vulnerable, inaccurate, and hideously destructive weaponry of that era, and it is not self-evident that the world would be more peaceful or secure as a result."<sup>12</sup>

Despite the historical record, however, the attraction of disarmament lives on. Professor Howard explains why:

The illusion that arms reductions would in themselves make peace more secure and that total disarmament would make it perpetual is so deeply rooted and so widespread as to constitute an ineluctable political fact that has to be accommodated into our [public] policy. It is, as it were, a Platonic "noble lie": governments themselves may not believe it, but it is an aspiration to be encouraged and not discouraged—and anyhow, no Western politician dares confront his or her electorate and tell them frankly that they were wrong. Governments must be seen to be striving to attain the heavenly city of disarmament.



Above, "The Great American Peace March" at the gates of the Army War College in October 1986. Our author asserts, however, that "we cannot preserve peace by mere wishful thinking."

If the writings of such people as Schell and Caldicott are such transparent nonsense, and if, as may be safely expected, our public figures and media people are, after all, reasonably discerning and intelligent, then why is it that the Pollyannas are not so branded? Perhaps Walter Lippmann had the best answer for that question thirty years ago:

[Politicians] are in effect perpetual office seekers, always on trial for their political lives, always required to court their restless constituents. They are deprived of their independence. Democratic politicians rarely feel they can afford the luxury of telling the whole truth to the people. And since not telling it, though prudent, is uncomfortable, they find it easier if they themselves do not have to hear too often too much of the sour truth. The men under them who report and collect the news come to realize in their turn that it is safer to be wrong before it has become fashionable to be right.\*

Politicians and journalists are unlikely to increase their vote totals or their newspaper circulations by dwelling on the lugubrious facts of political life. As a nation, we are always in a hurry for "breakthroughs." Cecil Crabb's analysis is excellent:

Americans have found it difficult to accept *partial solutions* to age-old problems disturbing the peace and security of the international community. Their usual expectation is that such problems will be "solved" within a relatively short time and that the tensions between nations will be "eliminated" by some dramatic development like an East-West summit conference or a new non-aggression treaty. For reasons that are not altogether apparent, Americans have been slow to apply a lesson that emerges from their own experience with countless internal problems, like divorce, delinquency, alcoholism, traffic accidents, crime, poverty, and many other issues. This is that few problems in human affairs are ever "solved" in a final sense. They are ameliorated, softened, mitigated, made endurable, adjusted to, outlived—but seldom eliminated.

To tell the American people that the problems created by nuclear weapons—indeed, created by the nature of humans themselves—will never go away requires inordinate courage. And few Churchill-like leaders are on the horizon. Lippmann, who did not have to campaign for office, could be brutally frank:

With exceptions so rare that they are regarded as miracles and freaks of nature, successful democratic politicians are insecure and intimidated men. They advance politically only as they placate, appease, bribe, seduce, bamboozle, or otherwise manage to manipulate the demanding and threatening elements in their constituencies.\*

Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson believed that the American people "can never do what is necessary until they understand what is necessary, and why; and they will never understand that until their leaders in government, business, and labor are willing to tell them." What bothered Acheson was that "this takes more courage—and vision too—than most leaders, trained and aspiring to succeed in a special and limited constituency, have at their command."<sup>19</sup>

In the adult world of international politics, power relationships must be understood and managed—if we are to keep the peace. It is particularly important for Americans to absorb this lesson, since American influence in preserving the peace is likely to be decisive. We cannot expect to preserve peace by mere wishful thinking. The problem is that the truth about the balance of terror is not pleasant and, as George Kennan has told us, the "truth about external reality will never be wholly compatible with those internal ideological fictions which the national state engenders and by which it lives." In William Barrett's study of existentialism, he reports a conversation between Sartre and an American. The latter insisted that all international problems could be solved if men would just get together and be rational; Sartre disagreed and discussion between them became impossible. "I believe in the existence of evil," Sartre said, "and he does not." Barrett's conclusion was that "what the American has not yet become aware of is the shadow that surrounds all human Enlightenment."<sup>20</sup>

Confronted by a popular mythology which often suggests that peace is available virtually for the asking, leaders, sycophantic and saccharine, truckle to Pollyannas in endorsing schemes which sometimes, in their simplicity, may undermine rather than support the structures of peace. As Hans Morgenthau once pointed out in a brilliant but little-known essay, "One of the main purposes of society is to conceal these truths [about power] from its members."<sup>21</sup> Radicals, the total disarmers, resist the truth about the political order: that power and conflict exist; that evil is a reality; that war and peace issues turn on the prudent management of international negotiation by skilled statesmen. Arthur T. Hadley, in his book *The Straw Giant*, puts it this way:

In their passionate protestations of a higher rationality I hear the desperate pleas of those who fear they are about to lose control over their unconscious selves. Frightened by the violence of their turmoil, they fly to the world of Rousseau, where man is essentially good. If generals and barbed wire and nuclear weapons could be done away with, we could then reinvent the world and live in peace. They scorn any rational thought about warfare, believing such thought evil in itself. Joyce Carol Oates has accurately limned this attitude: "It is very tempting . . . this disavowal of intelligence, this sub-religious gesture of surrender to the senses and emotions, to death."<sup>22</sup>

In confronting this dilemma of democratic politics, Professor Morgenthau suggested that "the Government is the leader of public opinion, not its slave"—or ought to be.<sup>24</sup> The statesman, he implied, must lead. Yet a terrible gap exists between the popular—and wrong—nostrums so prevalent in the West and the more seasoned (one hopes) realizations of prudent political leaders. Henry Kissinger ventures to suggest: "If the desire for peace turns into an avoidance of conflict at all costs, if the just disparage power and seek refuge in their moral purity, the world's fear of war becomes a weapon of blackmail by the strong; peaceful nations, large or small, will be at the mercy of the most ruthless."<sup>25</sup>

Kissinger has contended that "the balance of power, a concept much maligned in American political writing—rarely used without being preceded by the pejorative 'outdated'—has in fact been the precondition of peace."<sup>26</sup> Let us suppose, with Kissinger, that it is precisely the maintenance of the balance of nuclear power which has prevented, through deterrence, the waging of nuclear war. But let us further suppose that the Pollyannas are now effective in undermining the deterrence which they refuse to accept as the basis of the peace. If Kissinger is right, and if the Pollyannas undermine that precondition of peace, then they unwittingly contribute to the onset of the nuclear horror which they rightly fear.

Kissinger, alas, is not in vogue, and Morgenthau is dead, his once extremely popular text reviled by certain students who might profit so well by it.<sup>27</sup> "The modern philosophy of disarmament," Morgenthau told us, "proceeds from the assumption that men fight because they have arms . . . . [But] men do not fight because they have arms. They have arms because they deem it necessary to fight." Further, in the spirit of Talleyrand, Morgenthau averred that "diplomacy must be divested of the crusading spirit. This is the first of the rules that diplomacy can neglect only at the risk of war."<sup>28</sup>

We all might profitably reread the myth of Icarus, for in trying to fly on wings of wax toward the sun of disarmament, we may instead go crashing into the sea of war. The Harvard Study Group—not Schell—is right: "Living with nuclear weapons is our only hope. It requires that we persevere in reducing the likelihood of war even though we cannot remove the possibility altogether." The task is not without idealism: "This challenge will be both demanding and unending, but we need not perish if practical steps continue to be taken. Surely there is no greater test of the human spirit."<sup>29</sup>

Can we not relearn that "it is as fatal in politics to ignore power as it is to ignore morality"?<sup>30</sup> Can we not relearn the vitality of politics? Can we not relearn the importance of a vigorous national leadership based not upon the pursuit of rainbows, but rather upon the rock-solid foundation of historical realities about the enduring (if not always genial) presence of power and sovereignty?

Our task, Mr. Schell, is not to reinvent politics; rather, we must rediscover the political process which enables us to pursue an intelligent and effective diplomacy. And, no, Dr. Caldicott, unilateral disarmament will not bring us the peace which surpasseth all understanding. We do far better in an imperfect world to stand by the wisdom of Winston Churchill: "The day may dawn when fair play, love for one's fellow man, respect for justice and freedom, will enable tormented generations to march forth serene and triumphant from the hideous epoch in which we have to dwell. Meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair."<sup>31</sup>

#### NOTES

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4. *Ibid.*, pp. 311-12. "All weapons systems," she insists, "must be *verboten*, the nuclear freeze must be immediate and mandatory" (p. 302).
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23. Arthur I. Hadley, *The Straw Giant* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 241.
24. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, rev. by Kenneth W. Thompson, 6th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 591.
25. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 238.
26. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 195.
27. Some students of mine, attending an international affairs conference at a well-known New England women's college, were told by some students there that Morgenthau's text merely offered excuses for the use of violence. From the conversation it apparently was not clear whether they had actually read any of Morgenthau, one doubts it.
28. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 436, 584. His main point, succinctly put, is this: "Without political settlement, disarmament has no chance for success" (p. 432).
29. Carnesale, et al., *Living With Nuclear Weapons*, p. 255.
30. E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 97.
31. Winston Churchill, 1 March 1955, in *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, vol. 537, col. 1905.

# Soldiers, Scholars, and the Media

SAM C. SARKESIAN

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Since the Vietnam War most military professionals have held a negative view of the American media resulting, in no small way, from their perception that the conduct of the war was taken out of the hands of military professionals and placed in those of TV journalists. These attitudes have been nurtured by the perceived role of the media in reporting such disparate phenomena as terrorist incidents, the invasion of Grenada, the defense budget, and the Iran arms affair. Although some members of the media have responded to such criticism, in the main the views of the military profession have been ignored or minimized by the media on the presumption that they are an aberration and not in accord with the general views of society. Equally important, most members of the media may be convinced that the military profession has little understanding of the media and thus holds distorted and incorrect views. This unfriendly, if not hostile, relationship tends to obscure the importance of more fundamental questions regarding the military profession and the role of the media in an open system. The purpose here is to examine four such questions. Is there a media elite? Is there a media monopoly? What are the characteristics and mind-sets of the media? What do the answers to these questions reflect regarding the US military profession and the American media?

We now have available a number of solid published studies of the media. The weight of evidence revealed by these studies shows that there exists a media elite with a particular political and social predisposition that places it distinctly left of center on the American political spectrum. Further, the media elite enjoys a monopoly on news gathering and reporting, channeled through a corporate structure that gives the media elite and media corporations immense power in the American political system. Although there are contrary views, they pale in comparison to the empirical and analytical bases of these conclusions. As one group of scholars observed,

"There is considerable evidence from other sources to corroborate our portrait of liberal leading journalists."<sup>2</sup>

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the military profession holds views generally in accord with the conclusions reached by scholarly studies of the media. And, in the main, the views of the military are compatible with those of American society. This is true even though military officers may have formed their views subjectively and intuitively. In contrast, the political and social predispositions of the majority of those in the news profession and media elite put them at a considerable distance from mainstream America. What follows is a more detailed examination of the basis for these conclusions.

### *The Media Elite—Mind-sets and Power*

Elites are normally characterized by their perceived status in society, their relative homogeneity, the power they can command, the similarity of their political-social backgrounds, and their commonality of purpose. Underpinning these considerations is the fact that an elite tends to be self-contained and self-regulating. Further, an elite is not necessarily determined by the numbers involved, but more by the amount of power exercised in the system and relative status. While there are some exceptions, those in the media who are at the highest levels of their profession and occupy important positions in reporting the news reflect all of the characteristics of an elite. Indeed, the members of the media elite generally move in the same social circles, read the same literature, and depend on similar sources for news.<sup>3</sup>

In one of the most authoritative studies of the media in recent times, by S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter, the authors conducted

hour-long interviews with 238 journalists at America's most influential media outlets [*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and the news divisions of CBS, NBC, and PBS]. The result is a systematic sample of men and women who put together the news at America's most important media outlets—the media

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elite . . . . The demographics are clear. The media elite are a homogenous and cosmopolitan group . . . with differentially eastern, urban, ethnic, upper-status, and secular roots.<sup>4</sup>

A number of political implications result from these characteristics:

Today's leading journalists are politically liberal and alienated from traditional norms and institutions. Most place themselves to the left of center and regularly vote the Democratic ticket . . . . They would like to strip traditional powerbrokers of their influence and empower black leaders, consumer groups, intellectuals, and . . . the media.<sup>5</sup>

Some members of the media argue that they are apolitical. The most authoritative studies of the media, however, based on extensive survey research, indicate the opposite. That is, the great majority of those in the media elite and in the profession as a whole tend to be left of center on the political spectrum, with the media elite decidedly so.

Generally speaking, the term mind-set refers to the looking glass through which an individual views the world. It reflects predispositions and norms that fashion perceptions of reality.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, even though some members of the media may claim that the media are not a monolith, the fact is that the media elite displays a homogeneity of views and similarity of mind-sets which considerably influence the entire news profession. The media elite tends to perceive the world through its own lens, and this is reflected in news reports, editorials, and in selecting what is to be reported on the evening news. Although there may be some questions on the linkage between the views of the media elite and the way the news is reported, it seems clear that "leading journalists tend to perceive elements of social controversies in terms that correspond to their own attitudes."<sup>7</sup>

Journalists perceive a world that is "peopled by brutal soldiers, corrupt businessmen, and struggling underdogs."<sup>8</sup> While these views may be more pronounced when interpreting domestic life, more often than not the same attitudes are the basis for interpreting world events. Similarly, this leads many in the media to view the US military in negative terms.

A commonality of media attitudes was also the conclusion reached in an earlier study: "Because the *New York Times*, CBS Television News, NBC Television News, the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* exercise such inordinate direct and indirect influence over opinion, it is especially significant that they tend to convey the same general viewpoint."<sup>9</sup>

As noted earlier, the media elite mind-set and the way that elite perceives the world are sharply different from the mind-set and perceptions of the public in general. This difference is also reflected in the attitudes of many editors and reporters. For example, the results of a survey conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* are particularly revealing. The survey indicated

that the views held by about 3000 newspaper reporters and editors selected randomly from about 600 newspapers around the country were at a considerable variance from the views held by a slightly larger number of adult Americans. The portrait that emerged is one of journalists who "are emphatically liberal on social issues and foreign affairs, distrustful of establishment institutions (government, business, labor), and protective of their own economic interests."<sup>10</sup> Interestingly enough, the survey pointed out that there was only a slight difference between the views of the newspaper staffs and those of the higher-ups responsible for setting editorial policy. One is led to conclude that many positions taken by the media throughout the United States reflect those held by the media elite.

According to some studies, the media elite is obsessed with power. But the media are also ambivalent toward power. They tend to ignore their own power, even belittle it, while being zealous in their criticism of other power-holders. This self-blindness is well documented in one study and referred to frequently in others.<sup>11</sup> The power of the media tends to be underestimated by the media elite and overestimated by some segments of society. In any case, it seems clear that the media have a substantial role in affecting the public. As one study concluded,

To control what people will see and hear means to control the public's view of political reality. By covering certain news events, by simply giving them space, the media signals the importance of these events to the citizenry. By not reporting other activities, the media hides portions of reality from everyone but the few people directly affected . . . . Events and problems placed on the national agenda by the media excite public interest and become objects of government action.

