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The Operational End State: Cornerstone Of The Operational Level Of War

by

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Infantry

School of Advanced Military Studies
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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This monograph finds that historical actions validate theoretical concepts concerning the criticality of the operational end state in the proper conduct of operational warfare. This criticality is reflected in developing U.S. operational doctrine through an emphasis upon end state development as the first step in constructing a framework for the successful conduct of operational warfare.

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ABSTRACT

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This monograph examines the criticality of the operational end state to the conduct of operational warfare through a theoretical and historical analysis from which conclusions concerning current doctrinal treatment of the operational end state are drawn.

The theoretical basis for the operational end state begins with the development of linkage between tactical military action and political strategic goals found in the theoretical writings of Clausewitz and Jomini. Their treatment of this subject is reaffirmed by twentieth century military writers such as Lasswell, Huntington, and Brodie. An historical analysis of U.S. military actions since the end of WWII is then presented to determine the validity of theory concerning the criticality of the operational end state to the successful achievement of national strategic goals. Several military actions have been chosen as representative of the application of military force to achieve U.S. strategic goals: the Korean Conflict, the 1961 Cuban "Bay of Pigs", the 1965 Dominican Republic Intervention, and the Vietnam War. (SDW) ✓

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PART I INTRODUCTION

Historically, U.S. conflicts have had the flavor of crusades as the Republic either preserved the western hemisphere from European imperialism or fought for western democratic ideals threatened by totalitarian regimes. These conflicts had but one aim for victory, the total defeat of an opponent's armed forces. To achieve this aim, the Congress declared war and supported the military as it fought to achieve this well defined goal. The U.S. concept of war up to the end of World War II is described by Samuel Huntington in The Soldier and the State:

War was sharply differentiated from peace. When the Nation went to war, it went wholeheartedly, turning the direction of the conflict over to those who made it their business. The national aim of total victory superceded all else. The military became the executor of the national will, the technicians called in to implement the basic policy decision.¹

The successful conclusion of the Second World War brought about the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as global powers, the decline of the two traditional European imperialist powers, France and Britain, the beginning of the Third World struggle for independence, and the development of nuclear weaponry. These changes in the international environment marked the end of U.S. participation in total or near total war and the beginning of its participation in a period of limited war.

At the same time as the nature of war changed, American social values shifted to a democratic liberalism both at home and abroad as the socialistic tenets of Roosevelt's "New Deal" policies blended with an undercurrent of neoisolationism in the post-war era.² These

developments in war and society led to difficulties in the linkage of national strategic goals and the tactical application of military power at a time when strategic success in limited war required close political and military coordination. Instead of a convergence between the use of force to further strategic political goals, there began a divergence in purpose. This divergence continued in the absence of military doctrine, articulating the necessity for a translation of success in battle to desired political outcomes. Until the publication of FM 100-5 in 1986 and the coordinating draft of FM 100-6 in 1987 this omission led to a military and political focus upon tactical and strategic considerations to the neglect of any form of linkage between the two. This absence of linkage led the armed forces of the United States to expend limited critical resources and lives in a succession of tactical actions which failed to support the stated U.S. strategic goal of containment.

The absent linkage between tactical means and political ends is found in the operational end state. This end state articulates the military conditions which must exist to support national strategic goals. A concept for the application of force must then be developed to achieve this end state. This process of developing a concept to attain an end state furthering the probability of strategic success is the operational level of war.

This paper will examine the criticality of the operational end state to the conduct of operational warfare through a theoretical and historical analysis. The theoretical basis for the operational end state spans two centuries of military thought. Clausewitz and Jomini began the conceptual development of the linkage between tactical military action

and political strategic goals. Their treatment of this subject has been reaffirmed by twentieth century military writers such as Lasswell, Huntington, and Brodie.

Historically, U.S. military actions since the end of the Second World War will be analyzed to determine the validity of theory concerning the criticality of the operational end state to the successful achievement of national strategic goals. Several military actions have been chosen as representative of the application of military force to achieve U.S. strategic goals: the Korean Conflict, the 1961 Cuban "Bay of Pigs", the 1965 Dominican Republic Intervention, and the Vietnam War. These cases involved joint operations within a theater of operations and reflected the "limited" nature of warfare since the end of World War II. The analysis will focus upon the operational commanders' development of an end state and its effect upon the campaign plan. Based upon this theoretical and historical analysis, conclusions concerning current doctrinal treatment of the operational end state will be presented.

Prior to any discussion of the operational end state it is necessary to define this term. Throughout this paper the operational end state is defined as those military conditions established by the operational commander which must be attained to support national strategic goals. It must be emphasized that these military conditions are only one of five recognized elements of national power.³ Success in the application of military force does not lead automatically to strategic success if the other four elements of national power are ignored or ineffectively applied.

PART II THEORY

The theoretical roots of the operational end state and its importance lie in the writings of Clausewitz and Jomini. Although Jomini and Clausewitz approached the theory of warfare differently, they are in agreement on the importance of the operational end state to the conduct of the operational level of war.

Clausewitz codified the theoretical concept of war as an extension of politics by other means. Throughout On War he emphasizes continually the necessity of recognizing the use of armed might as a means of attaining some desired political goal. Clausewitz defines strategy as the use of engagements for the object of the war. His concept of strategy is at the base of the contemporary concept of the operational level of war found in FM 100-5. Clausewitz goes on to write that the practitioner of operational art, must, "define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with its purpose. In other words, he will draft the plan of the war, and the aim will determine the series of actions intended to achieve it. . . ." This aim which determines the "series of actions" is the operational end state from which the concept of operations of the plan of campaign is derived.⁴

Clausewitz goes on to describe how difficult it is for the operational artist to overcome the variety of distractions tending to divert his attention from focusing on the attainment of the operational end state. He emphasizes how important strength of character becomes to the maintenance of this operational focus. According to Clausewitz

maintenance of this focus is so difficult that most generals fail to do so.⁵ If adhering to an operational end state is so difficult, then any attempt to practice the operational level of war, as envisioned by Clausewitz, without an articulated operational end state would seem to be nearly impossible.

