

Rounding Out a Concept of Operational Art: Using Theory to Understand Operational Art's Purpose, Structure, and Content.

**A Monograph
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This monograph posits that military practitioners have a theoretical and doctrinal gap in understanding operational art. This threatens to separate tactical action from strategic purpose resulting in battlefield success that is orphaned by strategic frustration. To address this situation, this monograph proposes a theory of operational art, tempers it with historical case studies, and evaluates both Joint and Army doctrine. It demonstrates that, while operational art cannot overcome severe policy/strategic faults, it is necessary to successfully organize tactical action to achieve strategic aims.

In order to link tactical action to strategic purpose, operational art must have at least a four-part structure. It must understand strategic purpose, develop an operational logic, negotiate boundaries, and control tactical action. All four parts are necessary to ensure that battlefield action leads to strategic success. If one aspect is deficient, victory is in peril. Like tactics, however, the superior application of operational art cannot overcome serious faults in strategy or policy. In this respect military strategy, operational art, and tactics are interdependent and contingent upon a purpose that can only come from policy.

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Abstract

ROUNDING OUT OPERATIONAL ART: USING THEORY TO UNDERSTAND OPERATIONAL ART'S PURPOSE, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENT. by Major Michael Kosuda, United States Army, 45 pages.

This monograph posits that military practitioners have a theoretical and doctrinal gap in understanding operational art. This threatens to separate tactical action from strategic purpose resulting in battlefield success that is orphaned by strategic frustration. To address this situation, this monograph proposes a theory of operational art, tempers it with historical case studies, and evaluates both Joint and Army doctrine. It demonstrates that, while operational art cannot overcome severe policy/strategic faults, it is necessary to successfully organize tactical action to achieve strategic aims.

After describing both military strategy and tactics, this monograph proposes that the purpose of operational art is to bridge these two qualitatively different functions. To accomplish this operational art must bridge the conceptual-physical divide, negotiate boundaries, use tactical culmination to serve continuation, and manage political interaction. To accomplish this, operational art needs to have a structure that can understand strategic purpose, generate an operational logic, negotiate boundaries, and control tactical units. This four-part structure is the chain that links strategic purpose to tactical action.

Three historical case studies provide insight into the functioning and limitations of the theoretical model. Major General Scott's Mexico City campaign (1847) provided an example of the successful application of operational art and that all four parts were necessary to successfully link strategic purpose to tactical action. General Westmoreland's introduction of ground combat forces into Vietnam (1965) demonstrated that poor application of operational art can lead to tactical action that does not contribute to strategic goals. It also provided an example of the limitations of operational art. It demonstrated the primacy of policy and strategic direction over operational and tactical capability. Finally, General Schwarzkopf's Operation Desert Storm (1991) demonstrated that operational art was successful in organizing the action of corps and divisions, but did not meet all of the Joint Force Commander's requirements.

Joint and Army doctrine focus on different aspects of the theoretical model of operational art. Joint doctrine provides a detailed description of operational art's interaction with strategy/policy and how to negotiate boundaries. Army doctrine is strong a describing methods of control. Both provide for developing an operational logic. What is missing is the recognition that both are necessary to fulfill the purpose of operational art – to link tactical action to strategic goals. Specifically, Army doctrine tends to focus on the tactical action of large units at the expense of understanding operational art's relationship to strategy.

This monograph posits that, in order to link tactical action to strategic purpose, operational art must have at least a four-part structure. It must understand strategic purpose, develop an operational logic, negotiate boundaries, and control tactical action. All four parts are necessary to ensure that battlefield action leads to strategic success. If one aspect is deficient, victory is in peril. Like tactics, however, the superior application of operational art cannot overcome serious faults in strategy or policy. In this respect military strategy, operational art, and tactics are interdependent and contingent upon a purpose that can only come from policy.

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Introduction

The United States does not have a way of war; it only has a way of battle.¹ Dr. Antulio Echevarria made this stunning observation in 2004 after tactical successes in both Afghanistan and Iraq failed to result in decisive victory. He attributed this to an overemphasis, on the grammar of war, which is the province of the military, to the exclusion of the logic of war, which is derived from policy. As Clausewitz noted war's "grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic."² The emphasis on war's grammar led to an exceptional ability to win battles. When the enemy abandoned the battlefield, however, and chose to fight a war amongst the people the way of battle was no longer relevant. To address this, the US military, quite appropriately, focused on developing a second grammar of war – one focused on counterinsurgency or irregular warfare. While this emphasis was necessary, the problem of developing a holistic way of war fell by the wayside. Now there is an opportunity to return to the original diagnosis and further the project of linking war's grammar and logic. Without such work, the nation faces the prospect of having two well-developed ways of battle that still leave tactical success the orphan of strategic frustration.

The problem of developing a way of war is essentially about resolving how policy and warfare interact. One avenue to approach this is through strategic theory and the relationship between strategy and policy. A second common method is to approach it through the lens of civilian-military (civ-mil) relations. These two approaches are necessary, and both professional and academic literature routinely addresses them. A third, less well-examined approach, is to focus on the role of operational art in connecting war's logic and grammar.

¹ Antulio Echevarria, *Toward an American Way of War* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004), 1. Dr. Antulio Echevarria II is the Director of Research for the US Army War College. He holds a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. [Strategic Studies Institute, www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil (accessed January 15, 2012)].

² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 605.

Clausewitz divided the art of war into strategy and tactics.³ Strategy addressed the logic of war, using force for political objectives, and tactics governed the grammar of war, fighting battles. The problem in interpreting classical theory for contemporary usage, however, is that society, and thus war, is vastly more complex today. Classical theorists typically wrote from a perspective where the sovereign was the political leader, head of the military, and tactical commander who personally linked the affairs of state, military strategy, and the employment of forces.⁴ Growing political complexity led to the bifurcation of political and military leadership. Simultaneously, the growing complexity and scope of military operations led to the demise of the decisive battle and hence the need to organize multiple battles into campaigns with a common aim.⁵ This led to the recognition that the categories of strategy and tactics were no longer sufficient and thus operational art came to be the intermediary.⁶

Operational art entered the modern US military lexicon with the 1986 revision of FM 100-5, *Operations*.⁷ From the beginning, there were two significant problems with the development of operational art. First, it was not developed in conjunction with a theoretical framework – it was developed to solve the problem of fighting a massive conventional land war in Europe against the Soviet bloc. Various conceptions of operational art demonstrate the lack of a theoretical framework. The 1986 version of FM 100-5 posited that the essence of operational art is “the identification of the enemy’s operational center-of-gravity and the concentration of

³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 128.

⁴ Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), V.

⁵ James Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art* (Fort Leavenworth: US School of Advanced Military Studies, 1992), 5; Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, *Alien*, 19.

⁶ Kelly and Brennan, *Alien*, 20.

⁷ Michael Krause and R. Cody Phillips, *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art* (Washington: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2005), 15.

superior combat power against that point to achieve a decisive success.”⁸ Dr. James Schneider⁹ characterized the essence of operational art as “distributed free maneuver.”¹⁰ Such variance can only take place in an absence of a definitive theoretical framework.

A second problem was the post-Vietnam narrative that politics had unnecessarily inserted itself into the management of combat operations to the detriment of both tactical success and strategic victory. The manifestation of this belief was the introduction of an operational level of war in the 1982 version of FM 100-5. “The existence of an independent level of war served by its own command, operating free from unwelcome interference from strategy, represents the foundation on which the US military can define its professional jurisdiction.”¹¹ The consequence of adopting this narrative and a separate level of war was to separate tactics from strategy.

The lack of a definitive theory relating operational art to strategy and tactics combined with the creation of a level of war independent from politics effectively limited military focus to winning battles. Much of the confusion about operational art persists into the present. While recent US Army doctrine begins to address the mistaken notion of levels of war,¹² it still does not adequately address the essential relationship with politics.

One approach to solving this problem is to place the burden of integrating politics into warfare squarely in the realm of strategy. This is the approach of strategic theorists such as Colin

⁸ Department of the Army, *FM 100-5: Operations* (Washington: US Department of the Army, 1986), 10.

⁹ Dr. James Schneider was a professor of military theory at the School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth from 1984 to 2008. He holds a Ph. D. in history from the University of Kansas. [Booz-Allen-Hamilton, Staff Biographies, www.operationaldesign.com (accessed February 18, 2012)].

¹⁰ Clayton Newell and Michael Krause, *On Operational Art* (Washington: Center of Military History, US Army, 1994), 18.

¹¹ Kelly and Brennan, *Alien*, 67.

¹² Department of the Army, *ADP 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (Washington: Department of the Army, 2011), 9.

S. Gray, in *The Strategy Bridge*,¹³ and military writers such as Brigadier General Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, in *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*.¹⁴ While a call for a revitalized strategic art is indeed necessary, the danger is that operational art, lacking a sufficient theoretical framework, can continue to separate rather than connect strategy and tactics.