Another study notes, "A small number of people who work for a very small number of news organizations exercise very great influence over the news of national and international affairs received by all Americans."<sup>12</sup>

The ability to shape the public's image of reality and to affect its attitudes is surely a fundamental component of power. This power is reinforced by the lack of consistent and effective counterbalancing forces within the media elite. Pluralism in the American political-social system is a major factor in counterbalancing forces and in checks and balances—a basic democratic characteristic. However, the media seem to be generally free from such internal forces. This concentration and centralization not only add to the media's power, but strengthen its corporate character.

This is not to suggest that there is no internal conflict in the news profession. There is a high degree of competitiveness, including commercial competition. However, it rarely becomes institutionalized to the point of threatening the power of the media elite as a corporate body. Nor does this conflict crystallize into effective counterbalancing forces within the media.

The power of the media is considerably broadened and also strengthened with the introduction of new information technology. On that score, one report concludes,

Essentially the same people who own and manage newspapers and television now control the new technologies. They are guided by the same elite-sanctioned values, the same desire for profit. New journalistic . . . practices and effects will flourish, but technological innovations are unlikely significantly to disrupt the structure of power or undermine its legitimacy.

Media power is not a new phenomenon, of course. Writing in the middle of the 19th century, de Tocqueville observed that even with some restrictions, "The power of the American press is still immense." He went on to write, "When many organs of the press do come to take the same line, their influence in the long run is almost irresistible, and public opinion, continually struck in the same spot, ends by giving way under the blows."<sup>16</sup> In a modern version of de Tocqueville, one scholar describes this phenomenon as "pack journalism."<sup>17</sup>

#### *The Media Monopoly and Media Miscues*

The obsession with power, the character of the media elite, and the commercial nature of news reporting combine to create a media monopoly. According to Ben Bagdikian, this leads to considerable harm to the concept of fair and balanced news reporting:

The continuing violations of the ethic of independent journalism over the years has an important message for the future: The unstated rules will be respected until they represent a threat to the power of the media corporations. When the status of . . . media corporations . . . is in jeopardy, or when the corporations believe their status is in jeopardy, no conventions, no professional ethics, and no individual protests by angered journalists will prevent corporations from using their prerogatives of ownership to protect their power by altering news and other public information.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, regardless of the existence of these conditions and power relationships, Bagdikian states that "there persists the illusion throughout American journalism that it operates as a value-free discipline."<sup>19</sup>

In sum, there is overwhelming evidence that there is a media elite that has a monopoly on the media function in American society. Further, the media elite exhibits political and social predispositions clearly separating it from mainstream America. This raises a whole series of questions regarding access to information networks by political actors, groups, or individuals who are not part of the elite and who do not share the media



Walter Cronkite of CBS interviews Professor Mai of the University of Hue shortly after Tet 1968.

elite's political and social predispositions. Can such political actors gain access to the vast media network? Can they expect to be treated fairly and objectively by the media elite? One is led to believe that the answers to both questions are likely to be in the negative.

The members of the media elite, as is the case with most political actors, have made serious mistakes in judgment leading to news distortions and monumental errors. Members of the news profession are human, and like all human beings they are imperfect. Errors are to be expected. The members of the media elite, however, are reluctant to admit mistakes, and are not fond of examination by outsiders. Indeed, when challenged by outside critics, the media elite displays a siege mentality. For example, in a recent book by a media professional, the author writes, "The American press has a responsibility to the public. It must help keep Americans free by telling them the truth. It cannot discharge this duty by hunkering down and waiting until its attackers go away. It is time to fight back."<sup>11</sup>

While a siege mentality may be a trait of other professions, it is a conspicuous characteristic of the media elite. What is disconcerting is that media errors and distortions can take on a momentum of their own and become "historical fact." A classic example is the reporting of Tet 1968 during the Vietnam War. In a comprehensive study of that event, journalist Peter Braestrup concluded,

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What began as hasty initial reporting of disaster in Vietnam became conventional wisdom when magnified in media commentary and recycled on the hustings in New Hampshire, in campus protest, and in discussions on Capitol Hill. The press "rebroadcast" it all uncritically, even enthusiastically, although many in the news media should have known better.<sup>21</sup>

The author concluded that "the general effect of the news media's commentary coverage of Tet in February-March 1968 was a distortion of reality—through sins of omission and commission—on a scale that helped spur major repercussions in U.S. domestic politics, if not in foreign policy."<sup>22</sup> For a number of military men in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive, it must have been ironical to win a military victory, have it reported by American journalists as a defeat, and have those reports accepted as fact by many Americans. Military men are likely to agree, therefore, with one observer writing in the early part of 1970:

During the last decade the media elite has acted, at worst, as if it were waging a studied propaganda campaign against the United States in foreign affairs. At times it has acted as if it viewed itself as a neutral agent between the United States and its enemies . . . . It has largely ignored specific foreign tactics, rather apparently designed to use our own news media against us.<sup>23</sup>

The now famous 1984 case of General William Westmoreland and CBS is another example of media miscues. According to Don Kowet,

The CBS documentary had charged a Westmoreland-led conspiracy. Just as the military had anticipated, although fifteen years delayed, CBS had gotten the story wrong, by relying on a paid consultant whose account of events was tailored by his own bias, by allowing a producer to avoid or discard interviews with those who might have been able to rebut the documentary's premise, and by ignoring documents in its own possession which tended to cast doubt on that thesis.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the Westmoreland case, one study concludes, "It shows how a single viewpoint, that of the executive producer, can shape the facts to conform to his own version of the truth."<sup>25</sup>

History is replete with such examples. In the Janet Cooke affair, for example, the reporter had written a heart-wrenching story about "Jimmy," an eight-year-old drug addict living in Washington, D.C.<sup>26</sup> Written in 1981, the story earned a Pulitzer Prize. Subsequently, it was found that the story was a fabrication and the Pulitzer was withdrawn. *The Washington Post* had little choice but to publicly admit its error. But many were left wondering how an error of such magnitude could have occurred in a major newspaper proclaiming professional rigor and close editorial

supervision. This episode was particularly disconcerting given the fact that the newspaper has significant influence in shaping public attitudes.

More disturbing is the view that "the media elite advocacy of certain viewpoints and policies produced an additional new problem. Having diagnosed complex public problems, and having taken unequivocal public positions on them, they apparently wish to demonstrate that they were right. They have substantial journalistic and moral stake in proving their own rightness."<sup>27</sup> Some members of the media have responded to such criticism. One type of response, based on the First Amendment, castigates media critics for their anti-constitutionality. In such instances, the defense of journalists is based primarily on the freedom of the press, interpreted broadly as "the people's right to know." True, some in the media do spotlight the profession itself and try to come to grips with internal problems. As one noted media professional, Robert MacNeil, commented,

I think there is, frankly, scorn for fairness in some journalistic quarters . . . . There is an attitude common in the media that any good journalist can apply common sense and quickly fathom what is right and what is wrong in any complicated issue . . . . Coupled with this attitude is one in which a reporter or camera crew acts as though their presence, their action in covering a story, is more important than the event they are covering.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, many in the media are inclined to brush aside such criticism by simply saying, "We don't make the news, we only report it."

A broader concern among journalists, perhaps, centers on manipulation. The media has been wary of being used or manipulated by various political actors, particularly in government. The use of leaks and testing the waters by "unnamed sources" is a common technique. Various administrations have been noted for such manipulation. But there are a variety of reasons for leaks, ranging from those prompted by disgruntled bureaucrats to those from opposition members in Congress. Members of the media elite are quite conversant with these methods and many times allow themselves to be used. There is also some evidence to support the notion that members of the media themselves manipulate the news. As noted earlier, members of the media elite tend to interpret events as fashioned by their own political and social dispositions.

The role of the media during the Kennedy Administration is a case in point. According to an authoritative chronicler of the Kennedy era, John H. Davis, the media virtually idolized the Kennedy family, with distortion the result: "Kennedy's phenomenal grace and charm belied an administration whose style was hardly peace-loving. The discrepancy between image and reality was due principally to the press."<sup>29</sup> In the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination, the media seemed to be out of touch with reality. Davis notes, "Along with the glorification of John F. Kennedy, there went

also his continued idealization and sentimentalization. If the press had gushed over John Kennedy before, it now became downright maudlin. The canonization had begun."<sup>10</sup>

Economist Holmes Brown makes a particularly strong case with respect to news distortion and manipulation. In the article "TV Turns Good Economic News into Bad," he concludes: "The national economy improved dramatically during 1983—but you might not have realized it if your only source of information had been the nightly news programs of the three major television networks."<sup>11</sup> Similar conclusions were reached in an earlier study showing how media coverage of the 1968 presidential campaign and US policy toward Vietnam, among other matters, was slanted to conform to the general views of the media.<sup>12</sup>

The sources referred to here do not exhaust the list of available studies, nor do their interpretations and conclusions necessarily preclude others. Yet, these sources provide powerful support for the notion that the media are far from being the virtuous profession claimed by their elite spokesmen, and far from being balanced and fair in news interpretation and presentation. Though without deliberate design, the media critics tend to reinforce much of the military professional's own view.

With respect to the disapprobation of the media expressed by military officers, it may well be that it goes much deeper than the familiar concerns of suspect patriotism and irresponsibility in operational security matters. Rather, the real concerns of military officers rest on the more fundamental questions of news balance, fairness, compassion, and sincerity. Military men see these qualities missing in today's military reportage, in stark contrast to the situation prevailing during "the Ernie Pyle era" of World War II. In this deeper sense, then, their concern is not with levels of news coverage, but trustworthiness on the part of newsmen.

The question of trustworthiness was measured by a Gallup Poll taken in July 1986. The poll assessed the public's trust and confidence in ten key American institutions. The military was rated highest, with 63 percent of the respondents giving it a confidence rating of "a great deal" or "quite a lot." In sharp contrast, the American people showed much less confidence in television and newspapers, with ratings of 27 and 37 percent respectively. While such polls may change over time, the 1986 poll left no doubt about the public's confidence with respect to the military and the media. Six institutions out of ten were rated above newspapers, with television rated tenth—that is, last—in public confidence and trust.

### *Beyond the Surface, Beyond the Front Page*

Clearly, there is more to the media and their role in American society than addressed here. Further, there is a great deal more to explore regarding the view of the military profession. One does not have to meet or

know a reporter or TV journalist, however, to assess the political consequences of news reporting. Reporters and TV journalists are met everyday by anyone who reads newspapers and watches the nightly TV news. Of course, any serious effort to examine the media must include a critical reading of the existing literature. Such examination must include, for example, a study of the First Amendment and its application to the media, and the concept of "the people's right to know." The issues of US national security and media responsibility also deserve detailed study.

Similarly, to understand the military, with its special responsibility, requires a serious study of the military profession. This cannot be achieved simply by serving a few years in the Army or Navy while waiting to get out. It requires critical mastery of the important literature as well as thorough and continuing practical knowledge of the national and international security arenas, the military professional, military life, and the military system. Too few of the media elite have accomplished this.

Solutions to problems arising out of the relationship between the military and the media require understanding the challenges, dilemmas, and responsibilities facing both the military and the media. Understanding may be better achieved by not expecting a "solution," since this presumes that there is a fixed answer, relevant for all times, and that there is a beginning and an end to a particular problem. The dynamics among political actors in American politics and the constantly changing political climate make the search for solutions to a "proper" media role elusive, if not misguided. The most one can expect is a dynamic relationship, with episodic attention to power relationships and demands for accuracy and balance.

In the modern era, with all its technological innovations, the media elite will surely play an even greater role in agenda-setting and in shaping public attitudes. At the same time, opportunities will increase for news distortions and political biases in selecting what to report. The media elite will be increasingly vulnerable to such conditions, and these conditions will place an increased burden on the news profession. It is a profession wrought with challenges and dilemmas, and increasing pressures for balance and fairness. It is difficult, indeed impossible, to achieve absolute objectivity, particularly when individuals are trying to gather and report news under pressures of time and events. But at the minimum, we should expect—and demand—that the members of the media elite recognize their own characteristics, predispositions, and weaknesses, the commercial imprint on news reporting, and their influence over the news profession.

In the final analysis, it is well to remember the words of de Tocqueville: "I admit that I do not feel toward freedom of the press that complete and instantaneous love which one accords to things by their nature supremely good. I love it more from considering the evils it prevents than on account of the good it does."<sup>33</sup>

## NOTES

1. See for example, Richard Halloran, "Soldiers and Scribblers: A Common Mission," *Parameters*, 17 (Spring 1987), 10-28. See also Daniel F. Gilmore, "In the Barracks, Scorn For the News Business," *The Washington Post*, 26 August 1986, p. A15.
2. S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, Linda S. Lichter, *The Media Elite* (Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1986), p. 39. See also pp. 39-44, and see Dan Nimmo, *Political Communication and Public Opinion in America* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear, 1978), pp. 192-93.
3. Lichter et al., p. 299.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21, 23, 294.
5. *Ibid.*
6. See for example, Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), pp. 40-42.
7. Lichter et al., p. 295.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
9. Peter B. Clark, "The Opinion Machine, Intellectuals, The Mass Media and American Government," in Harry M. Clor, ed., *The Mass Media and Modern Democracy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1974), p. 48.
10. As quoted in Lichter et al., p. 43. See also Sam C. Sarkesian, *The New Battlefield: The United States and Unconventional Conflicts* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 264-65, 283, n. 20.
11. Lichter et al., pp. 110-14. See also Thomas F. Patterson and Robert D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Elections* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), p. 75; and Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 3-28.
12. Lichter et al., pp. 103-08, 120.
13. Patterson and McClure, p. 75.
14. Clark, p. 41.
15. David I. Paletz and Robert M. Entman, *Media Power Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), pp. 253-54.
16. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 186.
17. Doris Graber, "Media Magic: Fashioning Characters for the 1983 Mayoral Race," in Melvin G. Holli and Paul M. Green, eds., *The Making of the Mayor, Chicago, 1983* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), p. 68.
18. Bagdikian, p. 224.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
20. Peter Stoler, *The War Against the Press: Politics, Pressure and Intimidation in the 80s* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1986), pp. 207-08.
21. Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1977), I, xxxiii. For another journalist's view of the Vietnam War, see Michael J. Arlen, *The Living Room War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).
22. Braestrup, p. 184.
23. Clark, p. 76.
24. Don Kowet, *A Matter of Honor: General William C. Westmoreland versus CBS* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), p. 301. See also Renata Adler, *Reckless Disregard: Westmoreland v. CBS et al; Sharon v. Time* (New York: Knopf, 1986).
25. Lichter et al., p. 153.
26. See Janet Cooke, "Jimmy's World," *The Washington Post*, 28 September 1981, p. A1; Editorial, "The End of the 'Jimmy' Story," *The Washington Post*, 16 April 1981, p. A18; and David A. Maraniss, "Post Reporter's Pulitzer Prize is Withdrawn," *The Washington Post*, 16 April 1981, p. A1.
27. Clark, p. 71.
28. Robert MacNeil, "Why Do They Hate Us?" *Columbia Magazine* (June 1982), p. 17.
29. John H. Davis, *The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster 1848-1984* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), p. 464.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 609.
31. Holmes M. Brown, "TV Turns Good Economic News into Bad," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 March 1984, p. 6.
32. See, for example, Edith Efron, *The News Twisters* (New York: Manor Books, 1972).
33. De Tocqueville, p. 180.