Jomini, in his chapter on "Military Policy" in The Art Of War, echoes the Clausewitzian aim in his discussion of two theoretical elements critical to the development and resourcing of operational warfare, or "system of operations" as he calls this level of war. The first of these elements is that of a "prescribed aim". This "prescribed aim" serves as the reference for the "system of operations" as well as a basis for determining "the material means necessary to guarantee the success of the enterprise [the 'system of operations']". The second element is that of the "object of war", the strategic goal. According to Jomini, "the system of operations ought to be determined by the object of war". Therefore, a "system of operations" exists focused upon a "prescribed aim" which is determined by the "object of the war". In other words, the operational end state, the "prescribed aim", links the strategic goal, the "object of war", to tactical operations and serves as a means of assessing resources necessary to carry out the operational level of war.⁶ Logically then, in the absence of this "prescribed aim", tactical operations would not be focused upon, nor resourced for, the attainment of the "object of the war". Operational art would not exist, only tactical actions focused upon the achievement of tactical objectives.

A good measure of a theoretical model is how well it has stood the test of time. In the case of Clausewitz and Jomini their model advocating

the criticality of an operational end state to operational warfare would seem to have fared quite well. By the late 20th century, several books had been written analyzing the applicability of Clausewitzian and Jominian theory to contemporary warfare. Bernard Brodie's War and Politics makes a strong case for the centrality of an articulated operational end state to the successful conduct of modern warfare. Brodie postulates that military force applied without political restraint becomes uncontrolled reducing the likelihood of political strategic success. Therefore, the need to articulate the conditions which must be achieved by force of arms to gain political strategic success is paramount in contemporary conflict.

Harold D. Lasswell, in his work On Political Sociology, proposes that conflict in the modern era will become all pervasive. This environment of continual conflict will demand military leaders who are intimate with desired political strategic outcomes in order to determine the most effective sort of violence to "manage" in achieving these political outcomes. Lasswell's conceptual military leader combines the political and the military leadership of the state in one individual capable of developing an operational end state and directing the armed forces to achieve this end state. This figure is much like Napoleon during the period in which Clausewitz and Jomini formulated their theories of war.

Samuel Huntington, in the Soldier and the State, echoes the importance of linking force of arms to desired political outcomes. He proposes that the determination of military objectives supporting national strategic policy is critical if force of arms is to be beneficial for a nation-state. Huntington does caution against Lasswell's soldier-politician on the

grounds that a politicized military leader will no longer provide the most effective means, in strictly military terms, of achieving an operational end state. This absence of the most effective purely military solution does not provide a nation's leadership with a basis of assessing risk as political and military advantages are traded off in an effort to achieve the strategic goal.

As discussed, the Clausewitzian and Jominian theoretical model for war is based upon the "aim" linking strategy and tactics. This "aim" insures that the last step has been thought through before the first step on the road to war has been taken. Subsequent theoretical discussions concerning the elements of operational design, such as centers of gravity, decisive points, and the relative merits of offense and defense, are all based on the supposition that the leadership of the nation-state has some design behind the tactical military actions which will support strategic goals. If all the elements of operational design have been identified and from them a plan of campaign developed and resourced, but no consideration given to the strategic implications of this plan of campaign, then no operational plan exists, nor is the military leadership operating at the operational level of war. It is merely tactics conducted on a larger scale.

Articulation of an operational end state is fundamental to any use of armed force at the operational level. Knowledge and practice of the elements of operational design or the employment of large units do not, of themselves, place one at the operational level of war.

PART III HISTORY

A historical review of the operational end state illustrates the impact of the previously discussed theory upon U.S. effectiveness in the application of military force in support of national strategy since the end of World War II. This strategy has been one of containment of communism.⁷ In effect, the United States has drawn a global line which no communist aggressor must cross.⁸

KOREA

The first challenge to this strategy of containment occurred on the morning of 24 June 1950 when Kim Il Sung launched the North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA) into the Republic of Korea (ROK) catching both the United States and the Republic of Korea by surprise. On 29 June, 1950 the commander of the U.S. Far Eastern Command, General Douglas MacArthur, who had assumed responsibility for Korea from the Korean Military Advisory Group, personally observed the frontline situation. He formulated his plan of campaign to defeat the NKPA and restore South Korea to the ROK government while watching ROK forces flee the advancing North Koreans.⁹ Upon his return to Japan MacArthur sent President Truman his recommendation for the "immediate dispatch of American divisions to Korea". At this time the Far Eastern Command staff began working on the detailed planning which would result in the destruction of the NKPA between U.N. forces attacking north from Pusan and south from the Inchon-Seoul area. On 1 July, 1950, the Truman Administration removed all restrictions on the use of U.S. ground forces in Korea save the requirement to insure the safety of Japan. Previously only air and naval action had been authorized throughout Korea with ground forces limited to holding the Pusan area.¹⁰

By the end of September 1950 the successful execution of the Inchon landing and the Pusan breakout had attained the initial objective of the United States-- repelling the aggressor from the Republic of Korea. Theory had been applied, and it had worked.