This monograph will take an alternate approach. While not discounting the primacy of policy and strategy it will focus squarely on operational art and its function in linking strategy to tactical action. Furthermore, it will adopt the position that political understanding is necessarily inherent in operational art. The essential insight comes from Clausewitz, but not from *On War*. In December of 1827 Clausewitz wrote *Two Letters on Strategy* in response to Major Roeder of the Prussian General Staff.¹⁵ Roeder was working on an operational planning exercise; he was planning a five corps defense of Prussia against an attack by 150,000 combined Austrian and Saxon troops. Lieutenant-General Müffling, Chief of the General Staff, directed this exercise. Müffling described the operational parameters but not the political context. In response to Roeder's solution Clausewitz wrote: "How then is it possible to plan a campaign, whether for one theater of war or several, without indicating the political condition of the belligerents, and the politics of their relationship to each other?"¹⁶ Clausewitz pointed out that without an understanding of the political situation operational planning was impossible. Planners could not organize tactical actions in any meaningful manner. The virtue of this work is that Clausewitz wrote it after his July 1827 note that cast doubt about which aspects of *On War* reflected his mature thinking. The *Two Letters on Strategy* is unencumbered by this controversy.

¹³ Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). The bridge in the title is the one strategy has to build to link tactical action to strategic aims.

¹⁴ Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009).

¹⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *Two Letters on Strategy*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1984).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

This initial intuition, however, is not enough to claim that political understanding is inherently necessary in operational art. First, the relationship of strategy, operational art, and tactics must be uncovered. This requires theory for “the purpose of any theory is to clarify concepts and ideas that have become, as it were, confused and entangled.”¹⁷ This will be the first task of this monograph.

Section one will develop a theory of operational art. It will seek to order the concepts of strategy, operational art, and tactics. It will argue that there are qualitative differences between strategy and tactics that operational art needs to mediate. In essence, the purpose of operational art is to link strategic purpose to tactical action. To fulfill this function, operational art necessarily includes an understanding of strategic purpose, capacity to generate an operational logic, method for negotiating boundaries, and mechanisms for control. This four part theoretical framework will set the baseline for future discussion.

Section two will use historical case studies to examine the theory of operational art. The first will be General Scott (1847) in the Mexican American War. This example will demonstrate a successful integration of political considerations in the application of operational art. Additionally, it provides an example of both combined arms maneuver (CAM) and wide area security (WAS) in a single campaign demonstrating how operational art can integrate the two Army core competencies.¹⁸ The second will be General Westmoreland (1965) and the introduction of ground combat forces into Vietnam. This will demonstrate how operational art functions in a politically ambiguous situation. Finally, General Schwarzkopf (1991), in Operation Desert Storm, will illustrate the political-operational interface in circumstances similar to today in doctrine, joint architecture, and command and control. The study of history is meant to both flesh out the theoretical framework and add practical experience to the evaluation of doctrine to follow.

¹⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 132.

¹⁸ Department of the Army, *ADP 3-0*, 5.

Finally, section three will use the theoretical framework, tempered by the historical discussion, to evaluate both Joint and Army doctrine. It will argue that Joint doctrine does a better job of capturing the totality of operational art, and that Army doctrine insufficiently addresses political considerations. It will recommend the inclusion of strategic appraisal in Army operational art doctrine, both to operate more effectively, and to prepare Army officers to serve at echelons where operational art is needed to truly link strategic aims to tactical action.

To be successful, this monograph will advance understanding of operational art by demonstrating the need for an operational art theory, developing a potential theory that can be validated by experience in order to inform doctrine, and make doctrinal recommendations. Ultimately, it must break the tactical bias of war's grammar to clarify how political purpose filters down into tactical action in order to connect back to war's logic. The aim is that, prior to committing the nation's forces to combat; operational artists structure campaigns to ensure that tactical success translates into a favorable strategic outcome.

Section I: Theory

This section will develop a theory of operational art. The purpose of developing this theory is to clarify its constituent parts, understand its relationship with strategy and tactics, and provide a framework to use in evaluating doctrine. Before positing a theory of operational art, however, two preliminary issues demand attention. The first is to settle on a theoretical approach that will facilitate the purpose above. The second is to render a brief description of both strategy and tactics to help define the context in which the theory of operational art can operate.

One final note on context, regarding a general theory of war, this monograph will adopt the most abstract version of Clausewitz's trinity. He describes war as a "paradoxical trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason

alone.”¹⁹ Thus, war is a system consisting of irrational (passion), non-rational (chance) and rational (reason) forces. Furthermore, this trinity is operative within friendly, enemy, and neutral groups creating an interactively complex system. Adopting a nonlinear general theory of war has important implications for the type and method of theoretical approach. Of course, in order to avoid straying into absurdity and to distinguish war from other systems of competition, it is important to keep in the forefront of the imagination the fact that war is about the application of violence. The life and death struggle inherent in violent action not only distinguishes war from other forms of competition but also exacts a heavy cost, in lives and treasure, for muddled thinking and being wrong.

Theoretical Approach

The two most obvious approaches to developing theory are both inappropriate for developing a theory of operational art. The first approach is to adopt a scientific model for theory. This powerful model has generated phenomenal scientific and technological advancement. It is well suited to address natural deterministic processes, but ill-suited to deal with human-centered interactively complex processes in war. The second is one adopted by Clausewitz in his theoretical approach to a general theory of war. He used a dialectical approach to provide a description of the phenomenon of war. This works well for a general theory of war because the level of complexity and ambiguity defy the descriptions of positive theories. This, however, would not serve the purpose above. This monograph will propose to use a teleological approach²⁰

¹⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

²⁰ Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 792. The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines telos as an “ancient Greek term meaning ‘end’ or ‘purpose.’ Plants, animals, and even inanimate objects were thought to have a *telos* through which their activities and relations could be understood and evaluated.” A teleological approach, in this instance, means first examining the purpose, or *telos*, of operational art and then deriving from that purpose the structure and content of operational art.

to developing a theory of operational art. Since operational art is a constructed²¹ phenomenon, investigating its purpose and deriving the theory from that promises to be the most productive way forward.

A scientific approach to developing operational art theory is not possible. The desirable characteristics of scientific theory are abstractness, inter-subjectivity of meaning and rigor, and empirical relevance.²² While abstractness and agreement on meaning are indeed necessary here, logical rigor (usually expressed using calculus) and empirical relevance are problematic. This is because they serve the part of scientific knowledge organized to predict and control. Here there is a fundamental difference between the natural sciences and the project of war. Scientists study natural deterministic processes that are subject to description as “laws.” In war, these types of investigations cover only the non-rational third of the trinity. Once rational choice and human emotion are added, description, prediction, and control become largely illusory. That is why Clausewitz cautioned against positive (*scientific*) theories.²³ If the scientific approach is not possible, Clausewitz’s approach is the next alternative.

Clausewitz’s approach to developing operational art theory is also not possible. He used a dialectical method to look at war alternating between the abstract or ideal and the empirical. In the end, he used several lenses to create a description of war. His description was as complex and ambiguous as the subject. This worked because war is a phenomenon subject to investigation. Operational art, however, is constructed phenomenon. People created it and gave it meaning. Therefore, there is no external point of reference from which to guarantee that alternate descriptions of the phenomenon are actually describing the same thing. Isserson, Naveh,

²¹ Operational art is a human creation and does not have intrinsic properties like physical phenomena. Military professionals develop, or construct, what operational art is making the definition, nature, and content a matter of choice and argument.

²² Paul Reynolds, *A Primer in Theory Construction* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971) 13-14.

²³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 136.

Schneider, Gray, and Smith all parse what operational art is differently and using them as lenses does not lead to understanding different facets of the same thing; it leads to understanding different aspects of different things. Indeed, current US doctrine reflects precisely this understanding. A theoretical approach to operational art needs an organizing perspective more concrete than that of Clausewitz.

The best method for developing operational art theory is to adopt a teleological approach. Since it is a constructed phenomenon, the most fruitful line of inquiry is to first uncover its purpose and then derive from that purpose what the constituent parts should logically be. Before coming to an understanding of the purpose of operational art, it is necessary to understand the aspects of strategy and tactics that define the context.

Strategy

A full rendering of strategy is beyond the scope of this monograph. To investigate operational art, however, military strategy does need some clarification. Military Strategy is “the direction and use made of force and the threat of force for the purposes of policy as decided by politics.”²⁴ The subsequent use of the term refers to military strategy. The salient aspects of strategy that are necessary to set the context for operational art are its conceptual nature, its ability to shape boundaries, its focus on continuation, and its interaction with politics. To locate strategy in a military context, strategic thinking, decision-making, and leadership exist down to the theater level.

Strategy is conceptual in nature. To continue a thread that runs from Clausewitz to Gray, the notion of purpose originates with political decision. Policy, according to Gray, is “the political objectives that provide the purposes of particular historical strategies.”²⁵ Since policy is broad

²⁴ Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*, 18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

and includes indeterminate goals outside the military realm, an essential task of the military strategist is to define the military purpose and ends, then clearly link them to the broader purpose of policy. This critical function is largely conceptual. Another manner in which strategy is conceptual is in the way it defines the context for operations.