# DOD Reorganization: Part I, New Imperatives

DON M. SNIDER

Much has been written about the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. The expansive predictions of politicians and press would lead one to believe that the nation has turned a historic corner and that we professional officers will live and serve in a defense environment significantly different from that of our experiences to date. These predictions foresee fundamental improvements being brought about by the legislated reorganization of DOD and by the changes imposed on the procedures and relationships which make up our national security processes.

As professional officers we have a healthy skepticism of such euphoric predictions. We know that change to an organization as large as DOD takes place only over time, and then only with the acceptance and cooperation of the component organizations involved. It is a simple but seemingly unalterable fact of organizational behavior that large organizations can effectively resist change if they choose to. The history of DOD is replete with such examples.

On the other hand, we also know that much of the intent of the new law is correct. Changes to some DOD organizations and to some of our national security processes are needed, not just because Congress has legislated them, but also because we recognize that through judicious change improvements can be made in the effectiveness and the efficiency with which our nation's security is provided. For the Army, this period of significant change is an excellent time to reassess its own position within the changing environment of the DOD, and to see if there are new opportunities for Army contributions.

### *Context of the Reorganization*

The enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation is not a singular effort to reorganize DOD. Rather, it is but one part of a much larger, diverse effort to reform the whole of the defense establishment, both from within and from without, both structurally and procedurally. This reform movement has been growing for several years and is now coming to fruition in several areas.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the Goldwater-Nichols bill, the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Defense Management (Packard Commission) have been implemented within DOD by executive authority, principally by National Security Decision Directive 219, issued in April 1986.<sup>2</sup> In a separate but related effort, Congress through the 1987 DOD Appropriations Act provided for the creation of two new joint combatant commands. One is to be a unified command for the special operations forces of all the services, and the other a unified command for strategic mobility forces.<sup>3</sup> Both commands are intended to further the unity and efficiency with which these forces are built and the joint effectiveness with which they are employed. Thus the Goldwater-Nichols legislation should be viewed as the centerpiece of a set of complementary initiatives.

Of course, it would be helpful to know precisely what the legislation is supposed to correct. Unfortunately, there is no unanimity on what the problems within DOD really are. The symptoms of systemic problems have been broadly discussed for several years: the lessons learned from the failure at Desert One, the interoperability problems in Grenada, the command and control problems in Lebanon, the quality of military advice provided by the Joint Chiefs, and the abuses and gross inefficiencies found within the defense acquisition process. Thus, reform proposals have come from all perspectives, as one might expect given such intensely politicized issues.

Perhaps the best single portrayal of the fundamental, underlying problems is the Staff Report of the Senate Armed Services Committee published in October 1985, "Defense Organization: The Need for Change." It has become a prime statement of the organizational and decisionmaking problems within DOD and with congressional review and oversight of DOD.<sup>4</sup> Its major themes:

- Too much emphasis on functions versus missions, which has inhibited the effective integration of service capabilities along mission lines;
- A predominance of service interests over joint interests within DOD, a problem of balance which has precluded the most efficient allocation of defense resources;
- Interservice logrolling which has smoothed over internal conflict among the services, conflict yet to be resolved;
- A predominance of programming and budgeting within the

organizational activity of DOD, which has left insufficient attention to strategic planning, contingency planning, and operational matters;

- A lack of clarity of DOD-level strategic goals, which has allowed their displacement by subgoals of the various elements within DOD, particularly the services;

- Insufficient mechanisms for change, in part attributable to inherent military conservatism;

- Inadequate quality of personnel, both in political appointees and joint-duty military personnel.

- An ineffective division of work, manifested in congressional micromanagement of DOD programs, and within DOD by duplication of effort within military departments.

In consequence, Congress made major changes to various sections of Title 10, United States Code, as it applies to the Department of Defense. Highlighted below are the changes that have the most significant implications for the Army.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Department of Defense Generally*

Congress has amended the National Security Act of 1947 to require the President to provide annually to Congress, coincident with budget submission,

a comprehensive description and discussion of . . . worldwide interests, goals, and objectives that are vital to the United States . . . the foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national Defense capabilities necessary . . . the proposed short term and long term uses of political, economic, military, and other elements of national power to . . . achieve the goals and objectives . . . and an evaluation of the balance among all elements of national power.<sup>5</sup>

The new legislation also amends the Secretary of Defense's reporting requirements to "include annual descriptions of the major military missions and military force structure . . . , an explanation of the relationships of those military missions to that force structure and the

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<sup>4</sup> Colonel Don M. Snider prepared this article while serving as the Army's fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. He has subsequently been assigned to the staff of the National Security Council. Colonel Snider has served in several infantry, faculty, and military planning assignments, most recently as theater army planner in Europe; joint planner in Headquarters, Department of the Army; and Deputy Director of Strategy, Plans and Policy, HQDA. He holds graduate degrees from the University of Wisconsin and recently completed the Executive Development Program in strategic planning at Texas A&M University.

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justification for [both].” Thus Congress has mandated that at the beginning of any public debate on defense programs, a textbook statement of grand or national strategy and a clear statement of military strategy be provided as an explicit benchmark for the evaluation of all defense programs, including the Army’s. Given the elusiveness of such concepts in the past this will be no small task.<sup>7</sup>

Congress also has specified the content of future DOD guidance for the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) and for the Joint Operational Planning System (JOPS). The legislation requires the guidance to “include national security objectives and policies; the priorities of military missions [an important new item]; and resource levels projected to be available.” For operational planning the guidance “will be for the preparation and review of contingency plans . . . including specific force levels and specific supporting resource levels projected to be available . . . .” This statutory requirement for operational planning guidance is new, this area having been almost the exclusive domain of the JCS and services in the past. One has to go back to the late Carter Administration years of 1979-1980 to find the last such attempt to impose detailed DOD-level guidance on military operational planning, and then the attempt did not involve legislative mandates.<sup>8</sup>

The legislation also requires four management studies of the Office of Secretary of Defense, one each by the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an independent contractor to the Secretary, and the three service secretaries acting jointly. All studies are to be sent to Congress within one year of the legislation, i.e. by 1 October 1987. The legislation states with great specificity the “matters to be included,” taking over two pages to detail how the studies are to analyze both “the present organization of the Office of the Secretary of Defense” and whether or not the PPBS of the DOD, including the role of the OSD in such system, needs to be revised. Even a casual reading of the legislation makes clear that the Congress is not convinced the OSD is now correctly structured nor that civilian control is being correctly exercised. Equally clear is the assertion implicit in the “matters to be included” that further integration of the capabilities of the armed forces can most effectively be pursued along mission lines in lieu of functional lines, and that OSD and DOD should be so structured.

### ***Military Advice and Command Functions***

The functions of the CJCS have been redefined. The Chairman now “is the principal military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense,” but he “shall, as he considers appropriate, consult with and seek the advice of the other members of the

JCS or commanders of unified and specified commands." Previously, in fact since the inception of the JCS in the early postwar period, this advisory function has been a responsibility of the corporate JCS. Now, however, other members of the JCS as military advisors "may submit [through] the Chairman advice, or an opinion, in disagreement with . . . or in addition to the advice presented by the Chairman."

In addition to this much stronger role as the principal military advisor, the Chairman has been given a Vice Chairman who is second in military rank only to the Chairman; and the CJCS has been given singular "authority, direction, and control of the Joint Staff" which previously he shared with all of the corporate JCS.

The Chairman's functions in the PPBS, as executed by the Joint Staff, also have been greatly enlarged. He is to

prepare strategic plans which conform to resource levels projected by the Secretary of Defense . . . , develop doctrine for the joint employment of the armed forces [a vital, new function] . . . , provide for the preparation and review of contingency plans which conform to the policy guidance from the President and the Secretary of Defense . . . , advise the Secretary of Defense on the priorities identified by the unified and specified combatant commands and on the extent to which program and budget proposals of the military departments . . . conform to the priorities of the unified and specified commands . . . , submit to the Secretary of Defense alternative program and budget proposals in order to achieve conformance with the priorities . . . , and recommend to the Secretary a budget proposal for [certain] activities of each unified and specified command.

These detailed functions are clearly intended to give the Chairman, supported by the Joint Staff, a new and possibly dominant military role in the iterative stages of the PPBS. It will take some time for the procedures to be modified to accommodate all of this; but when they are, Army programs and budgets will be evaluated and modified according to the strategies, plans, and priorities established by the Chairman and his staff in coordination with the combatant commanders. The CJCS has already used his new statutory authority to reorganize the Joint Staff and create two new directorates: a J-7 as focal point for interoperability with responsibilities for joint doctrine, exercises, and operational plans; and a J-8 for analysis of force structure and resources, particularly the military net assessment and cross-service analyses.

The Chairman is now required to submit to the Secretary of Defense, at least every three years, a report on the assignment of roles and missions to the armed forces. The report is to contain "such recommendations for changes . . . as the Chairman considers necessary to achieve

maximum effectiveness of the armed forces." Each report is to consider "changes in nature of the threat, unnecessary duplication of effort among the Services and changes in technology that can be effectively applied to warfare." The first such report is required by 1 October 1988, by which time Congress intends that service roles and missions which scarcely have been modified since the Key West accord of 1949 will be rationalized and regular public reviews instituted thereafter. The implications for the Army and the other services are severe given the often zero-sum nature of such reviews.

### ***Combatant Commands***

The legislative changes contain new requirements for the assignment of virtually all forces to the combatant commands and for their command arrangements. The legislation requires that "except for those forces assigned to carry out functions of a Secretary of a military department [basically recruiting, training, equipping, mobilizing, etc.] . . . the Secretaries of the military departments shall assign all forces under their jurisdiction to unified and specified commands to perform missions assigned to those commands," but the Secretary retains the responsibility for "the administration and support of forces assigned by him to the command." It also specifies that "all forces operating within the geographic area assigned to a unified combatant command, shall be assigned to and under the commander of that command."

The chain of command runs "from the President to the Secretary of Defense, and from the Secretary of Defense to the commander of the combatant command." Further, "command authority" with respect to the forces assigned includes

giving authoritative direction . . . necessary to carry out missions assigned . . . including authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics . . . , prescribing the chain of command to the commands and forces within the command . . . , organizing commands and forces within that command . . . , and employing forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned.

This new definition of command differs significantly from the former corporate JCS-approved definitions of "command" and "operational command." It was intentional on the part of the legislators to break the old molds and in their place specify in detail the new authority they believed the combatant commander needed.<sup>9</sup> The result is consistent with the intent, a decentralization of authority and power out of Washington and consolidated at the field level responsible for fighting a war in a fully coordinated, joint manner.

These major changes will take considerable time to implement, even after initial decisions. Again the implications for the Army are large, e.g. can the Army prudently assign "all" combat forces to the combatant commands in time of peace, even our Reserve forces and overseas elements of US-based support commands? How will the combatant commanders exercise their new authority to organize assigned forces and oversee their joint training and logistics, and what will be the resultant role of Army component commands?

Another change is that the CJCS is required to review, "not less often than every two years . . . the missions, the responsibilities (to include geographic boundaries), and force structure of each combatant command and recommend to the President, [through] the Secretary of Defense, any changes . . . as may be necessary." The legislation requires the first such review of the Unified Command Plan to be completed by 1 October 1987, and specifies in the "matters to be included" ten specific issues for review, e.g. changes in current boundaries, possible addition of three new unified commands and the elimination of one, and several mission changes between commands.

Taken together with the requirement for periodic reviews of the roles and missions of the services starting in 1988, this creates greatly strengthened civilian authority in policymaking roles within DOD and provides continuous oversight by Congress in these two critical areas of military organization. These are areas which have long been unchangeable, and which, if changed, have a direct bearing on the nature of the Army in the future.

#### *Joint Officer Personnel Policy*

The next major legislative change with implications for the Army, especially for the officer corps, is the creation of the "joint specialty" "officers particularly trained in and oriented toward . . . the . . . employment of land, sea, and air forces, including major . . . national security strategy, strategic planning and control . . . command and control of combat operations under . . . Under the legislation, the Secretary of Defense will . . . must establish career guidelines for the selection, training, and utilization of these officers . . . (JDA). However, many of these career . . . detailed provisions of the new law . . .

How many JDA's will be . . . Secretary by 1 April 1987 . . . an officer's own military . . . and education . . .

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NUMBER 3 SEPTEMBER 1987 (U) ARMY WAR COLL CARLISLE  
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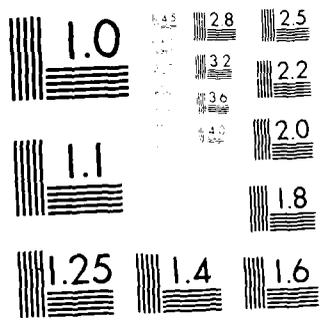
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the combatant command headquarters and some joint agencies. At least one thousand JDAs must be designated by the Secretary as "critical" and these plus up to one half of the JDA at any one time "shall be held only by an officer with a joint specialty or a nominee for such specialty." All assignments for JDA "shall be for not less than three and one-half years . . . or not less than three years for general and flag officers." Once these manning requirements are specified, the services will nominate officers for the joint specialty. After a two-year transition period, selection can occur only after the officer "successfully completes an appropriate program at a joint professional military education school and subsequently completes a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment." The services have taken the position that such stringent requirements for joint service will be mathematically impossible to meet, and they are consequently seeking legislative relief. Regardless of how the matter is resolved, however, joint service will be an essential element in future career development.

In a startling change to the historical prerogatives of the military departments, the legislation also specifies the promotion guidelines for joint specialty officers. The legislation requires the Secretary "to ensure that the qualifications of officers assigned to JDAs are such that . . . officers who have the joint specialty are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate for officers of the same armed force . . . who are serving on the headquarters staff of their armed force." Also, each future service promotion board that considers officers who are or have served in a JDA "shall have at least one officer designated by the CJCS who is currently serving in a joint duty position." After the board, the service Secretary must submit a report to the CJCS, who will review the results to determine if the board gave "appropriate consideration" to the performance of officers in JDAs. If the CJCS finds that the board has "acted contrary to the guidelines of the Secretary of Defense . . . or otherwise failed to give appropriate consideration," he will so indicate to the service Secretary, who must resolve the issue or refer it to the Secretary of Defense for resolution. The legislation gives detailed guidelines for the education of joint specialty officers, including the immediate infusion of at least one half of each graduating class from joint military education schools directly into JDAs. It also makes successful performance for a full tour in a JDA as a criterion for promotion to general or flag officer starting in 1992.

To monitor implementation of all these provisions, a significant array of reports is required of the services, OSD, and the Joint Staff. These are designed to show "the extent to which the Secretary of each military department is providing officers to fill that department's share of Joint Staff and other JDAs . . . and to demonstrate the performance of the Department of Defense in carrying out this chapter."

Taken together, the joint officer personnel provisions of the new law create a historic departure for officer development and management in our armed forces, including the Army. Congress has finally overcome the unfortunate spectre of "The Man on Horseback," and has now legislated the foundations necessary for a joint staff of the armed forces, one that can be educated, trained, and promoted over time to insure its progression, continuity, and freedom of action from undue influence from the services.