At this time ROK ground forces were directed by the President of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, to unify Korea in accordance with South Korean political aims while U.S. forces were preparing a limited advance into North Korea to finish off the NKPA. This use of U.S. ground forces by MacArthur had been decided upon after two visits from representatives of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in July and August and the subsequent receipt of a JCS directive dated 27 September authorizing U.S. ground forces to advance above the 38th parallel. This directive was contingent upon: nonintervention of major Soviet or Chinese Communist forces into North Korea; no announcement of intervention; and no Soviet or Chinese military threats to counter MacArthur's operations in North Korea. The only other restriction in the JCS directive was a loosely worded caution that non-ROK forces were not to be used in the provinces of North Korea bordering Manchuria.¹¹ No limit of advance short of the Yalu was set. The basis of this directive was National Security Directive (NSD) 81/1, authorizing U.N. forces to advance above the 38th parallel. MacArthur interpreted this restriction as an east-west line roughly 45 to 50 miles south of the Korean-Chinese border. The JCS did not question this interpretation. On 24 October, 1950 MacArthur, without JCS consultation, removed all restrictions upon non-ROK forces clearing the way for a U.N. push to the Yalu. Again the JCS did not object.

The first overt Chinese reaction to the northern movement of non-ROK forces occurred on 25 October when Communist Chinese Forces (CCF)

attacked both the 8th Army and X Corps, checked the U.N. advance and withdrew from contact. In response to this CCF attack and in preparation for a final U.N. offensive to the Yalu, MacArthur requested permission to bomb the Korean end of key bridges over the Yalu River. At first the JCS denied permission but acquiesced one day later, 8 November, deferring to the expertise of the theater commander. On the same day the JCS warned MacArthur of a possible revision of NSD 81/1 in light of the recent CCF intervention. Yet on 21 November the JCS, in consultation with representatives of the Truman Administration, again acquiesced to the theater commander and gave their silent approval to the upcoming U.N. offensive despite anxiety about possible massive CCF intervention.

What was to be the final U.N. offensive began 24 November, 1950. Less than 24 hours later Chinese forces began their own offensive which again checked the U.N. advance and this time continued on to push U.N. forces south of the 38th parallel. This successful intervention led to the relief of General MacArthur, and caused considerable international and domestic embarrassment to the Truman Administration for its conduct of foreign policy. This setback was to prolong the conflict until 1953 and became a major domestic political issue leading to the defeat of the incumbent political party.

By the time of the armistice, 27 July, 1953, the fundamental decision of the Truman Administration to fight the Korean War for the limited political objective of restoring the independence of South Korea and avert a major, and possibly nuclear, war had been accomplished for a second time.¹² However, U.S. strategic goals had been poorly served in the process. A major cause of this poor performance was the absence of a clearly established link between the use of armed force and the

realization of strategic goals. What linkage existed lay within the limitations of the genius of General MacArthur. Military conditions supporting the U.S. strategic goal of containment within the Far Eastern Theater of War were developed, realized, and then dramatically destroyed through the actions of MacArthur. Higher military and political authorities were unwilling to intervene or assert their authority within the Far Eastern Command. The only meeting the Chairman of the JCS or the President of the United States had with the operational commander whose actions could plunge the country into global war occurred on Wake Island and lasted less than three hours. The results of this meeting can be summed up in the words of MacArthur, "No new policies, no new strategy of war or international politics were proposed or discussed".¹³ Yet the subsequent action of the U.N. commander in advancing to the Yalu was in direct contravention to the stated strategic policies of the Truman Administration and led to charges by President Truman that MacArthur had misled him as to the true strength of the CCF.¹⁴ The operational end state had been changed in October–November 1950 by the unilateral actions of the Theater Commander to the detriment of national strategic policy. The fundamental theoretical premise that war is an extension of politics realized through the articulation of an operational end state in support of strategic goals had been violated. The result was the failure of an excellent operational concept, Inchon-Pusan, to achieve the strategic goal of containment.

CUBA

The events surrounding the 19 April, 1961 defeat of the Cuban emigre

invasion force at the Bay of Pigs continued the divergence of U.S. military actions and strategic goals. In this case there was a failure to focus the operational concept upon the desired end state. Although the invading force did not consist of U.S. ground forces, the CIA trained and equipped the invading emigre force, "Brigade 2506", and the Kennedy Administration, after receipt of JCS concurrence, approved the plan of invasion to secure the removal of Castro and eliminate this communist foothold in the Caribbean.¹⁵

The military conditions necessary for success were developed by the CIA and approved by the JCS. These conditions consisted of securing a beachhead within Cuba for a period of time sufficient for a Provisional Free Cuban government to land and request recognition from the Organization of American States (OAS) and ask for intervention on the part of the OAS to overthrow Castro.¹⁶ The political situation in Cuba was believed to be so anti-Castro that this military action would act as a catalyst for internal and external opposition to Castro.