Strategy shapes the boundaries for action. This happens in a literal sense by defining a theater or war and a theater of operations. It also applies to decisions regarding means. The first cut at ascribing means appropriate for the political objective comes from strategists. Ultimately, this is a political decision resulting from a dialogue with military leaders. The important distinction is that strategy defines the boundaries in which tactical action takes place. Dolman describes this as “decision-making *about* the context of war and preparation for war.”²⁶

Strategy focuses on continuation. This is a qualitatively different relationship between action and time. The strategist seeks “a favorable *continuation* of events.”²⁷ While tactics seek a discrete endstate, strategy, like political discourse, will continue and thus necessarily looks toward an ever-unfolding future. That is why Gray can assert that strategy is “most significantly... about the intended consequences of operational and tactical behavior.”²⁸

Strategy necessarily interacts with politics; this interaction is intrinsic its function. Even given the supremacy of civilian control of the military, the important decisions about war are not made in a vacuum. They are made in dialogue and it is the function of strategy to provide military perspective. “It is not possible for a responsible military strategist to confine his judgment strictly to the military sphere. If that sphere is unduly discordant with the political demands that equate to policy, then either the military or the policy plot must be changed if success is to be achieved. All of the greater commanders, at all times and places, not excluding the contemporary United States,

²⁶ Everett Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 13. (Italics in the original)

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5. (Italics in the original)

²⁸ Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*, 18.

have been obliged to function across the line of civil–military relations as politicians and policymakers, as well as generals. It is in the very nature of war and strategy that this should be so.”²⁹

To summarize, strategy is primarily conceptual, especially in its primary task of defining the military purpose and ends of any given policy. It performs the function of defining the context for action and focuses on continuation. In these roles, military strategy necessarily interacts with politics and is responsible for managing the military side of civil–military relations. This brackets one side of operational art, tactics brackets the other.

Tactics

Clausewitz describes tactics as the realm of the battle or engagement.³⁰ For the purposes of developing a concept of operational art, however, the relevant aspects contrast those in strategy. They are the physical nature of tactics, the given nature of boundaries, its focus on culmination, and interaction with politics.

Tactics accomplish concrete action in time and space and is physical. This is true in both major combat and counterinsurgency. Gray describes tactics as “actual military behavior most especially, though not only, directly in combat (fighting).”³¹ An alternate characterization is that tactics is “the art of placing and employing weapons and combat units on the battlefield.”³² In both cases the essential characteristic is that tactics governs physical action which is distinct from the conceptual projects of strategy.

Tactics occur within a given context defined by strategy. Tactical units execute missions with designated forces, in designated areas. Orders from higher headquarters come with other

²⁹ Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*, 204.

³⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 128.

³¹ Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*, 18.

³² Michael Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 3.

constraints and restraints such as rules of engagement and perhaps most significantly, the higher commander's intent. Tactical leaders can always petition for additional forces or other changes but at the end of the day they execute within the boundaries described for them. Time is also one on these boundaries. Dolman describes tactical logic as “decision-making *within* the context of war and the preparation for war.”³³

Tactics seek discrete endstates or culmination. Tactics “seeks finality; it has specific goals and definable ends. It seeks victory.”³⁴ In contrast to strategy, tactical action benefits from its physical nature – the enemy is destroyed or it is not, the terrain is seized or it is not, a sufficient amount of the populace supports the government or it does not. In each case tactics seeks the accomplishment, and hence completion, of its mission.

Tactics does not necessarily interact with politics. Politics here refers to friendly political decision making/makers and is exclusive of the indigenous politics encountered in counterinsurgency operations. The fundamental interactions of tactics, those that are intrinsic to its nature, involve units and the enemy, terrain, and population. This is not a claim that politics and tactics never relate. Troop visits and fact finding aside, in cases of strategic bombing and certain special operations strike missions, orders may indeed proceed directly from political authority to tactical units executing those missions. Those cases, however, are not intrinsic to the nature of tactics. All that is required from a tactical perspective is that an appropriate authority issue orders.

Tactics forms the second bracket for operational art. It governs the actual actions of units both in major combat and in counterinsurgency. Tactics has important distinctions from strategy. The most salient for the investigation into operational art are its physical nature, its proscribed boundaries, its focus on endstates or culmination, and its independence from political interaction.

³³ Dolman, *Pure Strategy*, 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

Now the investigation can turn to the intermediate ground between strategy and tactics – that of operational art.

Operational Art

To stay consistent with the theoretical approach, this section will first address the purpose of operational art, and then investigate its logical structure. Locating the purpose, however, is not immediately obvious. The US introduced operational art doctrine while grappling with the twin issues of interpreting the Vietnam War and addressing a Soviet conventional threat in Western Europe.³⁵ Since the national concerns are broader now, that context is not especially relevant. Additionally, looking abroad to Russian and Israeli theorists, who have done considerable work in operational art theory, is also problematic since they developed their concepts to fit their specific geostrategic concerns.³⁶

One fruitful avenue for uncovering the purpose of operational art is to look at the characteristics of strategy and tactics above and follow the thread from strategic decision to concrete action. Strategy and tactics have inherent qualitative differences that need deliberate bridging in order to link tactical action to strategic purpose. This is the essential purpose or function of operational art. It has to bridge the conceptual-physical divide; interpret and negotiate the limitations of boundaries, harness culmination to serve continuation, and manage political interaction in an area between routine and limited political interaction.

³⁵ Richard Swain, “Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army” in *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War*, ed. B. J. C. McKercher and Michael A. Hennessy, (Westport: Praeger, 1996), 162 and 164.

³⁶ “Soviet military theory was firmly rooted in a specific strategic context – it was intended to resolve the problems attendant on defending the Soviet state against a threat from Western Europe” (Kelly and Brennan, *Alien*, 41). Additionally, Russia is a continental power with a vast interior, large population and single front. Israel, by contrast, has the opposite problem. It is a small state with limited population and enemies on three fronts. The development of Israeli theory, Systemic Operational Design, came out of the effort “to revitalize Israeli generalship through Operational Theory Research Institute’s approach to an operational art tailored to Israel’s strategic goals and circumstances” (Naveh, *Operational Art and the IDF*, 97).

To fulfill these requirements and build a chain linking strategy and tactics, operational art needs to have the following structure: a resident understanding of strategic purpose, an operational logic, a method for negotiating boundaries, and a mechanism for control of tactical units (See APPENDIX A for a graphical representation). These are the constituent parts of operational art and the following will address each in turn.

An understanding of the strategic purpose must be resident in operational art in order to maintain a solid connection to strategy. The strategic purpose is more than the higher headquarters intent; it includes an understanding of context that stretches back to the origin of purpose – the political objectives. Understanding the political objectives is necessary to harmonize the qualitative differences between strategy and tactics. It includes the introduction of continuation into operational art. Constructing discrete endstates for tactics can only be done in relation to the strategic continuation that is to follow. Additionally this understanding must be resident in operational art to dialogue with strategy. As the strategic context changes, operational art must be nimble enough to recognize the implications and adjust appropriately. This concept is not new to mission command.³⁷ What is slightly different is that the “intent” comes from politics. Additionally, understanding the strategic purpose, and indeed some political fluency, is necessary to negotiate the dialogue with political leaders. While strategy interacts with politics routinely, political leaders, quite appropriately, will want to interact with the commander “on the ground.” This political interaction may be infrequent, but is necessarily part of operational art. There is an additional reason why understanding strategic purpose and political fluency are necessary. In less than ideal circumstances, it is entirely possible to imagine that strategy may not provide a clear

³⁷ Mission Command is “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of full spectrum operations. It is commander-led and blends the art of command and the science of control to integrate the warfighting functions to accomplish the mission” (Department of the Army, *FM 6-0: Mission Command*, Glossary-3).

articulation of purpose, this will be explored in the Vietnam case study. In those instances, having a redundant capacity to deal with strategic purpose is especially important.

The second link is operational logic. This is the causal process that explains why/how certain tactical actions will achieve the strategic purpose. It is the first step in bridging the conceptual-physical divide. The logic is necessary to explain the operational approach. Does the campaign adopt an enemy, terrain, or population approach and why? When aspects of all three are required which one is decisive? Here it is clear why a proper understanding of purpose is necessary. The operational logic also brings together continuation and culmination. It explains why the accomplishment of discrete objectives (tactical culmination) will create the conditions for strategic victory (continuation). Operational logic is how the headquarters synchronizes tactical actions in terms of purpose.

Operational art has a unique function in translating boundaries, generated by strategy and given to tactics. This translation is more than mere communication it also includes negotiation. The determination of resources clearly demonstrates this point. Strategy may generate a force cap and major units, but only the headquarters executing the detailed planning can properly tailor the force. Inevitably, this leads to a discussion with political leadership over the size and type of units appropriate for the assigned mission. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of strategy to resolve ends-means conflicts but it can only do this when armed with the hard details generated by operational art. This function applies to physical and temporal boundaries as well. Cross-border operations and the length of time certain actions will take are not always possible to predict in advance, and it is a function of operational art to recognize the implications of the tactical situation and negotiate with strategy for adjustments.

The final link in the chain between strategy and tactics is a mechanism for control. This includes the second aspect of bridging the conceptual-physical divide by communicating the conceptual to the elements who will accomplish the physical. It includes planning which synchronizes tactical actions in time and space. It also includes orders, which direct discrete

tactical actions to the units who will physically carry them out. Finally, since the tactical situation is dynamic, the relationship between operational art and tactics must also be dynamic. Tactical feedback is critical to recognizing changes in the interactively complex system of war that affect both operational and strategic considerations.