### *Military Departments*

The last major set of legislated changes affects the organizational and functional responsibilities within the headquarters of the military departments. The intent of the Congress in making these changes was to strengthen significantly the authority of the service secretaries and their ability to contribute to overall management of the Department of Defense, particularly in policy and decisionmaking. But, at the same time, they intended to clarify functional responsibilities and eliminate perceived duplications between and within military departments, and in some cases, to circumscribe the departments' previous authority. The resultant changes to the headquarters of the Department of the Army are indeed significant, though perhaps not to the same degree as changes in the joint arena.

The Secretary of the Army "is responsible for, and has the authority necessary to conduct all affairs of the Department of the Army"; these affairs are listed in a traditional format of twelve functions such as recruiting, organizing, equipping, etc. He is also explicitly responsible to the Secretary of Defense for seven additional procedural functions of defense management, one of which states that he is "responsible for carrying out all functions of the Department of the Army so as to fulfill . . . the current and future operational requirements of the unified and specified commands."

To execute these responsibilities, the new law specifies the composition of the Office of the Secretary of the Army (OSA), and in a major departure from the past specifies that it shall have sole responsibility for certain specified functions. Seven functions are specified, some of which previously have been performed by the Army Staff. They are acquisition, auditing, comptroller (to include financial management), information management, inspector general, legislative affairs, and public affairs.

In this attempt to strengthen civilian leadership within the military departments and to eliminate internal duplication of effort between OSA and the Army Staff, Congress further specified that "the Secretary of the Army shall designate a single office or other activity within OSA to conduct each of the seven functions specified. No office or other entity may be established or designated within the Army Staff to conduct any of the functions specified." Further language in the bill does allow the Army Staff

to provide advice and assistance in these functions if done "under the directions of the office in OSA assigned responsibility for that function." It also allows the Secretary to assign to the Army Staff the aspects of research and development that pertain to military requirements and test and evaluation. Other than these small exceptions the new division of labor between the two staffs and the paramountcy of civilian control is now firmly set in statute.

One of the more pressing requirements of the new law is the specified allowable size of OSA and the Army Staff. The legislation mandates within two years a 15-percent reduction in both general officers and in the aggregate size of the military department headquarters. For the Army this will mean a reduction of approximately 550 personnel from Headquarters, Department of the Army, by October 1988.

### *The Post-reorganization Environment*

Does all of this change really matter? I think that it does, and our profession will be the better for understanding this. We can draw five main conclusions:

- **First, it is clear, even without a full understanding of how these changes will ultimately be implemented, that power relationships within DOD have been fundamentally altered.**

Significantly, the chiefs of the military services have lost considerable clout in at least three respects. First, they have lost clout with respect to the CJCS, who now alone is the principal military advisor, who is responsible for many functions that were formerly shared among the corporate JCS, and who solely controls the work of the newly independent Joint Staff. Second, they have lost clout with respect to the combatant commanders, who will now command service forces in manners other than through service components, and who have new avenues to influence service programs and budgets. Third, they have lost clout with respect to the secretaries of the military departments, who have been given sole responsibility for a number of functions which now may not be delegated to the service chiefs and their staffs as was done in the past.

Conversely, as the authority of the service chiefs has been diminished, that of the CJCS, the combatant commanders, and particularly the civilian leadership within DOD has been enhanced. The Secretary of the Army and the other service secretaries now have a greater role to play in policy formulation and decisionmaking within DOD, third only to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. Clearly the quality and political effectiveness of the appointed civilian leadership within DA will now be even more determinative of the future of the Army. It is important to realize, however, that all budget lines still reside with their pre-reorganization

owners, excepting the potential for small operational budgets for the CINCs. Even the most joint of programs, the one for joint exercises which evaluate the state of joint interoperability, still depends on funding by the services. So, while much has changed, strong vestiges of the old power relationships remain.

• **Second, Congress is not finished with reform of our national security processes, either within DOD or externally.**

Now that the lid is off the box, so to speak, continued reform will be the norm.<sup>10</sup> Not all this need come from Congress either; there is plenty of statutory authority now available for the Secretary to continue the reforms, if he is of a mind to do so.

This is not inherently bad; in fact there are several aspects of this first reform that the Army will want to help correct and can do so only with access to a change mechanism such as continued legislative reform. We need only recall the mandated periodic reviews to be convinced that change will be the norm. The nation's grand strategy and military strategy will be reviewed and debated with each budget submission; the roles and missions of the military services will be publicly reviewed every three years; the Unified Command Plan will be reviewed every two years; and a standard system for evaluating the joint preparedness of each combatant command must be in place providing feedback within a year.

Understanding and accepting continued reform as the norm is vital as the Army implements its part of this legislation. Our responses should be designed not to meet a presumed new static state, but should presuppose continuous interaction with a dynamic environment, much of which interaction will be with entities external to the military department, e.g. the independent Joint Staff, the combatant commands, the OSD staff, and Congress and the public. Effective participation in these externally oriented relationships will continue to be a critical challenge for the Army, particularly as the changing environment opens new opportunities for the articulation of Army needs.

• **Third, the legislative reforms insofar as they affect the Army are directed generally at its bureaucratic manifestations at the top, and not at its performance in the field per se.**

The total national security process with both executive and legislative actors can be viewed in terms of inputs and outputs. The inputs to the process are created by the many actors, primarily in Washington, who based on their roles participate in defined processes to produce what are essentially requests for resources: strategies, doctrines, programs, and budget documents. These in turn are transformed into outputs, beginning with the defense appropriation process, followed by hardware acquisition and force mobilization, to create the armed forces that have military utility for our nation. These forces are the "outputs."

In this context, it can be concluded that the focus of reorganization is on inputs to the national security process far more than it is on the outputs. While the intent is obviously to influence the outputs, the legislative mandates act directly only on the input side. This is not good when viewed from the Army's, or the nation's, perspective. The ability of the armed forces of a nation to apply effective military force, when and where needed, is still the test of any national security process. Unfortunately, there is little in this reorganization to focus attention on these outputs. The only focus is the new functional responsibility of the CJCS to design and implement within one year an evaluation system for the joint preparedness of the combatant commands. What form this will take is unknown, but it would be extremely helpful to the Army if it provides real visibility on the mismatch between conventional strategy and land forces; on the requisite but missing strategic lift for a global military strategy; on the actual capabilities, support requirements, and possible redundancies of weapon systems of all forces used in support of land forces; and on the known critical weaknesses in the operational jointness of our armed forces. As the service most dependent upon joint support, and as the service most suffering the inabilities of its sister services to support its primary mission, the Army would find this most helpful indeed; but that was not the focus of this reorganization.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Army's interest in continued reform to focus on outputs is acute.

• **Fourth, where the legislation did focus, on the input side of our national security process, we now have a fundamentally changed set of processes for strategy formulation, planning, and force-building that is more rational and explicit.**

The need for this type of change has been consistently documented in the reform literature. In one of the most succinct statements, the Packard Commission noted that "there is no rational system whereby the Executive branch and the Congress reach coherent and enduring agreement on national military strategy, the forces to carry it out, and the funding that should be provided—in light of the overall economy and the competing claims on national resources."<sup>12</sup>

Whether a really rational system could ever be attained or effectively used in such an intensely political environment is certainly questionable. But any move toward explicitness and rationality in relating means and ends presents the Army with both problems and possibilities. It presents problems because our organizational culture tends to be apolitical and thus we have not well articulated and effectively defended resource needs for the Army. This will be an even larger problem now that it must be resolved amid new roles and power relationships external to the military department. On the other hand, the Army will now have new opportunities to articulate its needs, given a more explicit process which publicly clarifies national commitments and strategic requirements, gets all the services

behind one common military strategy, explicitly links forces to commitments and strategy, and facilitates cross-service tradeoffs.<sup>13</sup>

• **Finally, the legislation brought no reform to Congress itself or the manner in which it exercises its considerable role in the overall planning and management of the national security process.**

The problems associated with the role of Congress have been carefully analyzed, and many practical solutions offered,<sup>14</sup> but political consensus and desire for change in the way Congress does business are obviously lacking. We should not naively expect this to change.<sup>15</sup>

*In "DOD Reorganization: Part II, New Opportunities," forthcoming in the December issue of Parameters, Colonel Snider will address the effects of the legislation on the future of the Army. He will address specifically how the Army can take full advantage of the several opportunities presented by the legislation.—Editor*

#### NOTES

1. Much has been written about the defense reform movement. In addition to the many books by the individual reformers, several anthologies and institutional studies provide a good overview. Suggested is *The Defense Reform Debate*, ed. Asa Clark, et al. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1984).

2. A White House summary of NSDD 219 is published as Appendix C to the Final Report by the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management, *A Quest for Excellence* (Washington: GPO, 1986).

3. US Congress, House, Conference Report to accompany H.J. Res. 738, "Making Continuing Appropriations For Fiscal Year 1987" (Washington: GPO, 15 October 1986), pp. 129-31.

4. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Staff Report, "Defense Organization: The Need for Change" (Washington: GPO, October 1985), pp. 613-36.

5. All references to specific wording in the legislation have been taken from the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-433), 1 October 1986.

6. The first such report has already been made by the President to Congress. See *National Security Strategy of the United States*, a White House document published in January 1987.

7. See Gregory Foster, "Missing and Wanted: A US Grand Strategy," *Strategic Review*, 13 (Fall 1985), 13.

8. Robert Komer, "Strategy Making in the Pentagon," in *Reorganizing America's Defense*, ed. Robert Art, Vincent Davis, and Samuel Huntington (Elmsford, N.Y.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985), p. 216.

9. Testimony by Senator Goldwater while presenting conference bill to the Senate for approval, 16 September 1986 (*Congressional Record*, vol. 132, no. 121, S12652).

10. Discussions with senior staff, Senate Armed Services Committee, December 1986. This view is also expressed by Huntington in "Organization and Strategy," in *Reorganizing America's Defense*, p. 230.

11. Morton Halperin and David Halperin, "Restructuring the Key West Accord," in *Reorganizing America's Defense*, pp. 348-50, 355-58.

12. *A Quest for Excellence*, p. xvii.

13. The Senate Armed Services Committee under its new Chairman, Senator Sam Nunn, who was also an architect of the DOD Reorganization bill, began action on the FY 88 DOD budget with hearings on strategy, not the budget. This has not been done since 1981, and then only casually. Given the content of these early hearings, it is apparent that Congress intends to establish publicly the strategy benchmark that it mandated in the Reorganization Act.

14. The most forceful recent statement of the problems in congressional review and oversight of DOD came from Senator Goldwater shortly after his retirement ("Overdose of Oversight and Lawless Legislation," *Armed Forces Journal International*, 124 [February 1987], 54-56).

15. Richard Betts, "Conventional Strategy: New Critics, Old Choices," *International Security*, 7 (Spring 1983), 155.

# General McClellan and the Politicians

BRIAN HOLDEN REID

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All who visit the city of Washington agree that it is a political hothouse. The temperature rises and falls with the oscillations in the fortunes of political causes and individual reputations, and it has ever been so. Founded as a center of government, the city depends on politics and politicians to an extent which has no European parallel; they are its lifeblood, its *raison d'être*. So close is the identification of Washington with politics that politicians themselves have turned this to their advantage: on the campaign trail, "Washington" has become a synonym for incompetence and corruption badly in need of a shaking up.

Throughout the 19th century, Washington was a small, rather uncomfortable southern town, with poor accommodations, dirt roads, and planks of wood serving as sidewalks. The magnificence of its public buildings, though still incomplete (scaffolding around the Capitol was still much in evidence during both of Lincoln's inaugural addresses), contrasted with the bareness of the surrounding countryside. At no time was the political temperature of Washington more fevered than in the midst of that century, during the greatest political crisis faced by the United States, the American Civil War. Indeed, General William T. Sherman was of the opinion that political intrigue was the main reason for the defeat of so many Federal armies. In January 1868 he wrote to President Andrew Johnson:

This city and the influences . . . here defeated every army that had its head here from 1861 to 1865, and would have overwhelmed General Grant . . . had he not been fortified by a strong reputation already hard earned . . . . Whereas in the West we made progress from the start, because there was no political capital near enough to poison our minds and kindle into light that craving itching for fame which has killed more good men than bullets.<sup>1</sup>

Many other senior officers were of the opinion that the hysteria generated by political activity was of material assistance to the Confederacy.

Of course it is a common characteristic of professional soldiers to complain that their operations have been hamstrung by politicians, but the position of Washington in 1861-1862 is in many ways a special case. It is rare that a war of such scale and intensity should be fought in such close proximity to the political heart of a nation in a conflict in which political issues were so heavily laden with strategic implications. The close proximity of Washington, moreover, as General Sherman observed, brought the military into the very heart of the political system as well as the decision-making process. Frequently soldiers enter the corridors of power but are not exposed to the cut and thrust of political life. In Washington during the Civil War, however, soldiers discovered that they could not adequately fulfill their responsibilities without participating in "politics."

Neither is it very likely that politicians who had experienced at first hand the drama and shame of secession would be sober and cautious; on the contrary, secession had provoked a condition of hysteria which was not to abate and a demand that the rebellion be put down without fail. As Senator Wade observed in his tract, *Traitors and their Sympathisers*, it was imperative "that treason be put down at all hazards, and by any means that God Almighty has put into our hands." The desire to put down rebellion, however, ended in disappointment and humiliation at the First Battle of Bull Run in July 1861. This in turn provoked more hysteria, frenetic but misdirected energy, and the demand that something be done to destroy the rebels. At the beginning of the war a certain cleavage developed between some politicians, who wished to destroy the rebellion as swiftly as possible and restore the authority of the Federal government (without a full understanding of the cost this involved), and professional soldiers, who had a bare idea of what it might cost but who had at this stage little stomach for the task. General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who was later to advise Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, wrote: "Many friends urge my return to the Army. But I have no heart for engaging in a Civil War . . . . If fighting could preserve the Union (or restore it) I might consider what I could do to take part—but when did fighting make friends?" When demands were made to shoot the generals who had lost at Bull Run, Sherman remarked disapprovingly that "civilians are more willing to start a war than military men and so it appears now."<sup>2</sup>

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General John M. Schofield, who had a distinguished war career, commented on this cleavage in his memoirs, *Forty-Six Years in the Army*: "Men who have been fighting most of the three or four years generally become pretty cool, while those in the rear seem to become hotter and hotter as the end approaches . . . They must in some way work off the surplus passion which the soldier has already exhausted in battle."

Certainly the politicians got "hotter and hotter" as the decisive success over the Confederacy, which many assumed would follow putting an army into the field, continued to elude them. Their energies were then poured into finding out why the Federal armies failed to meet the expectations that not only the politicians but the generals had encouraged. Congressman George Washington Julian, in his *Political Recollections 1840-1872*, remembered that before First Bull Run, "The confidence in General Scott seemed to be unbounded and I found everybody taking it for granted [that] when the first fight began our forces would prove triumphantly victorious." The reaction was all the stronger when they were not. Expectations were raised yet again when a new commander, Major General George B. McClellan, was called to Washington. But the political atmosphere in which he had to operate was the more volatile because of the failure of his predecessors. The success of this commander was almost as dependent on his understanding this and adapting his methods accordingly than it was on defeating the enemy in the field.<sup>3</sup>

The general called to restore the honor of American arms was young by prevailing standards, 36. McClellan had made a good impression by advancing into the loyal counties of West Virginia before they could be occupied by the Confederacy. McClellan was handsome and charming and looked like a hero. The President of the United States did not. At this stage of the war President Lincoln was underrated by all who came into contact with him—even by his wife. A typical comment was that "Lincoln means well but has not force of *character*. He is surrounded by Old Foggy Army Officers more than half of whom are downright traitors and the other one half sympathize with the South."