The CIA plan originally involved training Cuban emigres to mount a guerilla campaign in Cuba but was modified to a conventional invasion after an advance party in Cuba had been eliminated by Castro's militia. This new plan involved a frontal assault by 800-900 men, supported by a limited number of tanks and a small emigre air force, to secure a beachhead. Cuban ground forces at this time consisted of about 200,000 militia and 32,000 regular troops. Castro also possessed a small air force, primarily propeller driven fighters and a few bombers. The prohibition of direct involvement by U.S. forces of any type was a major restriction placed upon the planners.¹⁷

In November 1960, the JCS was presented with this revised CIA plan

to overthrow Castro. They showed little faith in the concept of a small-sized invasion by Cuban emigres alone. Additionally, the Secretary of Defense, influenced by the negative opinion of COL Edward Lansdale on the likelihood of a successful emigre action, called the proposed landing forces wholly inadequate.¹⁸ Despite this criticism the CIA continued to flesh out the plan. On 22 January, 1961 the JCS met with Brigadier General David Gray who headed a committee established to coordinate secret actions among various U.S. government agencies involved in paramilitary activities. Gray's committee had not been informed of the revised CIA plan and independent of the CIA presented several options to overthrow Castro. The committee's preliminary assessment was that, as a minimum, it would require a guerilla force with U.S. backup to overthrow Castro.¹⁹ Upon receipt of the completed CIA plan in early February 1961, the JCS directed General Gray to evaluate its feasibility. Gray presented his assessment at the end of February. According to Gray the risk was 85 to 15 against success at the chosen beachhead with the stipulation that ultimate success depended upon the landing force acting as a catalyst for an internal Cuban uprising.²⁰ It is important to note that on 3 March, 1961 the CIA estimated that 25% of the Cuban population was opposed to Castro. Finally, Gray's assessment stated that a single, unopposed Castro plane armed with a .50 cal MG could sink all the invading ships.

Despite this assessment, the JCS gave their approval to the CIA plan and dropped an earlier condition specifying a need for large scale U.S. military intervention in support of the landing to insure success.²¹ CIA planners did change the original landing site from heavily populated Port Trinidad to the remote Bay of Pigs area based on the 85 to 15 assessment. On 15 March the Chairman of the JCS, General Lemnitzer, submitted JCS

acceptance, not approval, of the Bay of Pigs as the best alternative to Port Trinidad giving the plan a fair chance of success.²²

At the end of March 1961, President Kennedy had only given his permission to continue training Brigade 2506; he had yet to approve an invasion date. His hesitancy in the face of CIA pressure to grant full approval and set an invasion date was due to lingering doubts concerning the feasibility of the CIA plan and the negative effects upon U.S. foreign policy that would result from a failure of the U.S. sponsored invasion. President Kennedy convened a final National Security Council meeting 4 April, 1961 to review the plan and set an invasion date. General Lemnitzer, representing the JCS, was present and endorsed the final CIA plan involving a conventional amphibious assault without U.S. forces.²³ This approved plan had been further modified to include the conduct of a guerilla campaign by surviving members of the landing force in the event of a failed assault. Unknown to the JCS and President Kennedy, the emigres had not been told of this modification nor had they been trained to execute an operation of this type.²⁴

The invasion was launched at 11:00 PM on 16 April, 1961. Despite the identified need to destroy Castro's air force prior to the landing, only one-third of his aircraft had been destroyed by D-2. President Kennedy disapproved further attacks on Castro's air force which had been scheduled for D-1, fearing adverse domestic and foreign opinion since the U.S. had been identified in the press as providing basing for the attacking emigre aircraft. On the morning of 17 April, Castro's remaining planes, flying unopposed, sank several key ships and forced the surviving shipping, containing reinforcements for the first wave ashore, to sail

back to Guatemala.²⁵ This air action left the invading force undermanned and without the majority of its heavy weapons and communication equipment. A militia battalion which recently had moved into the vicinity of the Bay of Pigs to conduct training exercises further increased the difficulties faced by the troops ashore. This unit reacted quickly to the presence of the invaders and stopped attempts to expand the beachhead. Upon being alerted of the invasion at 3:15 the morning of 17 April, Castro personally assumed command of the operation to defeat the invaders and quickly reinforced the battalion in contact with regular army troops and mobilized militia units. By 19 April, 1961 Brigade 2506 had been defeated with remnants attempting to hide in the swamps and jungle in the vicinity of the Bay of Pigs. The failure of the invasion enabled Castro to consolidate his hold upon the island and firmly establish a communist presence within the Caribbean basin contrary to U.S. strategic goals.²⁶

Just as in Korea, a weakness existed in the link between strategic goals and military action. In this case, the operational end state had been identified, but the inability of CIA planners and military advisors to develop and resource an operational concept focusing upon the realistic attainment of the desired end state led to strategic failure. The resources available for planning were inadequate to support the approved concept. In the words of General David Shoup, Commandant of the Marine Corps, to his JCS colleagues after a briefing on the proposed CIA invasion plan, "If this kind of operation can be done with this kind of force, with this much training and knowledge about it, then we are wasting our time. . . [with] our [regular] divisions; we ought to go on leave for 3 months out of 4."²⁷

The CIA operational concept was a poor attempt to achieve the desired end state. However, rather than changing the end state or modifying the plan to increase the likelihood of achieving the end state, the JCS gave its collective approval. The operational concept had taken on a life of its own. The focus upon achievement of the operational end state was lost. The Clausewitzian warning of the difficulty in maintaining operational focus upon an end state had not been heeded. The Bay of Pigs fiasco not only led to tactical and strategic failure but further weakened the U.S. ability to coordinate military action in the attainment of strategic goals. In the words of President Kennedy, "The first advice I'm going to give my successor is to watch the generals and to avoid feeling that just because they were military men their opinions on military matters were worth a damn."²⁸

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The 1965 U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic is an example of an operational end state driving the operational concept to a successful conclusion supporting the strategic goal of containment. At first glance this action would indicate a U.S. political and military awareness of the criticality of the operational end state to the development of an effective campaign plan. Unfortunately this success was based upon the personalities involved rather than a doctrinal structure demanding a clear articulation of the operational end state as the first step towards the successful practice of the operational art.