This theory identified the purpose of operational art as the deliberate linking of strategic purpose to tactical action. To do this, operational art must bridge the conceptual-physical divide, negotiate boundaries, use tactical culmination to serve continuation, and manage political interaction. To accomplish this, operational art needs to have a structure that can understand strategic purpose, generate an operational logic, negotiate boundaries, and control tactical units. This four-part structure is the chain that links strategic purpose to tactical action, if any part of it is missing operational art is not complete. Historical case studies will now validate this theoretical framework before evaluating doctrine to see if it accounts for all aspects of operational art.

Section II: Historical Examples

This section will use three case studies to evaluate the proposed theoretical structure of operational art. It will analyze how commanding generals used operational art by examining how they understood strategic purpose, generated an operational logic, negotiated boundaries, and controlled tactical action. In doing so, this analysis will ask if each step was necessary in order to link strategic purpose to tactical action. Additionally, the analysis will attempt to uncover the impacts resulting from any missing or misconstrued links in the operational art framework.

The three case studies are Major General Winfield Scott's Mexico City campaign in 1847, General William C. Westmoreland's introduction of ground combat forces into Vietnam in 1965, and General H. Norman Schwarzkopf's termination of Operation Desert Storm in 1991. General Scott will demonstrate operational art during a campaign, General Westmoreland at the beginning of a campaign, and General Schwarzkopf at the end.

All three cases are examples of American operational art. Since foreign political structures, both historic and contemporary, differ significantly from the American system, this investigation focused on US examples to simplify analysis. Clearly foreign countries must also negotiate the translation of political aim to tactical action and the theory developed here may indeed be applicable internationally. Additionally, using examples from American history ensures that any observations about the linkage of strategic purpose to tactical action are applicable to an evaluation of US doctrine.

One last issue demands attention before delving into the individual case studies. Two of the three examples predate the introduction of operational art in US doctrine. This would be an issue if the previous theoretical discussion was tied directly to the development of US operational art doctrine, which it was not. It would also prove to be problematic if the analytical approach used doctrine to evaluate the campaigns, since this would place an unnatural burden on historical commanders. This is also not the case. This monograph suggested that operational art developed from the recognition that the political context for war and warfare itself were sufficiently complex to defy adequate description by the categories of strategy and tactics. Essentially, commanders were already addressing the problems of operational art before the phenomena received official recognition in doctrine. These three cases provide examples of operational art, consistent with the theory above.

Major General Scott (1847): Mexico City Campaign

Major General Winfield Scott successfully linked tactical action to strategic purpose in his Mexico City Campaign of 1847. This example provides evidence that all four elements of the theoretical framework for operational art were necessary for the successful prosecution of the campaign. The analysis will briefly address the strategic context and then examine each of the four elements in turn before returning to the question of their necessary inclusion in the theoretical framework.

The Mexican-American War took place during a time of international competition over land in North America. Mexico had already claimed the territory from Texas to California, the US was expanding westward, and Great Britain had designs on the pacific coast as well.³⁸ The US political aim was to incorporate California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Texas into the American state system.³⁹ This required Mexico to relinquish its claim on these territories. Prior to Major General Scott's campaign, the US pursued a peripheral overland approach by occupying the desired lands and defeating the Mexican army.⁴⁰ These tactical successes, however, did not lead to the negotiated settlement with the Mexican government necessary to secure the policy objectives.⁴¹ It was in this context that Scott, then commanding general of the US Army, proposed a new campaign.⁴²

Major General Scott demonstrated an astute understanding of the strategic purpose. To reach the political aim the US needed the government of Mexico (GoM) to cede California and New Mexico, as well as recognize the border with Texas. Therefore, the military's strategic purpose was to pressure the GoM to sue for peace and enter negotiations. Scott began his proposal with an analysis on why the line of operations from the periphery was not going to achieve the desired outcome.⁴³ The overland approach to Mexico City could not sustain a force large enough to lay siege to the capital once it got there. Additionally, the GoM showed no signs of negotiating after Major General Zachary Taylor defeated the Mexican force, threatening the

³⁸ Richard Stewart, *American Military History* (Washington: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2005), 168; Stephen Carney, *Gateway South: The Campaign for Monterrey* (Washington: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2005), 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 178; Carney, *Gateway South*, 7.

⁴⁰ Stewart, *American Military History*, 178.

⁴¹ Timothy Johnson, *A Gallant Little Army: The Mexico City Campaign* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007), 10.

⁴² Winfield Scott, "Vera Cruz and its Castle" in *Battles of America by Sea and Land with Biographies of Naval and Military Commanders*, ed. Robert Tomes and John Wilson (New York: J. S. Virtue, 1878), 614.

⁴³ Scott, *Vera Cruz and its Castle*, 614.

Rio Grande, at the battle of Monterrey in September 1846.⁴⁴ Clearly, seizing the disputed territories and defeating the Mexican Army was insufficient pressure on the GoM. This helped Scott construct his operational logic.

From the strategic purpose, Major General Scott derived an operational logic that resulted in a successful operational approach. He expressed his logic with a stunning economy of words: “To conquer the peace, I am now persuaded that we must take the city of Mexico, or place it in imminent danger of capture, and mainly through the city of Vera Cruz.”⁴⁵ In modern parlance, Scott identified Mexico City as the center of gravity for the GoM. His operational logic was that threatening or capturing Mexico City would eventually put enough pressure on the GoM to agree to US terms. The operational approach he proposed based on that reasoning was to conduct an overland campaign along a single geographic line of operations from Vera Cruz to the capitol. Scott also included in his proposal a description of military operations, force requirements, and methodology for dealing with the GoM. “The plan impressed [President] Polk with its grasp of both military requirements and political considerations.”⁴⁶ The president approved the plan and chose Scott to be the commander responsible for executing it.

Major General Scott negotiated boundaries throughout the campaign. The two most significant were over resources and troop strength. Scott’s initial plan outlined the requirements for both but throughout the campaign he had “a constant lack of supplies and transportation, [and] half the number of troops promised by the administration.”⁴⁷ Scott used a two-pronged approach to deal with these issues. He negotiated with higher for more troops and resources and eventually did receive reinforcements. His second approach was to mitigate the effects by using maneuver to husband combat power that could have been lost in costly direct assaults. He also mitigated the

⁴⁴ Carney, *Gateway South*, 33.

⁴⁵ Scott, *Vera Cruz and its Castle*, 614.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *A Gallant Little Army*, 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

effects through his operating method of purchasing supplies along the route of march which provided subsistence, and had the added benefit of helping to pacify the population. The recognition that he needed a deliberate scheme to deal with the population led Scott to consider new ways to control both subordinate units and the indigenous population.

Major General Scott used traditional methods to control tactical units and innovated new ones to account for his particular circumstances. His challenge was to operate over an extended line of communication (LOC) from the coast to Mexico City, a distance of over 250 miles that included 2.3 million people or a third of the Mexican population.⁴⁸ The biggest threat to the LOC was from guerilla operations. The Mexican army was less of a threat because Scott was threatening the capitol so the main enemy force had to stay in between Scott and Mexico City. To accomplish pacification, and prevent a popular guerilla uprising, Scott became “the first American general to invoke martial law while commanding an army on foreign soil... Strict discipline, respect for property, reverence to religion, purchase of supplies, and like measures collectively represented an organized effort to appease the Mexican population.”⁴⁹ These measures did not prevent all guerilla activity but did keep it below a threshold that could substantially threaten the mission.

Major General Scott’s Mexico City campaign provides examples of all four aspects of the theoretical framework for operational art. Understanding the political aim (a negotiated settlement) helped Scott appropriately define the military strategic purpose (pressure the GoM) without which he could not have developed a successful operational logic (threaten the capitol). This sound logic was critical in developing an operational approach. Careful management of the boundaries imposed by a lack of troops and resources extended Scott’s operational reach and allowed him to retain the initiative even when his army was drastically outnumbered. Finally,

⁴⁸ Johnson, *A Gallant Little Army*, 15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

Scott's appreciation of the first three aspects of operational art facilitated his recognition of the need for deliberate pacification and innovation of the control necessary to execute it. In this example, all four aspects of the theoretical structure of operational art were necessary for the successful prosecution of the campaign. While Scott provides a clear example of linking tactical action to strategic purpose, the next example is much more problematic to untangle.

General Westmoreland (1965): Introduction of Ground Combat Forces

On 8 March 1965, Marines from the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) landed in Da Nang South Vietnam.⁵⁰ While their mission was initially the defense of an American airbase,⁵¹ the introduction of ground combat forces into Vietnam marked a significant milestone in the shift of US policy that led to the Americanization of the war effort. General William C. Westmoreland, as commander of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), was responsible for developing the plan to employ ground forces in South Vietnam.⁵² He was partially successful in applying operational art, but ultimately, this effort proved insufficient to achieve the goals of policy. Identifying the ambiguous and often torturous political and strategic context is critical to understanding the limits of what operational art can achieve. This case study will start with an examination of the strategic context in 1965 and then use the theoretical model of operational art to identify where the breakdown occurred.

Policy makers confronted severe structural challenges in crafting an approach to Vietnam. They "faced a problem of monumental proportions: how to turn around a war effort that

⁵⁰ Graham Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967* (Washington: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2006), 179.

⁵¹ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 362-363.