Washington was running short of heroes. The discredited Major General Irving B. McDowell, commander at First Bull Run, was dismissed as an "ass," and the septuagenarian General-in-Chief and victor of the Mexican War (1846-1848), Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, was ridiculed as a "senile bag of wind." The President, it was widely believed, had no ideas of his own as to how the war should be conducted. McClellan had had a fairly impressive military career. He had graduated as an engineer (the elite of West Point), distinguished himself in Mexico, served as a member of the commission which had reported on the Crimean War, and resigned his Army commission in 1859. Thereafter he had turned his talents to building

railroads and was appointed president of the Ohio-Mississippi. But as a commander, it must be said, McClellan had yet to prove himself.

McClellan was a first-rate administrator and set about reorganizing and reequipping his troops with dispatch, so that the demoralized regiments that had fled the field of Bull Run in panic were soon drilling and training with enthusiasm. McClellan was nevertheless treated like a hero before his talents had been put to the proof. The praise went to his head. He saw his mission as saving his country: "I did not seek it. It was thrust upon me. I was called to it; my previous life seems to have been unwittingly directed to this great end," as he informed his wife in a state of nervous excitement. In this world of dreams the nickname coined by the newspapers, "The Young Napoleon," began to assume a firm reality before a shot had been fired. Lincoln miscalculated when he encouraged McClellan to intrigue against Scott and appointed him General-in-Chief on 1 November 1861 as well as commander of the Army of the Potomac. McClellan thereafter developed a disdain for his political superiors. This was not in itself very surprising, for it appears to be the stock in trade of most generals. What was alarming about McClellan's arrogance was that he took no pains to conceal his contempt for the President and leading members of the Republican Party.<sup>4</sup>

Despite his weakness for posing for photographers by aping a Napoleonic pose, McClellan revealed a prudence more typical of Marshal Kutuzov<sup>5</sup> than of Napoleon. His grandiloquently expressed general orders revealed nothing more than yet more training and preparations. They invariably concluded lamely, "All quiet on the Potomac." For those politicians who had lived through the drama of secession, this lethargy was insufferable. There had to be a reason to explain it, something more sinister than the inveterate habit of professional soldiers of overpreparing for an advance. Accordingly, the political temperature in Washington rose. There had been no action along the Potomac for months. When a tentative advance made in November 1861 ended in fiasco at Ball's Bluff, a vociferous anti-slavery group of Republicans, known as the Radicals, began to denounce McClellan. A Republican Senator from Oregon, Colonel Edward D. Baker, had been killed at the head of his troops. Demands were made that both First Bull Run and Ball's Bluff be investigated. A Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was set up, with Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts declaring that it "would teach men in civil and military authority that the people expect they will not make mistakes, and that we should not be easy with their errors."<sup>6</sup>

The formation of this committee should have served to warn McClellan of the extent of the political problems he faced. But McClellan rarely learned from experience. Baker's immediate superior, Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, a friend of McClellan and known as sympathetic to slave-holders, was immediately interrogated by the committee and then

imprisoned without trial. Nobody tried to defend him for fear of being tainted with "treason." James G. Blaine, a future Senator, recalled that "the public in that state of credulity, which is an incident to the victim hunting mania, accepted everything as true."<sup>7</sup>

McClellan's admirers were later to brand the joint committee "a sort of Aulic Council" empowered "to supervise the plans of commanders in the field, to make military suggestions, and to dictate military appointments." Its chairman was Senator "Bluff" Ben Wade. He was described by a future President, James A. Garfield, as "a man of violent passions, extreme opinions, and narrow views." Courageous and outspoken, Wade was completely ruthless. So was his colleague Senator Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, a master of manipulating Senate procedure, who could often be found in Washington bars celebrating his exploits over a bottle of whiskey.<sup>8</sup>

The gravest charge made by McClellan was that the joint committee injected the viciousness of partisan politics into the conduct of a great war, that grave national issues were tainted by ambition and greed. McClellan was not alone in this view. His successor as General-in-Chief, Major General Henry W. Halleck, complained, "*Self* and that pronoun I are too prominent in the minds of our would-be great men. Party politics! Party politics! I sometimes fear that they will utterly ruin the country." McClellan himself, in his memoir *McClellan's Own Story*, claimed that the Radicals on the joint committee wanted "to make a party tool of me." "The real object of the radical leaders," he wrote, "was not the restoration of the Union but the permanent ascendancy of their party [the Republicans] and to achieve this they were ready to sacrifice the Union if necessary."<sup>9</sup>

There were three forms of "politics" that McClellan found distasteful. The first was "political" generals. These were, in his opinion, a singularly nauseous variety of officer who used political influence to acquire a senior officer's commission in the volunteer regiments. This group, including Baker, John C. Fremont, Benjamin F. Butler, John A. Logan, and others, was favored by the joint committee. The second form of politics was interference by politicians in military operations. President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton, in times of crisis, were prone to issue orders directly to the commanders in the field. It is reputed that both had taken books out of the Library of Congress to enable them to study the principles of strategy in their leisure hours. The third form was the use of the joint committee's powers to advance the careers of generals who agreed with its views and to destroy the careers of those who did not; the hapless General Stone was a case in point.<sup>10</sup>

In all three of these instances the word "politics" had unsavory connotations. A suspicion of party politics was deeply ingrained in the American political tradition. In his Farewell Address, George Washington

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*"I can't tell you how disgusted I'm becoming  
with these wretched politicians."*

—George B. McClellan, 1862

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had warned that party feeling served "always to distract the public council." Deprecating the "ill-founded jealousies and false alarms" and the "animosity of one part against the other," Washington warned that party politics was destructive of stability. In a political system in which office was a substitute for European titles and decorations, however, the growth of mechanisms designed to promote and consolidate political patronage was inevitable. "Truly incredible are the efforts men are willing to make, the humiliations they will endure," declared the orator Edward Everett, to acquire office. Thus "politics" came to mean dirty politics. In a civil war when great national issues were put to the test, the moral dilemma of pursuing patriotic ends with partisan means was resolved by equating morality with power and the assumption on one side of a monopoly of patriotism and purity of motive. It was central to the identity or self-image of both soldiers (who were traditionally acquitted of political motives) and civilian politicians that they appeared free of political skullduggery (whatever the reality). Thus Senator Wade could claim that only "the [Radical Republicans] are the men of principle. They are the men who feel what they contend for. They are not your slippery politicians who . . . construe a thing any way to suit the . . . present occasion." Thus, even among politicians, "politics" became a term of political abuse. But for McClellan politics and politicians were one and the same. "I can't tell you how disgusted I'm becoming with these wretched politicians," he wrote in 1862. "I presume I have to go after them [the Confederates] when I get ready; but this getting ready is slow work with such an administration. I wish I were well out of it."<sup>11</sup>

All members of the joint committee despised professional soldiers, "aristocrats," West Point "martinets," and plodding engineers. McClellan fit all categories. The stalemate along the Potomac was easily explained, said Senator Chandler: "The war had dragged its slow length along under generals who never meant to *fight*." McClellan had refused to divulge his plans on the grounds that Lincoln could not keep a secret. The President issued consecutively his General War Order No. 1 and his Special War Order No. 1 ordering an advance in Virginia, but with no effect. In February 1862, General McClellan was called before the joint committee. He would not

reveal his plans to the committee, either, and contented himself with an exposition of the military principles upon which they were based, confident in the knowledge that this would leave the members of the committee none the wiser. He was correct in thinking they were ignorant of war, but their reaction took him completely by surprise. "If I understand you correctly," observed Chandler sarcastically, "before you strike at the rebels you want to be sure of plenty of room so that you can run in case they strike back." "Or," cut in Wade, "in case you get scared." After McClellan had left, Wade asked Chandler what he thought of the "science of generalship." Chandler replied, "I don't know much about war, but it seems to me that this is infernal, unmitigated cowardice."<sup>12</sup>

Civilian politicians like Wade and Chandler ridiculed the idea that fancy ideas about strategy were of any value. Yet they wanted to show that they excelled at strategy. Congressman Julian claimed that one of the advantages of joint committee membership was that "it afforded a very desirable opportunity to learn something of the . . . secrets of our policy." The reaction of the committee members when they discovered that, for all of McClellan's arrogance about the theory of war, the only secret about it was that there was no secret—that the Emperor (this time embodied in the rather feeble imitation of the Young Napoleon) had no clothes—was to mount a concerted attack against him. Julian recalled that "the fate of the nation seemed committed to one man called 'General-in-Chief,' who communicated his secrets to no human being, who had neither age nor military experience to justify the extraordinary deference of the President to his wishes." He considered it "a betrayal of the country . . . to hold our grand armies for weeks and months in unexplained idleness," and it had to stop.<sup>13</sup>

These political tussles mirrored a vexed strategic debate. The President preferred a direct advance over Northern Virginia (like that before First Bull Run) which covered Washington. McClellan had developed a more subtle scheme for shifting the Army of the Potomac across the Chesapeake Bay to the Peninsula, thus outflanking the defenses of the Confederate capital, Richmond, from the east. On 8 March 1862, Lincoln willingly saw the issue put to a vote of a council of war consisting of all the division commanders of the Army of the Potomac. He lost by a margin of 8 to 4. Slanderous gossip, spread mainly by Wade and his colleagues, followed this decision to send the Army of the Potomac to the Peninsula. The next day McClellan was called to the Executive Mansion (as the White House was then called) and Lincoln raised "a very ugly matter"—that McClellan intended to expose the capital to Confederate attack by transporting all his troops to Virginia. The President concluded "that it did look to him much like treason."

McClellan demanded and received an apology. But Lincoln's remark, besides revealing a marked lack of confidence in his commanding

general (and McClellan was relieved of the post of General-in-Chief before setting out), reflected the atmosphere of fear in Washington and a suspicion toward McClellan that he could not shake off. Indeed, "a majority of the Committee at this time strongly suspected that McClellan was a traitor." The root of this suspicion lay in the fact that McClellan was not so innocent of politics as he liked to claim. McClellan was a Democrat. The Democratic Party had been split by the slavery question; insofar as they supported the war, Democrats looked only to a restoration of the Union, not the destruction of slavery; the Radical Republicans were anathema to them. McClellan had strong links with the Democratic Marcy machine of New York, and many Democrats looked to him to lead a conservative alignment in the congressional elections in the autumn of 1862. After he had departed to the Peninsula, Fernando Wood, Mayor of New York (and suspected of secessionist sympathies), visited McClellan and urged him to become the Democratic presidential candidate in 1864. Radical Republicans suspected him of wanting a compromise peace so that he could win the presidential election and Southern votes.<sup>4</sup>

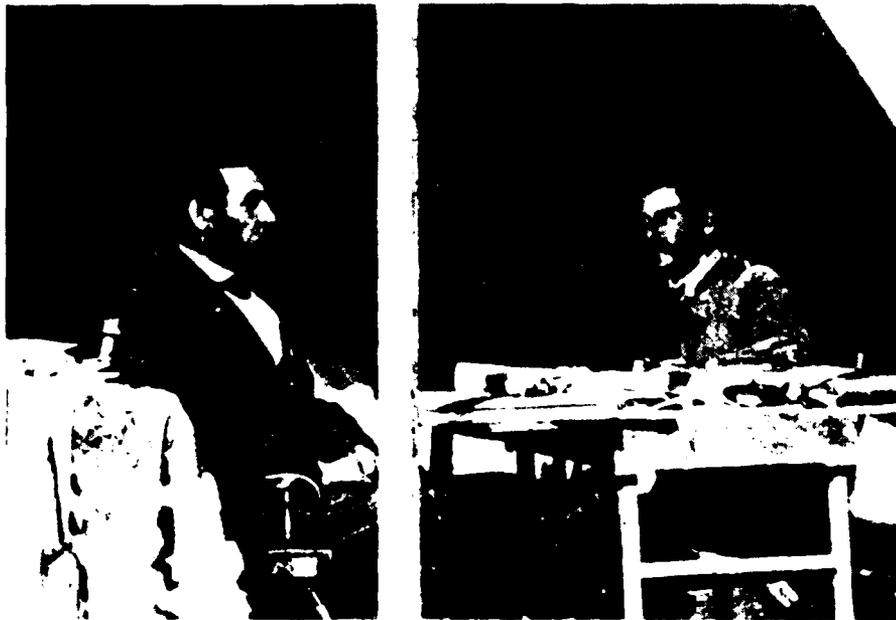
Nevertheless, McClellan's future rested in his own hands. Only the President could remove him; the joint committee had no executive powers. His deteriorating political position—the besmirching of his reputation, the suspicions of the President, the close alliance developing between Stanton (for whom McClellan had a particular loathing) and the joint committee—all could be retrieved by a striking victory. But in this McClellan failed. In June 1862 Lee drove the Army of the Potomac back to its base on the James River in a series of battles called "The Seven Days." Based upon his political views, McClellan's strategy reflected "due regard to the obligations imposed upon [him] by the laws and customs of civilized warfare." This "due regard" involved the protection of Southern civilians and their property (which included their slaves). Again, to McClellan the paramount war aim should be a restoration of the Union and not the destruction of slavery. Yet McClellan chose the moment of his defeat to write to Lincoln on this matter in what has come to be called the "Harrison Landing Letter." Now, a military withdrawal rarely advances political views. McClellan's military failures ultimately rebounded on the political position that he advanced, which in turn cast little credit on his strategy. Wade ridiculed his efforts: "McClellan's forte is digging not fighting . . . Place him before an enemy and he will burrow like a woodchuck. His first effort is to get underground."<sup>5</sup>

Though McClellan remained Commander of the Army of the Potomac during the remainder of the summer of 1862, Lincoln created a new force, the Army of Virginia, commanded by Major General John Pope, a favorite of the joint committee, who supported emancipation, the shooting of civilian snipers, and "as far as practicable" the notion that Northern troops should live off the country. Though Pope was defeated by

Lee at Second Bull Run, his appointment was proof of the gradual increase in the respectability of views about punitive strategy which were now accepted by many besides the Radicals—including the President. The committee also scored a notable success by singling out McClellan's friend, Major General Fitz-John Porter, commander of Pope's Second Corps, as the scapegoat for Second Bull Run, and he was court-martialed. Porter hated the Radicals and Pope. "I wish myself away from it [the Army of Virginia]," he wrote, and to be back "with all our old Army of the Potomac." After listing Pope's stupidities, he remarked, "make what use of this you choose [in the newspapers], so that it does good."

Though McClellan was damaged by the disgrace of Porter, he was offered yet another chance to retrieve his fortunes on the battlefield, and at a moment of great national peril. Lincoln appointed him to command all troops in the field after Lee's invasion of Maryland in the autumn of 1862. The Radicals were powerless to stop it. The resulting Battle of Antietam, though forcing Lee to withdraw back into Virginia, was tactically indecisive—"not such a victory as Napoleon had accustomed the world to demand," was the shrewd comment of the Quartermaster General, Montgomery C. Meigs.<sup>16</sup>

McClellan's ultimate dismissal, in October 1862, was hastened by another dose of what Lincoln called the "slows" (which had permitted Lee to escape unscathed) and by the issue of the Emancipation Proclamation.