On 24 April, 1965 the incumbent Dominican government of Donald Reid Cabral came under internal attack from a group of junior army officers

adopting the label of "Constitutionalists". This opposition quickly gained the support of several disaffected army units and served as a catalyst for Santo Domingo's leftist political leadership. An initial U.S. embassy assessment concluded that the Reid government quickly would suppress the coup. However, neither Reid nor U.S. embassy officials took into account the strength of the Soviet dominated Dominican Revolutionary Party, the Castroite 14th of June Revolutionary Movement, and the Dominican Popular Movement. In less than 24 hours, the western half of the capital, Santo Domingo, was under the control of rebels mobilized by the communist factions and armed with weapons looted from government armories, police stations, and units defecting from the armed forces.²⁹

President Johnson approved a JCS plan to evacuate U.S. citizens from the Dominican Republic under the protection of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade on 28 April, 1965. The same day that President Johnson approved non-combatant evacuation, the Santo Domingo Police Chief and the loyalist junta leader, COL Pedro Benoit, requested U.S. forces to restore order. In the words of Ambassador Bennett, "If the present loyalist efforts fail, the power will go to groups whose aims are identified with the Communist Party."³⁰

The specter of a "second Cuba" continually haunted President Johnson, particularly in light of the political damage incurred by former President Kennedy as a result of the "Bay of Pigs" fiasco. President Johnson was determined to halt the spread of communist influence and as a result of the ambassador's updated assessment ordered in the U.S. Army's 82d Airborne. The mission of committed U.S. forces was expanded to include prevention of the Dominican Republic from falling into communist hands.³¹

As the first U.S. soldiers landed at the San Isidro airport early on the morning of 30 April no operational end state existed linking tactical actions of U.S. forces to the achievement of the expanded Presidential mission. Tactically, the 82d was to seize the airfield at San Isidro and prepare to help the Marines in the evacuation of U.S. citizens.³² Fortunately for the U.S., General Wheeler was in the process of fulfilling President Johnson's demand to, "get the best general in the Pentagon", to command U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic.³³ By midnight 30 April, LTG Bruce Palmer, Jr. was in-country under orders to prevent a communist takeover. Wheeler told Palmer to take all necessary measures to accomplish his mission.

As early as 29 April, the U.S. ambassador, William Bennett, had suggested a plan to interpose U.S. forces between the rebels and the loyalists as a first step in stopping the violence.³⁴ It was this idea of isolating the combatants from each other that LTG Palmer seized upon as the military condition which would best lead to a successful political outcome. It was with this end state in mind that, beginning on 1 May, LTG Palmer presided over the largest military build-up in the history of American intervention in Latin America.³⁵ Key to Palmer's end state of factional isolation was the presence of a large neutral force capable of physically preventing either faction from attacking the other. Five days after the first U.S. troops landed at San Isidro airport U.S. strength on shore reached 17,000 soldiers, marines, and airmen. On 2 May LTG Palmer presented his plan to effect the desired factional isolation to the Organization of American States (OAS) for approval. OAS Secretary General Jose A. Mora approved the plan and that evening soldiers from the 82d began moving into position.

At one minute past midnight on 3 May, 1965, three U.S. battalions moved out to link up with U.S. Marines, split the capital city, and isolate the warring factions. At 1:12 AM a four block wide corridor, manned by U.S. troops, separated the constitutionalist rebels from the loyalist government forces. The establishment of this corridor, officially called the "line of communications", and Palmer's rules of engagement favoring neither side in the conflict immediately brought the factional fighting to a halt allowing President Johnson to concentrate on a political solution to the Dominican problem.

A continued U.S. military presence, later incorporated into an OAS peacekeeping force, guaranteed a political dialogue which by June 1966 led to free elections. The 1966 race for the Dominican Presidency was a three way contest that included the leadership of the former Constitutionalist rebels as one of the contesting parties. Former President Hector Balaguer was elected by a 57.7% majority of the 1.3 million ballots cast. The Constitutionalist, Juan Bosch, came in second.³⁶ On July 1, 1966 the OAS voted to withdraw the peacekeeping force.

In the absence of military operational doctrine it was the personal insight and cooperation of LTG Palmer and Ambassador Bennett, their clear understanding of the strategic mission, and their detailed knowledge of the Dominican culture and political structure which led to the determination of a politically acceptable and militarily feasible operational end state. This operational end state guided subsequent military actions establishing conditions from which political actions leading to strategic success [containment] could take place. Theory had proven to be valid when correctly applied.

VIETNAM

The depth of U.S. operational shortsightedness was reached in the conduct of military operations in the Republic of South Vietnam. The Clausewitzian warning of the need to define an aim for the operational pursuit of the war in accordance with its political purpose went unheeded.³⁷

The story of U.S. involvement in Indochina is a dismal tale of contradictory military and political policy. In early 1950 France requested U.S. assistance to defeat the Viet Minh. The official stance of the Eisenhower Administration was one of non-compliance with any aid requests.³⁸ The Army Chief of Staff, General Matthew Ridgway, was in agreement. In his words, "Indochina is devoid of decisive military objectives" and involvement there "would be a serious diversion of limited U.S. capabilities."³⁹ In hindsight this is perhaps the last time that political and military activities were mutually supporting. Despite serious misgivings on the part of President Eisenhower this policy was abandoned and an incremental involvement of the U.S. in Indochina began. Unfortunately the primary focus of this involvement was on the use of force to achieve strategic containment. The specter of a monolithic "red menace" was so powerful that force of arms appeared to be the only effective means of containment.⁴⁰

The French defeat in 1954 left the U.S. in direct confrontation with the Vietnamese communists. In the perceived absence of any other alternative, the U.S. chose to back Ngo Dinh Diem. From 1954 until 1963

the Eisenhower and later the Kennedy Administrations supported the Diem regime. Beginning with \$100 million dollars in aid in 1954, by 1963 the price tag was \$500 million dollars, with 15,000 U.S. advisors thrown in as an added expense. U.S. assistance augmenting Diem's own capabilities brought initial success in destroying the Viet Cong. By 1956 90% of the Viet Cong cells in the critical Mekong Delta had been destroyed.⁴¹

Despite this initial success Diem failed to consolidate his position outside the environs of Saigon. Governmental excess and insensitivity in dealing with the populace had established conditions for a North Vietnamese directed Viet Cong resurgence by 1960. Despite the alienation of the Diem government from the people and Diem's inability and unwillingness to reform, the newly elected Kennedy Administration ruled out a U.S. withdrawal. On November 1, 1963 Diem was murdered by members of a U.S. supported coup.