⁵² William Westmoreland, *Commander's Estimate of the Military Situation in South Vietnam*, 26 March 1965, Westmoreland Historical File 14, Center of Military History. This document provided analysis of the military situation in Vietnam and made initial proposals for employing US combat troops. It was the baseline for planning and policy discussions regarding the commitment of ground forces in the spring and early summer of 1965.

was disintegrating, at a time when two vital preconditions for such a turnaround – a Saigon government possessing widespread popular support, and a South Vietnamese populace dedicated to the war – were missing.”⁵³ With an unsustainable status quo, the policy options were to pursue disengagement or escalation. The Johnson administration decided on a policy of escalation “despite deep pessimism among many senior officials that the new measures would succeed in turning the war around.”⁵⁴ Initially, escalation consisted of an air war against North Vietnam.⁵⁵ Logically this approach was problematic. The administration chose this approach “even though its own intelligence community was arguing that bombing the North would not have the desired impact because the problems were political and in the South, not military and in the North.”⁵⁶ This was the strategic context when the 9th MEB landed near Da Nang. Structurally the policy was a mess. Dysfunction was also evident in the bureaucratic structure.

No one had the full time job of winning the war in Vietnam, at least no one with authority commensurate with that responsibility. The ambassador as head of the Vietnam country team had full statutory authority over both civilian and military operations in Vietnam and worked on reforming the Republic of [South] Vietnam (RVN) government.⁵⁷ MACV was a subordinate unified command under Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC).⁵⁸ The MACV commander advised the RVN government on security matters, assisted the security effort with the Republic of

⁵³ Logevall, *Choosing War*, 122.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁵⁵ Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, February 11, 1965 in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Vol. II, Vietnam January-June 1965*. ed. Glenn LaFantasie, David Humphrey, Ronald Landa and Louis Smith. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), 240-243.

⁵⁶ Logevall, *Choosing War*, 123.

⁵⁷ Lyndon Johnson, Letter from the President to the Ambassador of Vietnam, July 2, 1964 in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Vol. I, Vietnam 1964*. ed. John Glennon, Edward Keefer and Charles Sampson (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), 538; Logevall, *Choosing War*, 164.

⁵⁸ Cosmas, *MACV*, 35.

Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), and commanded US forces in South Vietnam.⁵⁹ Pacific Air Forces, the US Air Force service component of Pacific Command (PACOM), commanded the air war against North Vietnam (DRV) under the direction of CINCPAC.⁶⁰ CINCPAC also directed the maritime effort through Pacific Fleet, PACOM's maritime service component.⁶¹ Additionally, "the Central Intelligence Agency, the Agency for International Development, and the US Information Agency independently made and executed policy in their own fields."⁶² Ultimately, there was no one person or headquarters that had both the authority and responsibility to effectively run the counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam and integrate efforts against the DRV. In this context of dysfunctional bureaucracy, General Westmoreland had to apply operational art to the problem of introducing ground forces.

General Westmoreland did not have a purpose commensurate with the level of commitment that using ground forces would imply; forces were not committed with a clear view of how they would achieve the policy goals in Vietnam. Rather, they were committed to stave off immediate defeat. The rationale is clear in the Joint Chiefs of Staff's (JCS) recommendation to commit ground combat forces to fighting the VC directly. While RVN political progress was previously the main concern, the JCS stated that, "The needs of the military situation have become primary, and direct US military action appears to be imperative if defeat is to be avoided."⁶³ They acknowledged that MACV had a program to grow RVN forces but that it could not produce results fast enough to respond to the deteriorating situation, therefore US forces were

⁵⁹ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 175.

⁶¹ Ibid., 167.

⁶² Ibid., 21.

⁶³ Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, March 20, 1965 in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Vol. II, Vietnam January-June 1965*. ed. Glenn LaFantasie, David Humphrey, Ronald Landa and Louis Smith. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), 465-467.

needed to “achieve an effective margin of combat power.”⁶⁴ General Westmoreland demonstrated that he understood the JCS thinking in his commander’s estimate, submitted in March 1965, and stated specifically that the purpose of US ground forces was to cover the gap until the RVNAF could field a force large enough to decisively counter the Viet Cong.⁶⁵

The strategic purpose may have been born of necessity and understandably focused on the immediate crisis, but it was incomplete and hence disconnected from the war effort as a whole. The best evidence of this is that, even as late as June, after Westmoreland submitted an implementation plan for additional units, he “and his superiors had nonetheless avoided discussing one vital question: how American troops would contribute to the achievement of the overall US military and political objectives in South Vietnam... except for generalities about improving force ratios, preventing a South Vietnamese collapse, and regaining the initiative, they had not addressed the larger strategic issue.”⁶⁶ Tactical action was de-linked from strategic purpose from the very beginning and the same confused thought process that failed to articulate a clear strategic purpose continued into the development an operational logic.

A focus on relative combat power and attrition dominated General Westmoreland’s operational logic to the detriment of holistic understanding. He envisioned a three phase campaign, lasting two and a half years, with each phase based on an increased troop commitment.⁶⁷ The underlying logic was that if the allies could achieve a 3:1 force ratio in regards to the VC/DRV then the South would be successful.⁶⁸ This was essentially an attritional approach that attempted “to inflict on the enemy more casualties than they could tolerate, thereby

⁶⁴ Ibid. Westmoreland, in his commander’s estimate of March 1965, provided the analysis that an effective margin of combat power was essentially a 3:1 ratio of US/RVNAF to VC forces (Westmoreland, *Commander’s Estimate*, 7).

⁶⁵ Westmoreland, *Commander’s Estimate*, 4.

⁶⁶ Cosmas, *MACV*, 219.

⁶⁷ Cosmas, *MACV*, 249.

⁶⁸ Westmoreland, *Commander’s Estimate*, 7.

forcing them to abandon efforts to subjugate South Vietnam.”⁶⁹ The attritional approach did not provide a unifying logic for MACV operations. Ultimately, it focused on engaging enemy main forces to the detriment of both the advisory and pacification missions.⁷⁰ What was missing was the analysis that the enemy “combined large-unit and guerilla military action with a highly developed system of political subversion and control.”⁷¹ The enemy was an integrated system and the operational logic needed to organize consistent pressure on the entire system. Without this recognition, Westmoreland’s operational logic fell short of what was required to link tactical action to the achievement of strategic ends.

The negotiation of boundaries is particularly instructive about the systemic flaws in prosecuting the Vietnam War. Perhaps the most glaring was the definition of the theater of war and the theater of operations. The enemy was playing on a much larger field than MACV. Operationally, the VC and DRV used North Vietnam, the demilitarized zone, Laos, Cambodia, and the ports/waterways around Indochina for basing, intermediate staging, sustainment, and maneuver.⁷² The US administration, however, “declined to establish a single US theater command for Southeast Asia, leaving the development and execution of strategy to negotiation among a number of power centers with different interests and priorities.”⁷³ The effect was a serious handicap for MACV. In addition to the operational handicap, the strategic decoupling of the air war against North Vietnam meant that, even though General Westmoreland had significant input into the bombing, he could never fully synchronize that effort with action in South Vietnam.⁷⁴ Westmoreland did have success in negotiating some boundaries. He did gain control

⁶⁹ Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999), 1.

⁷⁰ Sorley, *A Better War*, 4.

⁷¹ Cosmas, *MACV*, 404.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 373. Sorley, *A Better War*, 4; 56.

⁷³ Cosmas, *MACV*, 389.

⁷⁴ Cosmas, *MACV*, 383.

of jet fighter-bombers within South Vietnam in 1965 and most significantly his troop requests were generally accepted, although on a slower deployment timeline than he requested.⁷⁵

General Westmoreland did overcome serious control issues in transitioning his headquarters from an advisory command to the equivalent of a field force headquarters. First, in a pre-joint doctrine era, he did manage to work through service rivalries to assert control over US Air Force and US Marine Corps units operating in South Vietnam even if both continued to use service channels to occasionally challenge his decisions.⁷⁶ More importantly, he negotiated allied relationships with the South Koreans and RVNAF that gave him effective control while preserving their political necessity of appearing to be independent.⁷⁷

The introduction of ground forces into Vietnam presents a challenge for analyzing operational art. The Johnson administration did not organize policy or strategy for success and the South Vietnamese government was an exceptionally poor counterinsurgency partner. That said, General Westmoreland did manage to forestall the collapse of South Vietnam during the rising tide of Viet Cong activity in 1965. In the long term, however, he failed to understand the systemic nature of the enemy threat, how it interacted with the systemic failures of the GVN, and he did not develop an operational logic that linked tactical action to strategic aims. Poor application of operational art can sever the link between strategy and tactics. Additionally, in Vietnam, the policy dysfunction was crippling and understanding the policy implications was necessary for the limited success that operational art could achieve. Ultimately, operational art, like tactics, falls silent in the face of strategic mismanagement. It would take 18 years, an institutional renaissance, and congressionally mandated reforms for operational art to regain its voice in the Arabian Desert.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 199; 258-259.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 330; 333-334.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 215; 248-249.