Courtesy USAMHI

**President Lincoln visits McClellan in the field. Lincoln later relieved him for his military indecisiveness and his political views.**

McClellan's response to the latter was that "the remedy for political errors is to be found only . . . at the polls," an indication that his eyes were fixed firmly on the 1864 Democratic nomination. There followed the disastrous defeat of the Army of the Potomac under Major General Ambrose E. Burnside at the Battle of Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862, which brought calls for McClellan's reinstatement. This the Radicals were determined to avoid. It is said of the ancient Carthaginians that they crucified failed generals whatever the circumstances that excused their conduct. The Radicals were determined to crucify McClellan's reputation, to kill him "deader than the prophets," as Chandler put it. In truth he had provided them with plenty of ammunition. The committee's campaign involved the exculpation of the commander at Fredericksburg, General Burnside, who now presented himself as an ardent emancipator. The proceedings of a joint committee investigation resembled a court where the defense had no place. Witnesses were invited to give opinions on their superiors, a procedure which was prejudicial to good military discipline. The committee met in secret and commanders called to testify were unaware that they had been criticized. Major General Joseph Hooker, for instance, ridiculed McClellan's siege of Yorktown: "I would have marched right through the redoubt and into Richmond in two days." The value of Hooker's testimony can be gauged by reference to the events of his own unhappy tenure of command of the Army of the Potomac at a later time. A scapegoat for Fredericksburg was nevertheless found, Major General William B. Franklin, commander of Sixth Corps, who had led the initial assault which had broken into Stonewall Jackson's lines only to be driven back. He was a close friend of McClellan.<sup>17</sup>

*The Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, published on 9 April 1863, with its damning slant on McClellan's generalship and that of his friends as well, ended any hope that he might be recalled. Preliminary summaries appeared in all leading Republican newspapers and were distributed among the troops. "There must be something in these terrible reports," wrote the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, in his diary, "but I distrust Congressional Committees. They exaggerate."

**A**t first sight the resulting complaints by McClellan and his friends seem justified. Their careers were destroyed by uncouth, self-seeking politicians who twisted the facts to their own advantage. But their case rests on a misconception, even a distortion: that they were innocent of political ambition or guile. McClellan complained, "No one seems to be able to comprehend . . . that I have no ambitious feelings to satisfy and only wish to serve my country in its troubles and when this weary war is over, to return to my wife." The image is that of Quintus Fabius Maximus, Scipio

Africanus, Cincinnatus, or even George Washington—the selfless patriot retiring from public life after dutiful service. As he claimed in *McClellan's Own Story*, "To the last I have done my duty as I understand it." But in reality McClellan and his friends—victims of political maneuver—applied absolute standards of morality to their opponents' behavior and pragmatic standards to their own. Their pique is a reflection of frustration at being denied similar power. Had roles been reversed no doubt they would have acted with equal ruthlessness. They fell well below the ideal of being able to serve governments irrespective of what party held office. The selfless soldier without political interests or ambitions fits the *chevalier* model as defined by Marcus Cunliffe.<sup>18</sup> McClellan himself had defined this as the "modern type of the Chevalier Bayard *sans peur et sans reproche*." McClellan was something less than this.

McClellan had always looked for political support. What requires comment is not the existence of his political ambitions but rather his need to disguise them from himself in accord with the code of the *chevalier*. "Whenever I wrote anything of a political nature," he said later, "it was only with the hope of doing something [to further] those political principles which I thought honestly should control the conduct of the war." Thus was McClellan's self-image maintained and his political ambitions disguised from his overweening moral vanity. His greatest mistake was in supposing that his political star could be advanced whilst his military fortunes waned. His strategy did not meet the demands of politics; with strategy he tried to shape politics. He missed his opportunity to discredit his critics in July 1862 with the failure of the Peninsular Campaign. Unlike many generals, he was given another chance to redeem himself during the Antietam Campaign and failed to seize it. McClellan was an indecisive general, a ditherer. Suetonius, in his life of Nero, tells of one of the Emperor's ancestors, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, who was so indecisive that "in a fit of desperation he attempted suicide by poison, but the prospect of immediate death so terrified him that he changed his mind and vomited up the dose—the family physician knew him well enough to have made it a mild one, which earned the wise fellow his freedom."<sup>19</sup> The moral is worthy of McClellan. For all his seeming arrogance he lacked the power of decision to best his opponents both on the battlefield and in the smoke-filled rooms of Washington.

If there is a striking feature of McClellan's campaigns which should be noted and underlined by all soldiers, it is that warfare emerges from a political context. As Clausewitz put it, "wars cannot be divorced from political life"; and commanders who become so immersed in the technical demands of the art of war, who arrogantly brush aside the imperatives and pressures of political life, and who lack sympathy with the way in which these impinge upon the decisions of their political masters, will mount military operations which are doomed to fail.

## NOTES

1. Sherman to Johnson, 31 January 1868, in R. S. Thorndyke, ed. *The Sherman Letters* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1894, 1969), p. 300.
2. Hans L. Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), p. 186; Ethan A. Hitchcock, *Fifty Years in Camp and Field*, ed. W. A. Croffat (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), p. 430; Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman: Fighting Prophet* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 142.
3. John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York: The Century Co., 1897), p. 314; G. W. Julian, *Political Recollections 1840-1872* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, & Co., 1884), p. 196.
4. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *Horace Greeley* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), pp. 275-77, 279; Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans* (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 180; George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story* (New York: C. L. Webster & Co., 1887), pp. 30, 59, 138-39, 141, 144, 149; James A. Garfield thought Lincoln "almost a child in the hands of his generals" (T. C. Smith, *The Life and Letters of James A. Garfield* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1925], I, 240-41).
5. Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov was the Russian commander who opposed Napoleon in the campaigns of 1805 and 1812. His primary tenet was to keep his army in being, avoiding decisive engagement until victory was assured.
6. T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and the Radicals* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1941, 1965), pp. 61-62.
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8. William H. Hurlburt, *General McClellan and the Conduct of the War* (New York: Sheldon & Craig, 1864), p. 160.
9. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1962), p. 205; McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, p. 149.
10. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, p. 152. If the Joint Committee could be petty in advancing the careers of its favorite generals, so could McClellan in resisting them. For instance, during a tour of the Army of the Potomac, he had Senator Wade chased away from shelter during a shower of rain. See Hans L. Trefousse, "The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War: A Reassessment," *Civil War History*, 10 (March 1964), 9.
11. Quoted in Marcus Cunliffe, *American Presidents and the Presidency* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969, 1972), pp. 97, 110; Trefousse, *Radical Republicans*, p. 3; Warren W. Hassler, *General George B. McClellan: Shield of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1957), p. 32.
12. T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and the Radicals*, p. 88.
13. Julian, pp. 201-09.
14. Peter J. Parish, *The American Civil War* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1975), pp. 164-66, 173-76; Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, *Stanton* (New York: Knopf, 1962), p. 211; Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), I, 817, n. 97. For an account of the council of war vote, see T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 67.
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16. *Official Records*, Series 1, Vol. XII, Part 2, pp. 49-50; *Official Records*, Series 1, Vol. XII, Part 3, p. 700; "General M. C. Meigs on the Civil War," *American Historical Review*, 26 (January 1921), 291.
17. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War* (Washington: GPO, 1866), I, 635-41; Julian, p. 225, claimed that Burnside's initial frank admission of responsibility "disarmed all criticism"; Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), p. 324.
18. Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Gideon Welles* (New York: 1960), II, 23 (entry for 3 May 1864); McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, pp. 489, 660; Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, pp. 418-23.
19. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, p. 35; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 210.

## *View From The Fourth Estate*

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### Bring Back Blood-and-Guts Patton!

DAVID H. HACKWORTH

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1987 David H. Hackworth

The USS Stark disaster now heads the list of our military failures, and I think it is high time that the citizens of America shout "Enough is enough!"

The litany of major blunders since 1945 makes the US military look like dogtag-wearing Keystone Cops at their most fumbling hour. It would be funny if it were not so damn tragic. It would be funny if tens of thousands of Americans had not died because of this longstanding and shameful ineptitude.

To review some of these shames, past and present:

- The spectacle of our Marines swapping secrets for sex in Moscow;
- The Iran-contra affair, where generals, admirals, and colonels operated as a law unto themselves (with some, when called to account, then unabashedly pleading the Fifth).
- The needless slaughter of our Marines in Beirut, there on a "presence" mission that had little military rationale.
- The fouled-up bombing of Lebanon in 1983, in which we used the wrong weapons and hit the wrong targets.
- The bungled invasion of Grenada, the mismanaged Desert One operation, the failed Mayaguez and Sontay raids, all conducted not unlike Chinese fire drills.
- The staggering defeat of our military in Vietnam.
- The stalemate no-win of Korea.

America has not had a clear military win since World War II. There is a reason for this, and it can be found in the insidious evolution in the years since in the character of the high-level leadership of our armed forces. Part of the problem may be inevitable in a peacetime military. But not all of it.

Someone, somewhere along the line, decided that our military forces would be better led by managers than by romping, stomping Arleigh Burkes. As a result, no longer are America's top military leaders true fighters. The rugged warrior-types who took Saipan and Normandy have been replaced by crude, urbane corporate generals and admirals who have a minimum of an MBA from one of America's top business schools, know which dessert spoon to use, and are smooth, cool, and management-capable.

Now, these senior members of our military's best and brightest management team will never make a diplomatic faux pas, or not be able to read a computer printout or walk with kings—but on the downside, they will not win a battle or a war, either.

The George Pattons and Chester Nimitzes were considered too abrasive, too demanding and too out-and-out ornery to fit into the New Look military that followed World War II. They were too hard to control, and they always made waves through an unwelcome habit of speaking bluntly. So they were given their gold watches and sent to the sidelines to watch as their once-proud services became pathetic caricatures of fumbling incompetence.

These gruff old nasties—whose men would have followed them to hell and back—were replaced by a new generation of smoothies who managed the downward spiral starting with Korea and got the speed of defeat going full thrust in Vietnam. And since then, disaster has only followed disaster, right up to the most recent sad debacle in the Persian Gulf, where 37 million white crosses were hewn by the corporate generation.

There is nothing wrong with our young sailors, airmen, and soldiers, or their junior leaders. If these good men were given tactically and technically competent senior officers we'd not worry about how they would perform. The radar would be scanned, the anti-missile system energized, the secrets would remain in the safe, and the missions would be accomplished with minimum casualties.

The citizens of America are paying roughly \$300 billion a year to be defended. With this price tag the country should be free from fear and proud of the boys who serve in America's finest. It seems safe to say that the American citizen is not getting his or her money's worth.

The problem is easy to fix. Simple, as a matter of fact . . .

The commander-in-chief must do a little selective ass-kicking and some wholesale firing of incompetent civilian and military leadership. He should stop giving those stirring memorial speeches and stop wearing mournful black, and instead find out a way of rendering both unnecessary—rather than allowing them to become routine engagements of his administration. He should cease and desist from eagerly copping the responsibility for each military snafu and instead demand that our military get it right. He should send the corporate generals and admirals packing quicksmart to industry where their brilliance would be well used, and replace these perfumed princes with colorful, knowledgeable warriors who will return our armed forces to the winner's circle.

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*In each issue, Parameters features "View From the Fourth Estate," consisting of a stimulating and often controversial article on military affairs previously appearing in the civilian printed media. Members of the military community may or may not like what is said in the civilian press of their activities, but in a democratic society they must remain abreast of what the citizen is reading and thinking if they are to execute their missions successfully.*

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It is virtually a guarantee. These fighters will get the right hardware, at the right price, and use tactics and strategy that work. They won't lie about operational reports, covert operations, or the state of current Cold War confrontations. They won't over-supervise their juniors, but they'll damn well make sure they're fit and ready for any test. They will love their charges, but ruthlessly demand perfection. Our military will once again become Centurians who will live by the selfless rule of Duty, Honor, Country.

The military will no longer be an occupation but a calling, its membership composed of dedicated, stout-hearted men and women. And if politicians and military industrialists come up with expensive, hare-brained, worthless weapons systems or plans for international adventures, the fighters will be the first to scream, "It won't work!" and not be afraid, as they must be now, of being kicked out of the service by the corporate yes-man types who support the schemes through ignorance or to further their own careers.

*—David Hackworth, a retired colonel, was the most decorated Army officer in Vietnam, with two Distinguished Service Crosses, ten Silver Stars, seven Bronze Stars, eight Purple Hearts, and three Legions of Merit.*

## Commentary & Reply

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### OF SHOES AND SHIPS AND SEALING WAX

#### To the Editor:

While Lieutenant General Richard G. Trefry's review of my book, *To Arm A Nation*, was complimentary in some ways and critical in others, several comments should not pass unchallenged lest silence be taken for acquiescence.

The review asserts that the book does not explain "why" the defense industry is replete with horror stories and contends that it does not offer solutions. The book, however, says early in the chapter titled "Serving Two Masters": "The defense industry has suffered from the same deterioration as the rest of American industry, and for the same reasons. Much of American industry has lost its competitive edge and fallen behind foreign competitors because of inadequate investment in modern plant and machinery, lack of innovation in research and development, thick layers of bureaucratic management, poorly trained workers, high labor costs, and stagnant productivity." The chapter also says that much of the blame lies "in the Pentagon and the Congress for insisting on elaborate scrutiny of development, overregulation of the acquisition process, and reams of red tape."

The chapter goes on to cite reasons given by Deputy Secretary of Defense William Howard Taft IV, former Inspector General of the Defense Department Joseph Sherick, former Pentagon acquisition executive James Wade, the Packard Commission, government agencies in published reports, defense industry executives, and Karl G. Harr, the recently retired president of the Aerospace Industries Association.

From Mr. Harr came the theme of the chapter; he was quoted as saying the defense industry "must serve two masters, the government customer and the corporate stockholders." The chapter says "when conflict between them arises, a defense contractor usually chooses profits for shareholders over economic production for taxpayers."

In the final chapter, the book says that because the monopolistic defense industry does not respond well to the commercial pressures of a free market, it should be regulated as a public utility. The chapter says that curing the ills of the defense industry would be difficult, and that "none of the options is overly appealing." It suggests a bipartisan, quasi-judicial regulatory commission independent of both the Defense Department and the defense industry as a compromise solution.

The reader may not care for the analysis or the solution, but they are there.

The review says "there is little chance" that the bold changes suggested in the book, such as abolishing the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force in favor of a consolidated Defense Department, will be adopted. That may well be true. The reason: vested, entrenched bureaucracies are more intent on serving their own purposes than on serving the national interest.

The review asserts the changes advocated in the book "are about as feasible as the idea that *The New York Times* should become the afternoon edition of *The Washington Post*." The analogy is not apt but it underscores, perhaps inadvertently, the book's point that officers in one service often consider other services to be adversaries. The *Times* and the *Post* are rightly head-on rivals and competitors for the attention of readers. The Army and Navy are supposed to be allies coordinating their efforts to defend the nation.