Diem's death began a period of revolving leadership for the Republic of Vietnam as coup succeeded coup as well as an increasing "Americanization" of the war. U.S. planes bombed North Vietnam in 1964 in retaliation for an attack on the destroyer Maddox. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed on 2 August, 1964 giving President Johnson considerable latitude in dealing with the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. Using this latitude, President Johnson ordered the Marines ashore at Danang 8 March, 1965. The entry of U.S. combat troops marked the end of the advisory effort in support of a Vietnamese solution to the conflict and the beginning of the search for a U.S. military solution to the Vietnamese problem.

This effort was characterized by a lack of coherence and a concentration at higher military and governmental levels on the technical,

bureaucratic, and managerial aspects of the conflict. The national objectives in the Republic of Vietnam were never clear. In 1966 the former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam, Maxwell Taylor, stated that the U.S. was not trying to "defeat the North Vietnamese", only to cause them to "mend their ways".⁴² Yet the U.S. Army Chief of Staff defined the nature of the war as essentially a military problem.⁴³ This confusion at the top levels concerning the nature of the war was reflected in the tactical and operational conduct of the war. The application of force became so all pervasive that it frequently was inconsistent with political objectives.⁴⁴ Campaign plans became exercises in futility. This is reflected in the comment of a U.S. Corps [Field Force] commander upon being asked about a recently published campaign plan, "I never read them, it would only confuse me."⁴⁵ A 1974 survey of U.S. Army generals who had commanded in the Republic of Vietnam reiterates this lack of focus as almost 70% of the respondents indicated they were uncertain of the war's objectives.⁴⁶

This lack of operational focus led to an operational concept of attrition. In the words of then LTC Dave R. Palmer, "attrition is not a strategy. It is irrefutable proof of the absence of any strategy."⁴⁷ This was echoed in recent remarks at the School of Advanced Military Studies by a former U.S. divisional commander in Vietnam. Upon being asked a question concerning the U.S. failure in Vietnam he replied that it was a result of a lack of a coherent operational concept. This is not unexpected, given the absence of an articulated operational end state from which an operational concept could be derived. This absence of operational focus is illustrated in the capricious rise and fall of U.S. troop levels in the Republic of Vietnam over the next nine years.

By December 1965 U.S. forces in-country totaled 200,000. By the time President Johnson decided not to run for re-election on 31 March, 1968 U.S. troop strength had passed 500,000 and the Commander, Military Assistance Command Vietnam, General Westmoreland, had requested an additional 206,000 troops. In 1969 President-elect Nixon entered the White House with a promise to end the war. By December 60,000 troops were withdrawn and President Nixon initiated his plan to "Vietnamize" the war. The conduct of the war was to be turned back to the Vietnamese much as it was prior to 1965. One year later U.S. troop strength was down to 280,000 men. In 1971 U.S. troop strength was down to 140,000 men and the outcome of the war was now up to South Vietnamese force of arms.

The U.S. inability to define an end state continued after the last U.S. troops had been withdrawn. The result was a major blow to strategic containment in Southeast Asia. On 30 March, 1972 the North Vietnamese attempted to destroy the South Vietnamese Armed Forces with a massive ground offensive. This offensive was halted and defeated by the South Vietnamese Army with considerable U.S. fire support. Negotiations between the U.S. and the North Vietnamese were revealed on 25 January 1972 but broke down on 20 November. The last U.S. troops left Vietnam 29 March, 1973. In 1973, the Watergate scandal, Congressional outrage with the administration, and public war weariness combined to block further aid to the Republic of Vietnam. As a result of this aid stoppage at the close of 1974, the South Vietnamese Armed Forces suffered critical armament, munition, and battlefield transport shortages. About this time the North Vietnamese began planning a second offensive hoping to take

advantage of the 1975 dry season to place their forces in a position for final victory by 1976. The first phase of the plan began in January 1975 and resulted in the capture of Phuoc Long province, the first time a South Vietnamese province had fallen under the uncontested control of either the North Vietnamese or the Viet Cong. Unchecked by U.S. fire support which had proven so effective in 1972 and assisted by South Vietnamese strategic blunders, the North Vietnamese offensive gained momentum. On April 30, 1975 the titular head of the Republic of South Vietnam, General Duong Van Minh, surrendered to Colonel Bui Tin representing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.⁴⁸

The absence of the military link between tactical means and strategic ends evident since the end of World War II had finally resulted in a major U.S. defeat and the loss of an ally through force of arms. Although U.S. forces continually produced tactical success upon tactical success they were never translated into strategic victory. U.S. military and political leadership ignored the theoretical precepts of war and politics and never developed an operational end state from which an operational concept could be derived. This led the U.S. to suffer through its longest war, disrupting its society, destroying its international prestige, and damaging its Army to such a degree that it would take a decade to recover.