General Schwarzkopf (1991): Operation Desert Storm

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf consciously applied operational art during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. In it, he successfully linked tactical action to strategic purpose. This case study is important because it highlights two aspects of the theoretical model for operational art. First, it demonstrates the sophistication and complexity inherent in control and secondly, it again demonstrates a seam in operational art's interaction with politics/strategy. Popular narratives of decisive victory generally obscure this seam, but it is nonetheless important to understanding the higher aspects of operational art. This section will proceed, as the previous case studies, with a brief consideration of the strategic setting followed by an examination of the four elements of the theoretical model of operational art. It will demonstrate that even in decisive victory there is room to improve the interaction between operational art and politics.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, in August of 1990, was characterized by strategic miscalculations on all sides. Western and regional allies misjudged Iraq's propensity to invade and Saddam Hussein underestimated the scale of the response that his invasion would trigger. The George H. W. Bush Administration successfully rallied world opinion against Iraq. Significantly, the US effort led to United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 660, calling on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, and UNSCR 678, authorizing member nations to use "all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660."⁷⁸ The US and Saudi Arabia also built a military coalition that included not only Western allies but Arab allies, such as Egypt and Syria, as well.⁷⁹ From a coalition and international perspective, ejecting Iraq from Kuwait was the

⁷⁸ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 660 (New York: August 2, 1990), www.un.org/docs/scres/1990/scres90.htm (accessed January 31, 2012); United Nations Security Council, Resolution 678 (New York: November 29, 1990), www.un.org/docs/scres/1990/scres90.htm (accessed January 31, 2012).

⁷⁹ Kevin Woods, *The Mother of all Battles: Saddam Hussein's Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 2.

lowest agreed upon common denominator. US objectives, as relating to General Schwarzkopf's strategic purpose, were slightly broader.

The President articulated the Persian Gulf policy objectives early, they remained remarkably consistent, and they were clear, if not entirely complete. On 5 August 1990, President George H. W. Bush addressed congress and stated that the policy goals were:

- Effect the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait;
- Restore Kuwait's legitimate government;
- Ensure the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf nations; and
- Ensure the safety of American citizens abroad.⁸⁰

The President published these policy goals on 20 August 1990 in National Security Directive (NSD⁸¹) 45, the White House document authorizing military action in defense of Saudi Arabia⁸² and reiterated them on 15 January 1991 in NSD 54, the White House document authorizing military action to liberate Kuwait.⁸³ The policy goals were sufficient to derive the strategic purpose necessary in operational planning. Where the policy was silent, however, was in an articulation of a post conflict political order, especially vis-à-vis Iraq. The paragraph on negotiation of boundaries will address this further.

Desert Storm was the first major conflict after the introduction of operational art into US doctrine and General Schwarzkopf used that doctrine to develop an operational logic. The Central Command (USCENTCOM) planners used a center of gravity (COG) analysis to help shape their

⁸⁰ General Accounting Office, *Operation Desert Storm: Evaluation of the Air Campaign* (Washington: US GAO, 1997) 196.

⁸¹ A National Security Directive (NSD) is how the president communicates national security policy decisions. "The NSD prescribes the policies and actions the president wishes implemented and assigns responsibilities and allocates resources accordingly" (Jordan, *American National Security*, 221).

⁸² George Bush, National Security Directive 45, US Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait, August 20, 1990 (Washington: The White House, 1990), 2.

⁸³ George Bush, National Security Directive 54, Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf, January 15, 1991 (Washington: The White House, 1991), 2.

operational approach. The USCENTCOM operations order (OPORD) identified three COGs: (1) the Iraqi national command authority, (2) their NBC capability, and (3) the Republican Guard Forces.⁸⁴ There is a clear link between the COG analysis and the designation of theater objectives, in addition to the stated policy goals:

- Attack Iraqi political/military leadership and command and control (C²);
- Gain and maintain air superiority;
- Sever Iraqi supply lines;
- Destroy chemical, biological, and nuclear capability; and
- Destroy Republican Guard forces.⁸⁵

To achieve these policy and theater objectives, General Schwarzkopf articulated an operational approach consisting of four phases, of which, the first three were airpower centric: (I) the strategic air campaign, (II) the attainment of air superiority in the Kuwait Theater of Operations, (III) battlefield preparation, and (IV) the ground offensive.⁸⁶ General Schwarzkopf's operational approach used the doctrine of the time and was effective in linking strategic purpose to tactical action, within the proscribed guidance. The operational approach, however, could not provide for the policy guidance that was missing – a description of the political order post hostilities. This issue manifests itself in controversy over termination criteria.

For the purposes of this discourse, the most significant boundary in regards to operational art in Desert Storm is the consideration of termination criteria. This is a matter of some controversy since some historians argue that Desert Storm failed to achieve all of its objectives. At first glance, this appears to be a persuasive argument. The OPORD states that the “offensive campaign is a four-phased air, naval, and ground offensive operation to destroy Iraqi capability to

⁸⁴ GAO, *Operation Desert Storm*, 198.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 197-198.

produce and employ weapons of mass destruction (WMD), destroy Iraqi offensive military capability, cause the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and restore the legitimate government of Kuwait.”⁸⁷ The controversy is over the destruction of WMD (capability and production) and the destruction of Iraqi offensive capability (generally regarded as the Republican Guard). Additionally, the same argument also includes the apparent objective, from a line in NSD 54, “to weaken Iraqi popular support for the current government [Saddam Hussein].”⁸⁸ The inclusion of this last claim suggests that one unfulfilled policy objective was regime removal. All of these considerations point to the question: what was the administration’s vision of Iraq after the liberation of Kuwait?

First, before arriving at a comprehensive answer, the specific objectives demand attention and a closer reading of the relevant documents can facilitate this. Neither destruction of WMB/Republican Guard nor regime removal were, in fact, policy objectives. There are two pieces of evidence for this, one strategic and one operational. In NSD 54, all of the disputed ‘objectives’ come from a paragraph more appropriately considered additional guidance. The purpose of military action was clearly stated, as such, in paragraph two and reflects the four policy goals articulated in the President’s speech to congress mentioned above. The contentious ‘objectives’ come from paragraph three, which begins; “To achieve the above purposes, US and coalition forces should seek to...”⁸⁹ This guidance is clearly meant to help facilitate the four policy objectives and do not, in and of themselves, constitute discrete objectives. This reading could be considered too parsimonious if it is not reflected in the operational commander’s thinking. Here the quotation from the operations order becomes problematic. Classification restrictions inhibit locating precisely where in the OPOD the above quotation resides. The

⁸⁷ United States Central Command, Desert Storm Operations Order (P.g. 5) in GAO, *Operation Desert Storm*, 197.

⁸⁸ Bush, *NSD 54*, 2.

⁸⁹ Bush, *NSD 54*, 2.

structure of the campaign, however, does provide some insight. The USCENTCOM OPLAN, which in the GAO's estimation was "virtually identical to the OPORD" broke down the theater objectives by phase.

The objective to disrupt leadership and C² was a Phase I objective. Since Phases I through III were airpower centric and shaping phases, the reasonable conclusion is that this was a shaping effort. The same applies to the theater objective to destroy NBC capability, which was a Phase I and III objective. Regime removal was not a theater objective. The only problematic objective was to destroy the Republican Guard, a Phase I, III, and IV objective. If the destruction of the Republican Guard was an objective during the decisive phase, then it remains an open question, in the operational documents, whether or not this was indeed a "hard" objective. A final piece of evidence comes from the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ambassador Charles W. Freeman, who stated that, he and General Schwarzkopf generated the goals regarding WMD/Republican Guard and that they only had to be reduced enough to "not pose an intolerable threat to the region, or, in other words, could be balanced by Iran."⁹⁰ Ultimately, this issue was resolved at the political level in NSD 54 where the President retained the decision to terminate combat actions in paragraph 12 which states: "Military operations will come to an end only when I have determined that the objectives set forth in paragraph 2 [*recall the President's 5 August 1990 speech*] above have been met."⁹¹

Rather than failing to meet policy objectives, the most likely answer to the question of termination criteria, in regards to Iraq, is that there simply was no policy. Ambassador Freeman recounts that neither he nor General Schwarzkopf were successful in gaining policy guidance at the end of hostilities prior to the ceasefire negotiations. He posited that national leaders "had no

⁹⁰ Chas Freeman, "Chas W. Freeman Jr. Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy." *Frontline Diplomacy*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC. <http://memory.loc.gov> (accessed October 6, 2011), 174.

⁹¹ Bush, *NSD 54*, 3.

vision of what sort of peace they wanted to have follow the war.”⁹² Clearly, US policy regarding the endstate for Iraq was lacking. The relevant issue is that policy left a vacuum that operational art could not overcome. In this instance, it was not catastrophic but it did prove problematic over time.

Desert Storm demonstrated the modern complexity of exercising control over joint and combined forces. It was remarkable for two reasons. First, this was post Goldwater-Nichols⁹³ and General Schwarzkopf was a Joint Force Commander (JFC) who had to manage inter-service authorities in the new joint construct. Schwarzkopf had air and maritime component commands but did not use a land component command. Instead, the Marines fell under their own command directly subordinate to the JFC.⁹⁴ A dedicated land component command may have been able to synchronize the ground fight better between the Marine Central Command, which was essentially a Corps-sized entity, and VII US Corps but that is mere speculation since they were not adjacent units and in between was Joint Forces Command West, an allied command.⁹⁵

This aspect of coalition warfare was a significant challenge since the Saudis and other Arab coalition partners were in a separate command structure.⁹⁶ Desert Storm witnessed a parallel command structure, partly in deference to sovereignty issues maintained since the defense of Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield, and partly due to the political sensibilities of the other Arab coalition partners. While a parallel command structure is not optimal, Schwarzkopf was able to make it work.