The review's proposal that *Playboy* be included in the merger is frivolous; the flip suggestion that Katherine Graham, Meg Greenfield, and Sally Quinn be the first centerfold playmates is rude and in extraordinarily bad taste.

The review's contention that the integrity of officers is called into question by a sentence on senior NCOs appears to be based on a misreading. At the beginning of a chapter titled "The Caliber of Troops," the book quotes a sergeant major applauding the improved quality of people coming into the Army in 1983, and says senior non-coms in the other services agreed. The sentence in question then reads: "The optimism of those senior non-commissioned officers, who know more about what's going on in their services and who render the most honest judgements, was evidence that the volunteer force was succeeding." The paragraph goes on to cite evidence supporting their argument. Nowhere does that passage, implicitly or explicitly, refer to other ranks. Moreover, the context of the book, beginning with the preface that says "I believe the profession of arms to be honorable," should provide ample evidence of my respect for all who serve well.

About 20 years ago, when I was reporting from South Korea, I asked an American lieutenant general something about the troops serving under his command. He paused, then said candidly: "I don't know. One of the things that happens when you get a little rank is that you get cut out of a lot of things. Go ask the senior non-coms." Everything I have learned since has proven the wisdom of that advice.

Richard Halloran

#### **The Author Replies:**

In responding to Mr. Halloran's commentary, I am reminded of the response by *Time* magazine to a reader who takes exception to a *Time* article. The magazine usually responds "Time stands by its story." Basically, so shall I.

I have no desire to point-counterpoint Mr. Halloran. My comments on his discussion of acquisition and contracting reflect my frustration. I am aware of all the arguments he offers concerning acquisition and the authorities he cites. As a student of the military profession, I dare say there will be additional recommendations for acquisition reform in the future. Many of Mr. Halloran's complaints are valid, but all too often what he takes to be causes are actually effects. My hope was that someone of his reputation and breadth of knowledge would have addressed the genuine causes of acquisition problems. My worry with his solution is that "the bipartisan quasi-judicial regulatory commission independent of both the Defense Department and the defense industry" would add other layers to the acquisition bureaucracy, layers that in turn become part of the problem. Every time we have a study, we add a new layer. (Just watch what happens in the unified and

specified commands, as well as the JCS, when they get into the business of determining requirements and resources.)

My dissent from Mr. Halloran's bold recommendations concerning the elimination of the uniformed services has nothing to do with preserving "vested entrenched bureaucracies." Nor is it because of an aversion to interservice cooperation in "efforts to defend the nation." I have served and, indeed, commanded as part of joint operations twice in wartime, so I believe I speak with some authority and experience. I have problems with Mr. Halloran's thesis from the standpoint of technical and professional competence. In my 40-year career, not a day went by that I did not learn something about the Army, and I still learn daily new things about my profession. I do not know how to fly an F-111 nor how to dock a destroyer, even though I do have a rough idea of the capabilities of those weapons. I do know it takes time and experience to gain adequate technical proficiency. The abolition of the services would not be useful in solving such problems. If it is budget prioritization and strategy that are Mr. Halloran's concerns, then reform should be directed at levels higher than the military departments. After all, that is what the long succession of National Security Acts has been about.

The Army is a component of a team, not just with the other services, but with the State Department, the CIA, and other branches and agencies of the government. National strategy and resource allocation were comparatively easy in World War II. The services, the secretariats, the combined staff, the joint staff, and the White House did it. Today it is an industry, but the problem is not with the military departments alone or primarily. That is an easy answer. The problem is much more profound, and the greater part of the solution requires education, both in and out of the services—but that is a separate story.

I am delighted that Mr. Halloran talks to and respects the judgment of senior NCOs. So do I, and within their area of competence they do very, very well. However, Mr. Halloran should understand that the statement I took exception to (regarding the NCOs' superior honesty and knowledgeability) bothered many who read it. I also noted that perhaps his pen had slipped. I would again state that journalists have a monopoly on neither integrity nor the sources of integrity.

Concerning my alleged lack of gentility, one is reminded of the motto "Evil To Him Who Evil Thinks." I intentionally attempted to make the comparison as preposterous as the proposal of Mr. Halloran.

Finally, as Mr. Halloran pointed out in his article "Soldiers and Scribblers" in the Spring 1987 issue of *Parameters*, journalists derive a certain satisfaction from "skewering" people. So it is with others. Let's just say that in the case of my review of Dick Halloran's book, Satan got behind me and gave me a little push.

Lieutenant General Richard G. Trefry, USA Ret.

## Book Reviews

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**Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace.** By Edward N. Luttwak.  
283 pages. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1987.  
\$20.00. Reviewed by Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., USA Ret.

It has been said that American military officers during the Civil War went into battle with Jomini's *The Art of War* in one hand and a sword in the other. In today's Army the M-16 rifle and the Beretta pistol have replaced the sword, and (since the Army War College class of 1981) Clausewitz's *On War* has replaced Jomini. Now comes a book that supplements *On War* and brings Clausewitz's philosophy of war into the late 20th century—Edward N. Luttwak's *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*.

*Strategy* is one of the very few books on military operations that could make a difference on the battlefields of the future. It is a book that should be read, pondered, analyzed, and dissected not only by military professionals but also by the military's civilian leaders in the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Congress who procure America's military arms and equipment, and who order American armed forces into battle.

Unfortunately that is not liable to happen. To many among the military, Luttwak's very name is anathema, because he works at being controversial. But they ignore him at their peril, for he is among the best of today's military thinkers. Civilians, on the other hand, will find *Strategy* not an easy read, since it presupposes some prior knowledge of battlefield dynamics and of the logic, theories, and philosophies of war. The late Bernard Brodie could have been talking about Luttwak's *Strategy* when he wrote in his introductory essay to *On War*: "Naturally, it will be read only by those who have strong interest, professional or otherwise, in the subject of its title, but for them it is quite indispensable."

What makes it indispensable is that, like Clausewitz, Luttwak aims not to be prescriptive, but "to provide a thinking man with a frame of reference." As he makes clear in his preface, "No strategies are suggested here for the conduct of the United States on the world scene, or for the employment of its armed forces in war. My purpose, rather, is to uncover the universal logic that conditions all forms of war, as well as the adversarial dealings of nations in peacetime."

In one sense *Strategy* is an extended gloss on Clausewitz's dictum that "In war, the will is directed at an animate object that reacts." The importance of that observation cannot be overemphasized, for it is what makes war different from all other forms of human endeavor. Clausewitz could have been talking about former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara's quantified and computerized approach to Vietnam War strategy (and to the latter-day McNamaras who continue to infest the Defense Department) when he observed that "continual striving after laws analogous to those appropriate to the realm of inanimate matter was bound to lead to one mistake after another."

"Part of the object of [*On War*]," Clausewitz went on to say, "is to examine whether a conflict of living forces as it develops and is resolved in war remains

subject to general laws, and whether these can provide a useful guide to action." Now, a century-and-a-half later, Luttwak believes he has found those "general laws."

"The large claim I advance here," he writes in the introduction to *Strategy*, "is that . . . *the entire realm of strategy is pervaded by a paradoxical logic of its own*, standing against the ordinary linear logic by which we live in all other spheres of life . . . In settings where conflict is merely incidental to purposes of production and consumption, of commerce and culture, of social relations and consensual governance, wherein strife and competition are more or less bound by law and custom, a noncontradictory linear logic applies, whose essence is captured by what we think of as common sense." He goes on to say, however, that "Within the sphere of strategy, . . . where human relations are conditioned by armed conflict actual or possible, another and quite different logic is at work. It often violates ordinary linear logic *by inducing the coming together and even the reversal of opposites*, and it therefore, incidentally, tends to reward paradoxical conduct."

With his central thesis thus established, Luttwak then devotes the first four chapters of his book to an elaboration of that thesis—what he calls the logic of strategy. While the remainder of the book has important insights, for the military professional these first 65 pages are key, for they establish the foundation upon which Luttwak's entire argument is constructed.

He begins by noting that "a paradoxical preference for inconvenient times and directions, preparations visibly and deliberately left incomplete, approaches seemingly too dangerous, for combat at night and in bad weather, is a common aspect of tactical ingenuity—and for a reason that derives from the essential nature of war." Having said that, he then supplies the caveats that enthusiasts of the currently fashionable "maneuver warfare" often overlook. "All forms of maneuver—paradoxical action that seeks to circumvent the greatest strength of the enemy in some way—will have their costs, manifest in some loss of the strength that would otherwise be available," Luttwak writes. "As for secrecy and deception, the two classic agencies of surprise that often set the stage for maneuver, they too exact some cost of their own"—a truth the United States learned to its sorrow with the debacle of the 1980 attempted hostage rescue in Iran.

"All these forms of deliberate self-weakening brought about by paradoxical choice can be justified by the sole benefit of surprise, if they weaken the enemy's reaction to an even greater extent," Luttwak emphasizes. But "combat risk" is only part of the equation. The other part is "organizational risk"—what Clausewitz called "friction." As Luttwak explains, "When the attempt is made to reduce anticipated combat risk by any form of paradoxical action, notably secrecy, deception, and maneuver, the action will tend to become more complicated and more extended, thereby increasing the organizational risks in proportion."

Having examined "paradoxical logic," Luttwak then examines another aspect of the logic of strategy—the "coming together and even the reversal of opposites." As he points out, "a course of action cannot persist indefinitely. It will tend to evolve into its opposite [for] the logic will induce a self-negating evolution, which may reach the extreme of a full reversal."

Using the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in World War II as an example of an attack which defeats itself by overshooting what Clausewitz called "the

culminating point of victory," Luttwak then extends this logic to the weapons of war. While "the notion of an 'action-reaction' sequence in the development of new war equipment and newer countermeasures . . . is deceptively familiar . . . slightly less obvious is the relationship (inevitably paradoxical) between the very success of new devices and the likelihood of their eventual failure [since] any sensible enemy will focus his most urgent efforts on countermeasures meant to neutralize whatever opposing device seems most dangerous at the time."

Using the example of the torpedo boat (thought to be the ultimate naval weapon in the late 19th century), Luttwak points out that this "ultimate weapon" scarcely played a role in World War I, "for by then the innovation had long passed its culminating point of success, and stood all the more neutralized *because of its very efficiency*." This logic also applies to the funding, design, and procurement of the weapons of war. As Luttwak explains, homogeneity is "the essential attribute that permits the efficiencies of economies of scale in acquisition, maintenance, and operation . . . but for military equipment that must function in direct interaction with the doings and undoings of a live enemy—within the strategic realm, in other words—homogeneity is no longer an unalloyed virtue and becomes a potential vulnerability." Taking procurement of a standardized antiaircraft missile as an illustration, Luttwak points out that "in war a competent enemy will be able to identify the weapon's equally homogenous performance boundaries and then proceed to evade interception by transcending those boundaries [and] what is true of antiaircraft missiles is just as true of any other machine of war that must function in direct interaction with reacting enemy." As he points out, "In the realm of conflict and strategy, therefore, economic principles stand in direct opposition to the demands of conflictual effectiveness."

Luttwak concludes his discussion of the logic of strategy by noting that "in strategy's dynamic paradox, a defense as much as an offensive can be too successful." Citing the historical examples of Verdun, Stalingrad, and Dien Bien Phu, Luttwak then brings his argument into the present by noting the Navy's claim in the aftermath of the Falklands War that they could successfully defend against an enemy missile attack.

But the question is not success, but success at what cost. As Luttwak observes, "out of an entire carrier group, with its several destroyers and one cruiser, its escort submarines and many supply ships, with perhaps almost 10,000 crew members on board, only 34 aircraft [out of some 90 embarked] remain for positive use on behalf of national purposes." The upshot of the successful defense against missile attack is that the overwhelming majority of the combat power of the carrier battle group is "consumed for self-protection."

With this groundwork laid, Luttwak uses the defense of Western Europe to apply the logic of strategy to what he sees as the five levels of war: "the *technical* interplay of specific weapons and counterweapons . . . the *tactical* combat of the forces that employ those particular weapons . . . the *operational* level [which] governs the consequences of what is done and not done tactically . . . the *theater* strategy [where] the consequences of single operations are felt in the overall conduct of offense and defense . . . and the highest level of *grand strategy*, where all that is military happens within the much broader context of domestic governance, international politics, economic activity, and their ancillaries."

"Strategy, then, has two dimensions: the vertical dimension of the different levels that interact with one another; and the horizontal dimension of the dynamic logic that unfolds concurrently within each level." As Luttwak concludes, "once the structure of strategy is understood, with its distinct levels and dimensions, an entire class of errors can be exposed, resisted, or directly inhibited."

For more than a generation our senior military officers have been unable to convince our civilian overseers that military strategy has its own peculiar logic. As a result civilian business-management linear logic has time and again taken us down the road to military disaster.

Now the means is at hand to correct that deficiency—Edward N. Luttwak's *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*. It is must reading.

**Military Technology and Defense Manpower.** By Martin Binkin. 138 pages. Brookings, Washington, D.C., 1986. \$22.95 (\$8.95 paper). *Reviewed by Dr. Lawrence J. Korb.*

This compact volume by Martin Binkin discusses a topic often overlooked in the debates over the level of defense expenditures and the tradeoffs between modernization and readiness: the impact of advancing military technology upon US forces. The author brings an impressive background to the study. He has published extensively on defense manpower issues and is the premier expert in the field.

The book is well-illustrated, containing 34 tables and charts, and offers a profuse array of examples as part of its analysis. Yet, like Binkin's other books, it remains quite readable. The military has led the civilian sector in the application of technology to its tasks and this study appropriately begins with a brief history of this process. The United States today fields a broad array of technically sophisticated weaponry and, because it chooses not to match the Soviets "man for man and tank for tank," it continues to pursue new advances. Despite this, there is "little understanding of how high technology will affect defense manpower requirements in the long term," and there is a great deal of rhetoric but little follow-through. Each of the services has developed programs to study manpower issues, e.g. HARDMAN and MANPRINT, but the effort is far too limited. There is a pressing need for serious analysis before imbalances develop between the skills of American forces and the requirements of the weapons they operate.

Binkin demonstrates his thesis about the potential for debilitating mismatches by analyzing trends on both sides of the man/machine relationship and giving examples of where technology has not made systems easier to operate and maintain. Clearly, US military systems are becoming more technically advanced and potent. It has become almost axiomatic that American qualitative superiority is necessary to offset Soviet quantitative advantages. But as Binkin notes, on the manpower side demographic trends are far from promising. After the widely publicized shortcomings of the late 1970s, the volunteer forces have improved markedly in quality, but the population trends indicate a shrinking pool of youths available for military service. Binkin argues that if the economy continues to grow, it will become increasingly difficult for the armed services to fill their ranks.

It is not necessarily inevitable that new weapons be more complex, and hence more demanding, than their predecessors, but unfortunately this is the general trend. In recent years there has been a growing debate over this point and, while

recognizing the basic validity of the arguments of technology proponents, Binkin sees little effort in the military to implement the measures needed to make the weapons more user-friendly. He also decries the tendency to reduce this debate to an argument for either quality or quantity, correctly considering it an oversimplification of a complex issue.