PART IV ANALYSIS

Several similarities appear among these disparate, post World War II military actions: reliance upon personality in the absence of doctrine, reversion to attritional warfare in the absence of any other operational concept, the need for a single commander with theater-wide control to effect operational warfare, and the recognition that overall strategic success is the result of success in all of the elements of national power.

In the absence of operational doctrine, successful operational use of force would appear to be solely personality dependent. Doctrine is designed to provide an alternative to the intuitive use of force. Doctrine provides the necessary guidance for the application of force in a manner which generally leads to success. In the absence of this guidance it is up to the commander to determine the best way to use his force. If the commander is gifted or lucky he may be successful. If he is neither gifted nor lucky, and lacks doctrinal guidance, the result is usually defeat. This is illustrated by MacArthur in Korea and Palmer in the Dominican Republic. The erratic genius of MacArthur envisioned the operational victory at Inchon as well as the disastrous pursuit to the Yalu and subsequent retreat south. At the time there was no U.S. operational framework upon which to analyze the actions of MacArthur, measure risk, or insure the logical application of force.

The power of a commander's personality and intuition surfaced again in the Dominican Republic. LTG Palmer recognized the need to separate the warring factions in Santo Domingo. His subsequent operational

concept to affect this separation and establish the conditions for political negotiation occurred in the absence of an operational framework. It was his determination and force of personality that convinced the JCS, the OAS, and the President to support his operation. He had no doctrinal basis to assess the probability of success.

In Vietnam there was no dominant personality who could sway the various service and national interests within the country to support a course of action. This lack of a dominant personality and absence of doctrine to guide the operational application of force and link tactical actions to strategic success led to defeat.

The historical review suggests that General Dave R. Palmer's contention that the irrefutable proof of the absence of any strategy is the presence of attritional warfare is applicable to the operational level of war as well. Restated, his contention would read that the irrefutable proof of the absence of an operational concept is the presence of attritional warfare.

The post-MacArthur conduct of the Korean conflict and the conduct of the war in Vietnam exemplify this inevitable turn to attritional warfare in the absence of an operational artist who establishes the military conditions necessary to achieve the strategic aim and then sequences tactical actions to achieve these conditions.

Both the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations sought a quick end to the Korean conflict while maintaining the pre-war territorial integrity of the Republic Of Korea. The actions of General MacArthur's successors did not support this strategic aim. These men lacked the operational genius of MacArthur and there was no operational doctrine available to provide

guidance in the conduct of this level of war. In the absence of both genius and doctrine, the conduct of the war focused upon tactical victory through the overwhelming application of firepower. This application of attritional warfare to the large, tenacious Chinese Communist Army led to a two year tactical stalemate and the beginning of a thirty-five year political and military commitment to the defense of South Korea by future American administrations.

The conditions which led to attritional warfare in Korea were repeated in Vietnam twelve years later. As shown above, this conflict was characterized by the lack of an operational concept focusing force upon the attainment of some end state. As in Korea, neither genius nor doctrine was present to provide an operational focus. The result was a reliance upon firepower to achieve tactical success, success measured by body counts. In Vietnam attritional warfare filled the void left by the absence of the operational level of war.

General Dave Palmer's contention almost proved true in the Dominican Intervention. However, the commander's intuition provided an operational framework which led to a successful strategic outcome. U.S. forces were committed initially in the absence of an operational concept. During this stage of the intervention the JCS requested an estimate of the size force necessary to seize Santo Domingo. This request went to the Commander of the Caribbean Task Force, a Navy Admiral, and to the Commander of U.S. Forces Dominican Republic, LTG Palmer. The Admiral estimated a need for twenty-six battalions. LTG Palmer never received the request but subsequently employed only nine battalions to secure the city. This disparity reflects LTG Palmer's apparent intuitive operational grasp of

the situation versus the Admiral's apparent lack of operational vision and reversion to an attritional based view of the situation whereby mass would insure tactical success. Fortunately LTG Palmer controlled the application of force on the island and in the absence of operational level doctrine intuitively linked tactical action to the strategic goal.

The actions of LTG Palmer in Santo Domingo illustrate a third common theme in these case histories, the necessity for the application of the time-honored principle of "unity of command" to the operational level of war.

Successful operational level warfare requires that end state attainment drive the design of an operational concept and that resources be allocated to support this concept. Should command within an area of operations be divided and should these commanders conflict in their end states then there will be a divergence and probable conflict in the operational concepts derived from the end states. These conflicting operational concepts will then compete for scarce resources to sustain their execution. Operational level war cannot be conducted under these conditions. This was the case in Vietnam and Cuba.

The Cuban "Bay of Pigs" disaster is illustrative of what results from operational "disunity of command". The CIA plan had an end state which drove a concept and required a specific level of sustainment. Success required a mutually supporting end state, operational concept, and logistic base. Unfortunately, the CIA did not control the air or sea assets critical to sustainment of the operational concept. The control of these assets belonged to outside agencies whose concerns conflicted with the CIA operational framework. As a result of President Kennedy's grounding of the emigre bombers and the Navy's decision to return to Guatemala

rather than reinforce the beaches, Brigade 2506 was destroyed, the military condition, a secure beachhead upon which a Provisional Government could establish its presence, was not attained, and U.S. strategic goals were not met.

Finally, these case studies show a need to synchronize all the elements of national power in order to achieve strategic success. Exclusive reliance upon military force will lead to disaster more often than success. It would appear from this study that a close, cooperative relationship between the political leadership and the military leadership of an operation is necessary to insure this synchronization.