⁹² Freeman, *Interview*, 174.

⁹³ Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 99th Congress (October 1, 1986), 22-25. Goldwater-Nichols strengthened the authority of unified and specified combatant commanders over assigned joint forces and removed the service departments from operational command.

⁹⁴ Stephen Bourque, *Jayhawk!: The VII Corps in the Persian Gulf War* (Washington: Department of the Army, 2002), 23.

⁹⁵ Bourque, *Jayhawk*, 33.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

The second significant aspect of control was the detailed tactical planning done at Corps and Division level to make the physics of moving and fighting possible over what were at the time significant distances. While these efforts did not encompass all aspects of the theoretical model for operational art, it did represent a significant step beyond what is normally demanded of tactics. This is important because it demonstrates that different echelons of command can use operational art differently. Corps and Divisions required a type of grand tactics and only really needed the control aspect of the model. Schwarzkopf, as the Theater/Joint Force Commander, required all aspects of the model. This is perhaps the genesis of the split in Joint and Army operational art doctrine that will be examined in the next section.

Desert Storm was a truly modern application of operational art. It had the benefit of a distinct operational art doctrine and the Goldwater-Nichols reforms that created joint command architecture. In the campaign, General Schwarzkopf successfully linked strategic purpose to tactical action, the execution of which demonstrated a maturation of operational art at the Corps and Division level. Decisive victory on the ground, however, has to be moderated by the recognition that operational art could not account for the lack of a clear political endstate in regards to Iraq. Over time, this resulted in protracted issues regarding the containment of Iraq. Additionally, operational art doctrine proved well adapted for the Corps and Division fight but did not fully address the requirements of the Joint Force Commander. Joint and Army institutions responded to these separate requirements and produced different operational art doctrines. This is the subject of the final section.

Section III: Doctrine

This section will address how US military professionals codify their thinking about operational art in official doctrine. This is significant in two respects. First, doctrine is the official position of the military institutions that publish it, and thus it has organizational significance because doctrine shapes how institutions perceive and organize themselves for war. Secondly,

doctrine represents a synthesis of thinking about war and the practical experience of it. The interpretation of the past ten years in two major and several smaller theaters of war present a significant occasion to modify the doctrine that was extant in 2001. Indeed, both Joint and Army doctrine have gone through several recent revisions, some of which are still under way.

Prior to this section, the theory section posited that operational art is a constructed phenomenon – military professionals define what it is. Until now, this monograph treated operational art as a singular concept. The case study on Desert Storm, however, raised the concern that operational art may not in fact be a singular entity. It is quite possible that Joint and Army doctrine writers constructed two different concepts of operational art. To approach this problem, the current section will evaluate both Joint and Army doctrine in relation to the theoretical model proposed in section one to determine if they can be reconciled under one construct. Additionally, this section will make recommendations for the future direction of operational art doctrine.

US Army Doctrine

Analyzing Army operational art doctrine poses a challenge. The institution is reconfiguring how it organizes its doctrine and has not completed the translation of its capstone document FM 3-0, *Operations* into the new construct. Currently, the Army has only published Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*. This has enduring concepts and principles but requires Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ARDP) 3-0 to provide the details about what will carry forward from FM 3-0. ARDP 3-0 is in draft only and thus of limited value. This analysis will focus on ADP 3-0 and where necessary look back to the February 2011 edition of FM 3-0 where necessary. The analysis will follow the theoretical model of operational art proposed in section one.

ADP 3-0 represents an improvement in both understanding and linking strategic purpose to tactical action. It does this by rejecting unhelpful ideas from previous doctrine and it redefines

operational art in relation to strategic purpose. While this movement is positive, the general nature of the ADP does not cement that link. Previously, in FM 3-0 the concept of levels of war was used to “clarify the relationship between strategy and tactical action.”⁹⁷ In practice, however, this tended to obscure and sever the linkage due to the misconception that the operational level was free from interaction/interference from both strategy and politics.⁹⁸ ADP 3-0 explicitly rejects this construct.⁹⁹ Rather, it addresses the linkage in a new definition. In ADP 3-0, “Operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”¹⁰⁰ The doctrine writers are clearly establishing the relationship between tactical action and strategic purpose. They go on to stress the importance of commanders who understand the strategic objectives.¹⁰¹ This is an improvement, however, the concept of strategic objectives needs further refinement.

Are strategic objectives inclusive of political goals or do they relate to purely military objectives? In the context of Unified Action, which includes Joint, interagency, and non-governmental entities, strategic purpose would seem to include greater policy goals. Unfortunately, this understanding is implicit and relies upon the reader to make the connection. Additionally, ADP 3-0 does not directly consider US foreign policy. For a true understanding of strategic purpose to take root, it must be grounded squarely in policy. It remains to be seen if this will be explicitly included in either the ADRP or Army design methodology, both of which are not formally approved.

⁹⁷ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0 CI 2011: Operations* (Washington: Department of the Army, 2011), 7-1.

⁹⁸ Kelly and Brennan, *Alien*, 67. The operational level of war became a field of study, in and of itself, and developed within the field at the expense of developing the connective relationships to the other levels.

⁹⁹ Department of the Army, *ADP 3-0*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Department of the Army, *ADP 3-0*, 10.

Army doctrine addresses the development of an operational logic in two ways. First, within the Operations Structure in ADP 3-0, operational art's function is to "cognitively link tactical actions to strategic objectives."¹⁰² This is necessary because it clearly places the burden on operational art to develop the logic. It does this through the second aspect, planning. Specifically, in FM 5-0 *The Operations Process*, during conceptual planning and the development of an operational approach which "is a broad conceptualization of the general actions that will produce the conditions that define the desired end state."¹⁰³ FM 5-0 also provides tools and concepts to do this, not the least of which are the elements of operational art.¹⁰⁴ Considered holistically, doctrine does adequately address the development of an operational logic as understood in the theoretical model, as long as planners adequately describe the anchor point in purpose.

Army doctrine is primarily concerned with organizing the tactical actions of subordinate units and is therefore largely silent on the negotiation of boundaries. This is understandable because Unified Land Operations is the Army's contribution to the Joint fight and Unified Action. There is an implicit assumption that there will be a Joint Force Commander to negotiate the strategic boundaries. This aspect of the theoretical model of operational art highlights an area of divergence with Joint doctrine. Joint and land component headquarters have different purposes – the Army focuses on the land fight and the Joint headquarters focuses on organizing the theater. This monograph will defer judgment on whether or not this leads to two separate operational art constructs until the conclusion, after the examination of Joint doctrine can inform the perspective. There is one notable exception to the negotiation of boundaries in Army doctrine. That is the task of force tailoring which is "is the process of determining the right mix of forces and the sequence

¹⁰² Ibid., iv.

¹⁰³ Department of the Army, *FM 5-0 C1 2011: The Operations Process* (Washington: Department of the Army, 2011) 3-11.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., D-1.

of their deployment in support of a joint force commander.”¹⁰⁵ This is an Army Service Component Command (ASCC) responsibility. The Army has a range of capabilities that do not have an analogue in other services so only the Army headquarters doing the detailed planning for the JFC can tailor effectively and this is one concrete example of a proscribed negotiation of boundaries with higher headquarters.¹⁰⁶

Doctrine, unsurprisingly, is the most well developed aspect of the theoretical model and provides ample guidance on control. The concept of *Mission Command* coupled with the orders process in FM 5-0 provides sufficient guidance for communicating the conceptual to the tactical that the theoretical model requires. The one aspect of control that could benefit from further study is the development of feedback and learning processes for tactical action to inform operational art. Identifying the relative importance and mechanism for this would surface during conceptual planning so it is not entirely lacking. Unpacking this concept further requires a separate study and is therefore beyond the scope of the current project.

Recognizing that Army doctrine is in a state of change, the current documents, and trends in development, equate well with the proposed theoretical model. The two exceptions are clarity on policy versus strategic objectives and the negotiation of boundaries. The later will be addressed after an examination of Joint doctrine; however, the former is immediately problematic. Understanding the policy objectives is critical to the essential function of operational art to link strategic purpose to tactical action. This is often mediated by one, or multiple, joint force headquarters, however, it is entirely possible that an Army headquarters, in the normal nesting process of examining the mission and intent two levels up, may encounter policy guidance directly. Making an understanding of policy explicit has two specific benefits. First,

¹⁰⁵ Department of the Army, *FM 3-0*, 4-13.

¹⁰⁶ This monograph only addresses capstone doctrine and fully recognizes that, within specific warfighting function doctrine there are specified interactions with higher headquarters that affect the negotiation of boundaries.

demonstrating the capacity to trace purpose back to its source in policy strengthens operational art's ability to link tactical action to strategic purpose. Secondly, habituating Soldiers to connecting tactical action to strategic purpose will not only prepare them for operating in politically sensitive environments but will help prepare them for service in senior headquarters.