The final chapter in the book, and also the longest and the most informative, details the various policy options that might be pursued in order to prevent the currently tenuous balance between capabilities and military requirements from deteriorating. Binkin divides his discussion of these options into three categories: equipment design efforts, military training measures, and manpower management alternatives. He is pessimistic about efforts to enhance the manpower side of the equation; expanding the role of women, for example, may already be near the limits of its effectiveness unless there is a sudden shift in national attitudes toward exposing women to combat. Training technologies are much more promising, since recent developments in the field make possible increased use of sophisticated simulators and computer-based education. There is also much potential in the application of technology to improve system reliability, especially the use of diagnostic equipment to ease the complexity of maintenance. Reliability enhancements have too often been overlooked in the weapon development process.

The publication of material on the role of high technology in military organization and strategy has increased, but this study takes the issue a step further by assessing the impact of technological change in the military forces themselves. I disagree with his pessimism about the impact of demography on future manpower levels, but time will prove one of us correct. The rest of his analysis is timely and trenchant and should bring greater attention to an increasingly important subject.

**Strategy and Force Planning: The Case of the Persian Gulf.** By Joshua M. Epstein. 169 pages. Brookings, Washington, D.C., 1987. \$26.95 (paper \$9.95). *Reviewed by John M. Collins.*

This study, which "aims to shed new light on enduring problems of strategic choice, escalation control, and deterrent credibility," describes three US options designed to prevent the Soviet Union from seizing Khuzestan oil fields in southwestern Iran. Option 1, a conventional tripwire-vertical escalation strategy, counts on a small US contingent, quickly emplaced in time of crisis, to signal this nation's resolve and trigger nuclear retaliation if the Soviets invade Iran. Option 2 derives deterrent powers from threats to escalate horizontally with conventional counteroffensives "against Soviet targets outside the Persian Gulf theater." Option 3 employs air interdiction and special operations to delay Soviet divisions north of the Zagros Mountains while US defenders on the Khuzestan plain build strength, then defeat them when they dribble through bottleneck passes.

Epstein summarily dissects and discards Options 1 and 2, concluding that neither vertical nor horizontal escalation is a credible course of action for deterrence or defense. Option 3, which he champions, depends on fast reaction for success—he revises Nathan Bedford Forrest's familiar adage to read, "If you get there firstest, you may not need the mostest." Five divisions, he contends, are enough, provided they arrive in timely fashion. Otherwise, "not even a much larger RDF (Rapid

Deployment Force) is likely to succeed." Plans to expand US Central Command (CENTCOM) to 7 1/3 divisions thus seem inappropriate.

Five civilians, but no military authorities, are named in the acknowledgements. General P. X. Kelley, USMC, father of the US Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, is unnoted in the index. General Robert C. Kingston, his replacement and first CENTCOM Commander-in-Chief, rates little over one line in a footnote. While the bibliography contains some insightful primary sources, it compensates only in part for such oversights. Though touting "dynamic" methodologies for capitalizing upon Soviet vulnerabilities, the author disregards *spetsnaz*, chemical warfare, deception, and disinformation, all of which are Soviet strong points.

Nevertheless, Epstein's appraisal makes fascinating reading, particularly for contingency planners, operators, and their critics, including those in Congress and the news media. The biggest value of the book is that it provides a starting point for each reader to reach personal conclusions concerning his assumptions, hypotheses, mathematical models, scenarios, simulations, and cause effect relationships. Each can learn a lot in the process.

Josh Epstein, in short, is like all free-thinkers. He scores some bull's-eyes and some Maggie's drawers. The proportion depends on reader education, experience, proclivities for risk-taking, and common sense.

**Very Special Relationship. Field Marshal Sir John Dill and the Anglo-American Alliance, 1941-44.** By Alex Danchev. Brassey's Defence Publishers, London, 1987. \$26.00. *Reviewed by Forrest Pogue.*

Alex Danchev's book has beautifully filled a gap in Anglo-American knowledge of the crucial part played in British and American wartime collaboration between the head of the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington, Field Marshal Sir John Dill, and the US Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, in the months between Dill's arrival in early 1942 and his death near the end of 1944. The trust and understanding that developed between the two men was a key point in Allied cooperation.

From their meeting at the Atlantic Conference at Argentia, Newfoundland, in the late summer of 1941, when Dill was scheduled to be replaced after months as the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Marshall and Dill were friends. They began a correspondence which continued until Churchill, after Pearl Harbor, brought Dill with other military staff members to discuss war strategy in Washington. Marshall pushed for the establishment of a special arrangement in Washington in which the British Staff Committee in London would be represented in dealings with the American Chiefs of Staff by the British Staff Mission. Dill, who had been slated for the Governorship of Bombay, was chosen to head the Mission.

Danchev makes clear the way in which Marshall and Dill worked, developing rapidly an approach marked by trust and candor in which they could deal completely openly about day-to-day problems. In his interviews with the author of this review, General Marshall spoke with great feeling of the extent to which he and Dill worked as a devoted team. If someone in London sent a sharp message to the Americans, Dill would bring it off the record to Marshall before delivering it

officially. He would often soften the sharpness by explaining why the British had to take that position. Marshall would respond heatedly in full knowledge that Dill would report the explosion with a statement that it was a pity that Marshall was so rude. At the same time, he would explain that Marshall and the other Chiefs would go only so far to meet the British demands. At the great conferences when the President, the Prime Minister, and their staffs would meet, Dill was on hand to warn the British of the limits of American patience. Often, he helped break stalemates by persuading one of the British Chiefs to meet privately with Marshall to find a compromise. When in later months Churchill decided to recall Dill, Marshall put on a special campaign to play up Dill's standing in the United States so as to lead Churchill to drop the order for recall. When Dill died, Marshall arranged for a special congressional vote of respect, for Dill's burial in Arlington Cemetery, and for an equestrian monument to be erected over the grave.

In addition to their mutual trust, Marshall was grateful for the benefit of Dill's experience gained in his months as head of the British army in the grave days following the fall of France. He profited from Dill's analyses of the thinking of the Prime Minister and the British Chiefs. The British, in turn, gained from Dill's understanding of the Americans.

Marshall felt that the Prime Minister did not fully appreciate Dill's contribution. He would have been delighted that Danchev has helped to set that record right. Danchev has also made clear Marshall's part in creating the very special relationship that helped bring Allied victory.

**Empty Promise: The Growing Case Against Star Wars.** Edited by John Tirman. 192 pages. The Union of Concerned Scientists. Beacon Press, Boston, 1986. \$7.95. *Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel S. Pete Worden, USAF, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President.*

This book was painful for me to read. Hardly a page was turned without revealing glaring misrepresentations, disinformation, errors, and in some cases outright lies. I was halfway through before I could put my finger on the problem—I was reading a piece on theology.

To put this book in its proper light, consider a parable. Imagine if you will a nominally Islamic country in the Middle East. A charismatic and popular leader, concerned with the public's spiritual well-being, considers alternate religions for his people. He decides that Christianity might better protect the people from sin and announces a "Strategic Christianity Initiative" or SCL. No one would be surprised by the reaction of the old-line theologians to the SCL. It wouldn't take them long to form a "Union of Concerned Mullahs" or UCM. The UCM would write many books, appear on talk shows, and generally regard the Strategic Christianity Initiative with hostility. Several themes would dominate the Mullahs' concern: Christianity can't provide perfect protection against sin. **Christian leaders** are inconsistent in their public statements—theological arguments from the Pope are often at odds with those of Jerry Falwell. Polls would show the overwhelming majority of Mullahs oppose Christianity. Finally, a precipitous move toward Christianity might upset Satan enough to bring on Armageddon.

Unfortunately, President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative or SDI has become a theological issue every bit as contentious as the one in my parable. Strategic theory has become secular religion—and there are three main competing sects. Each sect espouses radically different roles for offensive and defensive forces and arms control. The Union of Concerned Scientists advocates Mutual Assured Destruction or MAD. MAD relies on a modest offensive nuclear force—just large enough to blow up a portion of the adversary's cities—say 25 percent. But strategic defenses are antithetical to the principles of MAD and must be suppressed. Defenses make it hard to calculate how many nuclear weapons are needed to assure MAD. Arms control is central to MAD because it can eliminate defenses—thereby assuring that both sides are vulnerable. The second religion, Flexible Response or nuclear warfighting, is like MAD in that it relies primarily on nuclear offensive weapons to deter war. But the targets of those offensive forces are the other guy's military—not his cities. Defenses are okay in Flexible Response to the degree that they protect offensive forces from enemy first strikes. The third religion—upon which the SDI is based—is strategic defense-reliant deterrence. It has a goal exactly opposite to MAD's. Defenses are designed to deny the enemy meaningful offensive war options. Arms control can then get rid of offensive, not defensive forces. It is little wonder, therefore, that MAD theologians categorically reject defense-reliant deterrence. What one approach holds holy, the other holds profane.

*Empty Promise* hides the MAD theology behind technological mumbo-jumbo and cheap shots at SDI advocates. It is simply a collection of articles by MAD Mullahs. Some articles—notably those by John Tirman and Jonathan Tucker—attack the ethics and methods of SDI advocates. Two articles, by Peter Clausen and by John Tirman and Peter Didisheim, try to assign SDI and its advocates to the Flexible Response religion and attack it on that basis. The articles alleging SDI's potentially inhibiting effects on arms control negotiations are correct—but they fail to point out that it is arms control with MAD as its objective that SDI damages.

The book's only genuinely technical articles address our ability to command and control a strategic defense system. These articles—by Robert Zirkle, Greg Nelson, and David Redall—are interesting from a historical perspective. They argue that our ability to program the command and control for an effective strategic defense is questionable at best:

The current state of the art makes the development of even a 1-million line program a highly complex and risky undertaking. (Nelson)

The required computer system would be far more complex than any previous computerized weapons systems and would require software well beyond the current state of the art. (Redall)

Sounds pretty conclusive and technical to me! But then I went back and reviewed the arguments made against the US Anti-Ballistic Missile deployment in the late 1960s. Some of the same people lobbying against SDI in *Empty Promise* were involved in that old debate, Richard Garwin for example. In 1969, a similar book written by distinguished scientists entitled *ABM: An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an*

*Antimissile System* (New York: Signet, 1969) stated, "Many engineers feel that it will simply not be possible to program such [an ABM] computer successfully in the near future." In fact, the United States developed and deployed the Safeguard ABM in the early 1970s. The computer system integrator for Safeguard, Bell Laboratories, concluded in 1975: "Its production required the development of a highly reliable multiprocessor computer system, and the generation of millions of lines of computer code . . . . It can reasonably be said that the complete development, including the integration of the first installed sites, was performed on schedule and that the system met the prescribed specifications." Let the reader beware of glib conclusions about the technical feasibility of something the opponents wouldn't want if they could have it tomorrow for free.

I recommend that those interested in national grand strategy read *Empty Promise*. But readers should keep in mind that scientists have no more expertise in matters of military strategy than do Islamic Mullahs. Comments on competing ideas from these groups are theological and political—not technical. I think it is only fair to confess that this reviewer is a dedicated Christian on the issue of SDI. Thus, like the Union of Concerned Scientists, I too have biases. The reader should listen more carefully to what each advocate says of his own approach than to what he says about *other* approaches. Then the reader can decide which approach best protects him.

**Tug of War: The Battle for Italy, 1943-1945.** By Dominick Graham and Shelford Bidwell. 445 pages. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1986. \$24.95. *Reviewed by Colonel Harold W. Nelson, USA.*

Operations in Italy in World War II have been the subject of extensive official histories, memoirs, and scholarly monographs. This single volume is a solid effort to synthesize the best of these earlier works in light of the archival sources available in the repositories of both sides in the conflict. Inevitably, much familiar ground is covered, and the authors must include strategic background and tactical detail to tell the operational story. The main line of their narrative handles this pedestrian dimension of their task gracefully, producing a book that should give a beginning student of these operations an excellent starting point in the voluminous maze of secondary sources.

Readers who have already traveled any distance in that maze will be more interested in the interpretive dimensions of this history. The Western Allies who fought in Italy were not blessed with flawless leadership, and the errors of omission and commission in their decisions receive ample coverage here. The authors are explicitly attempting to transcend "the problems that official historians and their unofficial successors face in recounting a coalition campaign in a national history." Fans of General Mark Clark might detect a certain British bias in the product, but no one could fault the endeavor to correlate the materials in the various national archives with conflicting "authoritative" sources. The four-page "footnote" describing research on Operation AVENGER and the bombing of Monte Cassino Monastery reminds us of the complexity of the historian's task when he embarks in the turbulent sea of ink that has been spilled in dissecting those controversial decisions and actions by senior leaders.

Readers get an extra dimension in the tactical analyses of most key battles because the authors have studied the actual terrain described in the histories.

"Ground is evidence as important as a typed letter, an operation plan, or a message form torn from a signal pad," they write, and they have used the insights that come from studying the ground with the eye of a professional soldier to refute "evidence" that will not stand this simple test. Since the terrain over which these battles were fought is often as complex as the written accounts, this is no small accomplishment. Unfortunately, some of the battlefield studies were undertaken nearly twenty years ago, and have found their way into this volume without detailed updating, weakening the linkage between terrain findings and monographs that have since been published. But linking documentation to narrative is inevitably weak in such a history. To do more in this area would overwhelm the reader. As it is, the footnotes and select bibliography will give any reader who seeks more information on these operations ample leads in choosing his next book. In short, *Tug of War* should be on the shelf of any student of military history who is ready to begin serious study of World War II operations in Italy.

**Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of an Alliance.** By Douglas Pike. 255 pages. Westview Press, Boulder, Colo., 1987. \$29.85. Reviewed by Dr. Leif Rosenberger.

Moscow and Hanoi gave every appearance of close cooperation against the United States during the Vietnam War. Many observers saw the two allies working hand-in-hand to further the spread of communism in Asia. This image of intimate Soviet and Vietnamese cooperation was strengthened after the war when Moscow supported the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Kampuchea.

In his comprehensive new book, *Vietnam and the Soviet Union*, Douglas Pike provides an excellent analysis of the ties that bind the alliance, such as Vietnamese economic and military dependence and Soviet geopolitical opportunism, as well as their mutual hostility toward China. In addition, Mr. Pike analyzes how Soviet-Vietnamese relations are becoming more institutionalized or less ad hoc in nature. On the surface, this more integrated relationship would seem to suggest a durable alliance.

But Pike warns that only "a foolish determinist" can predict whether Moscow and Hanoi will have a permanent alliance. Pike argues persuasively that the relationship is more uneasy than it is close. Pike carefully describes strains which run from the start of Soviet-Vietnamese relations to the present. Pike's discussion of the subliminal friction between the two allies is a particularly fascinating contribution.

Unfortunately, the book fails to discuss mounting evidence that the Soviet Union and Vietnam are working together to support indigenous communist movements outside of Indochina. For instance, Admiral Ronald J. Hays, Commander of Pacific Command, says there is no doubt in his mind that the Soviet Union is supporting the New Peoples' Army (NPA) in the Philippines. Captured Philippine communist leader Rodolfo Salas recently revealed that Moscow and Hanoi began negotiating with the Philippine communists over material support to the NPA as early as 1984. Soviet-Vietnamese support to the NPA challenges Pike's assertion that "Gorbachev's policies in Asia seem less ideologically oriented."



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