In Korea, General MacArthur embodied the soldier-statesman. His own abilities and shortcomings supported or limited the synchronization of the elements of national power. In Vietnam and Cuba there was an adversarial relationship between the political and military leadership within and between the U.S. and the Republic of Vietnam. As a result national power was squandered, leading to defeat. In the Dominican Republic however, the cooperative relationship between the military commander, the U.S. Ambassador, and the Secretary General of the OAS allowed all the U.S. elements of national power to combine in the achievement of operational and strategic success.

In sum, this analysis indicates a reliance upon individual genius as compensation for a lack of operational doctrine. Unfortunately, this places strategic success hostage to the vagaries of personality. Even generals have their limitations. Furthermore, the analysis points out that a disregard for the principle of "unity of command" and a failure to synchronize all the elements of national power through a cooperative

political-military relationship make the conduct of operational warfare extremely difficult if not impossible. This inability to conduct warfare at the operational level will invariably result in attritional warfare detrimental to U.S. strategic success.

PART V CONCLUSIONS

Theory and historical analysis suggest that both the presence of and agreement upon an operational end state is critical for the successful conduct of operational level warfare. The identification of an operational end state must provide the basis to derive a concept of operations, determine logistical resources, and measure success. In its absence resources and tactical prowess are squandered to little or even adverse strategic effect.

The concept of operations that sequences tactical actions must support strategic goals if it is to have utility. The operational end state provides the military conditions which these tactical actions must have as their objective. There may be innumerable branches and sequels within a plan of operations dealing with the friction and fog of war. However, a clearly articulated operational end state will provide the commander a measure of utility in selecting those branches and sequels which support strategic aims and reject those which are likely to lead to stalemate or will be detrimental to the desired strategic outcome.

The operational end state provides the commander a means of

assessing risk. A tactically conservative course of action may appear more favorable than a much bolder, tactically riskier, course of action. However, when assessed in terms of achieving the desired operational end state the tactically conservative concept may have a lower probability of attaining the end state. Therefore, the operational risk for this course of action is higher even though the tactical risk is lower, for the stakes are attainment of the end state. Inchon illustrates a tactically risky operation with a greater probability of operational success.

The end state provides a means of assessing how to best expend limited national resources. The operational concept for the use of armed force derives from the operational end state and provides the framework for determining the resources needed to achieve strategic success. This concept also directs the manner in which they must be expended. If this concept is of average or below average risk and is resource intensive then the use of another element or combination of elements of national power applies. However, if the probability of operational success is very high for an acceptable operational concept given a certain level of sustainment, then the expenditure of limited national resources on military action is preferable.

The operational end state also provides a means of assessing political risk, success, and strategic feasibility. The operational concept must result in an end state that leads to strategic success. It will have an impact upon both the international community and the resources of the nation. Political leaders must assess this impact over time to determine political risk. Based upon this assessment the political leaders can

achieve strategic goals in some other fashion or make the preparations necessary to apply the original operational concept in a more politically acceptable environment.

Success or failure in the use of an armed force executing an operational concept is also easier to determine. Should the end state remain unattainable given the specified sustainment level then the politician has a basis from which to make a decision to continue or stop military action.

This assessment of political risk before and during the conduct of operational warfare also acts as a means to assess strategic feasibility. Should there be no operational concept capable of achieving the end state necessary for strategic success, or should the operational concepts be politically unacceptable then that strategy needs to be changed or modified.

In order for an operational commander to determine the operational end state, the strategic goals of the nation must be understood clearly. During the Dominican Crisis President Johnson left no question as to what he saw as the strategic interests of the U.S.. In the absence of this strategic articulation, the operational commander is left to determine the purpose of American military commitment. Too often, as in Vietnam and the Bay of Pigs, there is a poor assessment of what must be done, and what must be used to do it. This results in not enough, too much, or the wrong type of military power being applied. While clear strategic guidance is highly desirable and can preclude many problems, this guidance may not be available. The absence or presence of this strategic guidance does not exempt the operational commander from determining an operational end state and forcing strategic articulation. Clausewitz addresses this problem in On War:

In other cases the political object will not provide a suitable military objective. In that event another military objective must be adopted that will serve the political purpose and symbolize it in the peace negotiations.⁴⁹

Theory and historical analysis suggest that the presence of an operational end state is so critical to the proper conduct of operational warfare and strategic success that the military commander must determine a proper end state regardless of obscurity or uncertainty within the political environment. Therefore, a system of operational education must insure that this capability is present within the U.S. Officer Corps.

The recent publication (in coordinating draft) of FM 100-6, Large Unit Operations, provides an excellent explanation of the importance of the end state to the successful conduct of operational warfare. This importance is reinforced further in the conduct of operational level exercises through the Chief of Staff of the Army's Operational Decision Exercise Program, a program that directs senior U.S. Army commanders to analyze an operational level problem focusing on the articulation of the military conditions which will lead to the attainment of strategic goals, the operational end state. They must then devise an operational concept sequencing tactical actions to achieve the previously determined end state.

U.S. Army leadership has accepted the theoretical and historical importance of the operational end state for success in operational warfare. This has resulted in doctrine which stresses the criticality of

the end state for the conduct of operational level warfare, as well as the institution of a program designed to exercise this doctrine. These actions increase the likelihood that senior U.S. Army leadership will have the capability to analyze a situation and devise an operational framework for the application of force based upon the solid foundation of a well-articulated end state linking tactical action to strategic success.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, four decades of U.S. setbacks in the application of military power indicate a neglect of seemingly obvious elements of warfare such as the operational end state. This neglect is indicative of a need periodically to assess U.S. military doctrine in light of theory and historical experience to avoid future monuments to futility represented by the black granite memorial wall to the dead of Vietnam.

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