US Joint Doctrine

Joint doctrine covers the full range of military operations and functions executed by Joint Task Forces (JTFs), specified/subunified/combatant commands, and the Joint Staff.¹⁰⁷ In contrast to the Army, which must provide tactical as well as operational doctrine, Joint publications are more concerned with operational/strategic matters and interaction with policy. To structure these interactions, Joint doctrine retains the levels of war construct. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 *Joint Operations* locates the combatant commander as the pivot point that has both strategic and operational responsibilities.¹⁰⁸ The levels of war construct is equally as unhelpful in the Joint context as it is in service specific doctrine. This is because Joint headquarters, other than combatant commands, also operate on multiple levels. Specified commands, like United States Forces–Iraq, and subunified commands, like United States Forces Korea, have served theater strategic, operational, and at times tactical functions. The levels of war construct is not only irrelevant to understanding these headquarters, it is also a potential source of confusion as well.

In Joint doctrine, levels of war aside, the characterization of strategy, operational art, and tactics generally aligns with the theoretical model of operational art proposed in this monograph. Strategy is primarily conceptual, “an idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives... The operational level links the tactical employment of forces to

¹⁰⁷ Department of Defense, *JOINT PUB 3-0 2011: Joint Operations* (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), i.

¹⁰⁸ Department of Defense, *JP 3-0*, I-13.

national and military strategic objectives.”¹⁰⁹ The tactical level is primarily physical and concerned with the employment and arrangement of forces in engagements and battles.¹¹⁰

This section will examine Joint doctrine in relation to the theoretical model for operational art. Since joint doctrine includes some strategic functions and processes, care is necessary to ensure that the discussion stays on the aspects of Joint doctrine that are relevant to operational art.

A final note on operational art, the Joint definition is different from the Army definition. JP 3-0 defines operational art as “the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment – to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means.”¹¹¹ This definition fails in many respects. By equating operational art with a cognitive function, it remains within the mind and never really does anything. This conflicts with other articulations of operational art, in the same manual, that describe operational art as designing, planning, and executing operations.¹¹² Additionally, it conflates strategic functions with operational ones. Developing strategies and integrating ends-ways-means are strategic responsibilities. Ultimately, it is both too broad and too unspecific to have any explanatory utility. Replacing this definition with the newer one in ADP 3-0 will add clarity and will not alter the content or logic of existing Joint doctrine. This analysis will examine the content and logic in the Joint doctrine while discarding the definition from any consideration.

Joint doctrine is explicit about developing an understanding of strategic purpose and provides a system for interacting with strategic leaders to clarify and if necessary develop it. In the chapter on operational art in JP 3-0, understanding strategic direction is one aspect of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., I-14.

¹¹¹ Department of Defense, *JP 3-0*, GL-14.

¹¹² Ibid., I-13.

developing an operational approach. It discusses how policy makers, the President and Secretary of Defense (SecDef), can establish strategic objectives. It also acknowledges that Joint Force Commanders may need to collaborate with these leaders to develop strategic objectives.¹¹³ This collaboration is built into the Adaptive Planning and Execution System (APEX), which structures interaction with strategic leaders. “The primary end products of the strategic guidance function are assumptions, conclusions about the strategic and operational environment (nature of the problem), strategic and military end states, and the supported commander’s approved mission statement.”¹¹⁴

Joint doctrine develops an operational logic as part of the operational design phase of planning. Operational design complements the Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP) and the first iteration takes place during planning initiation, the first step in JOPP. Specifically, developing operational logic is part of the broader project of developing the commander’s initial operational approach as part of the commander’s initial planning guidance. The commander and staff first define the operational environment and the problem. From that understanding, they consider the elements of operational design and craft a narrative that describes objectives, potential lines of operation/effort (LOOs/LOEs) to include defeat (destroy, dislocate, disintegrate, isolate) and stability (compel, control, influence, support) mechanisms, and potential decisive points.¹¹⁵ What is important about this structure of planning is that, in the Joint construct, developing the commander’s operational approach links strategic purpose to tactical action. Understanding the strategic purpose informs the problem statement and the commander’s initial planning guidance creates the frame for arranging tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.

¹¹³ Department of Defense, *JOINT PUB 5-0 2011: Joint Operation Planning* (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), III-7.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II-19/20.

¹¹⁵ Department of Defense, *JP 5-0*, III-16.

The APEX system provides several opportunities to negotiate boundaries. It does this by scheduling in-progress reviews (IPRs) with strategic leaders during different stages in the planning cycle. The formal IPRs of importance here are strategic guidance (IPR A), concept development (IPR C), and plan approval (IPR F). Each lettered IPR can be a single discrete event or consist of several iterative events as required. The IPR forum provides the Joint Force Commander an opportunity to discuss any significant boundary that requires additional approval/decision (physical, temporal, resource, legal, etc.).¹¹⁶

Control in Joint operations is significantly more complex than in pure Army or land component organizations. In fact, one can argue that Congress created the entire Joint system to solve the problem of control. Joint force headquarters not only have to direct multi-service formations, but also have to integrate interagency, coalition, and non-governmental entities as well. Since Joint doctrine is only authoritative over US military forces, the control of multi-service formations is of primary importance in this discussion. While always challenging, Joint doctrine provides adequate guidance for control. It provides the tools for articulating command and support relationships, planning/orders processes, and headquarters organizations to effectively control Joint Forces by translating the conceptual strategic purpose to the organizations that will carry out the tactical action.¹¹⁷

On balance, Joint doctrine incorporates all aspects of the theoretical model of operational art. It is explicit about understanding strategic purpose and tracing it back to policy. It has processes (operational design) to develop an operational logic. It has mechanisms (the APEX system) to negotiate boundaries with strategic decision makers and it provides adequate guidance

¹¹⁶ Ibid., II-14; II-19 to 21.

¹¹⁷ JP 5-0, Joint Operation Planning, provides the overview and process for translating strategic guidance into tactical orders. Command and control mechanism and guidance are further refined in: JP 3-16, Multinational Operations; JP 3-33, Joint Task Force Headquarters; JP 3-30, Command and Control for Joint Air Operations; JP 3-31 Command and Control for Joint Land Operations; and JP 3-32, Command and Control for Joint Maritime Operations.

for the control of Joint forces. Joint doctrine does suffer from an inadequate definition of operational art but does provide the logic and tools to effectively translate strategic purpose into tactical action.

Conclusion

To address Dr. Echevarria's challenge that the US does not have a way of war, this monograph argued that the essential problem is the linkage of policy, war's logic, to warfare, war's grammar. It focused on the role of operational art in this linkage because operational art is an intermediary between strategy and tactics and because the introduction of operational art was partially responsible for severing this link. Furthermore, this monograph argued that a lack of definitive operational art theory created a conceptual gap, an inability to explain how tactical action serves policy. Therefore, the approach was to create an operational art theory, test it with history, and then use it to evaluate doctrine.

The theory of operational art began with an examination of its purpose. The purpose of operational art is to bridge the qualitative differences between strategy and tactics. To do this, operational art needs a deliberate structure. The structure, posited here, consists of four links: 1) an understanding of strategic purpose, 2) an operational logic, 3) a method to negotiate boundaries, and 4) mechanisms for control. This theoretical model, like all theory, requires practical experience to temper it.

Three historical case studies provide insight into the functioning and limitations of the theoretical model. Major General Scott's Mexico City campaign in 1847 provided an example of the successful application of, in modern terms, operational art. This study showed that he met all the requirements of the theoretical model and that they were all necessary to successfully link strategic purpose to tactical action. General Westmoreland's introduction of ground combat forces into Vietnam in 1965 demonstrated that poor application of operational art can lead to tactical action that does not contribute to strategic goals. It also provided an example of the

limitations of operational art. The structural inequities of an ambiguous policy, the absence of unity of effort, and resource constraints limited him to merely forestall defeat rather than achieve strategic decision. It demonstrated the primacy of policy and strategic direction over operational and tactical capability. Finally, General Schwarzkopf's Operation Desert Storm in 1991 provided an example of operational art in a more contemporary context. It demonstrated that operational art was successful in organizing the action of corps and divisions, but did not meet all of the Joint Force Commander's requirements. Furthermore, it also demonstrated that operational art could not overcome the absence of policy regarding a post-war Iraq. Finally, this case study raised the question of whether or not there are two distinct operational arts, one for the organization of tactical units and one for a Joint Force Commander. This will be addressed below.

The most important Joint and Army doctrine for operations and planning was republished in 2011. These documents incorporate many of the lessons learned from the past 10 years of war. The Army is still developing its doctrine but the most recent document, ADP 3-0 *Unified Land Operations*, makes significant improvements in clarifying the purpose and structure of operational art. It could benefit, however, from more explicit attention to understanding strategic purpose. The best place to publish this is in the more detailed, and forthcoming, ADRP 3-0. Additionally, as FM 5-0, *The Operations Process*, migrates into the Army Doctrinal Publication framework, there is an opportunity to solidify the requirement to trace political requirements through strategic goals and down to operational objectives and tactical action.¹¹⁸ Finally, ADRP 3-0 should explicitly acknowledge that Joint doctrine (currently JP 5-0 chapter II) is the proponent doctrine describing operational art's interaction with strategy and policy. Positioning

¹¹⁸ Either this can be addressed in design methodology or the military decision making process (MDMP) as long as it is explicit. It may also be optional since service doctrine covers tactical echelons where this process could be unnecessarily burdensome. It is entirely possible that brigades, divisions, and even corps could operate in a well-structured theater, with several echelons of headquarters above them, which adequately translate policy and military strategy into operational objectives.

service doctrine in relation to a greater context will remind practitioners that operational art has a responsibility to relate upwards to strategy as well as downward to tactics.

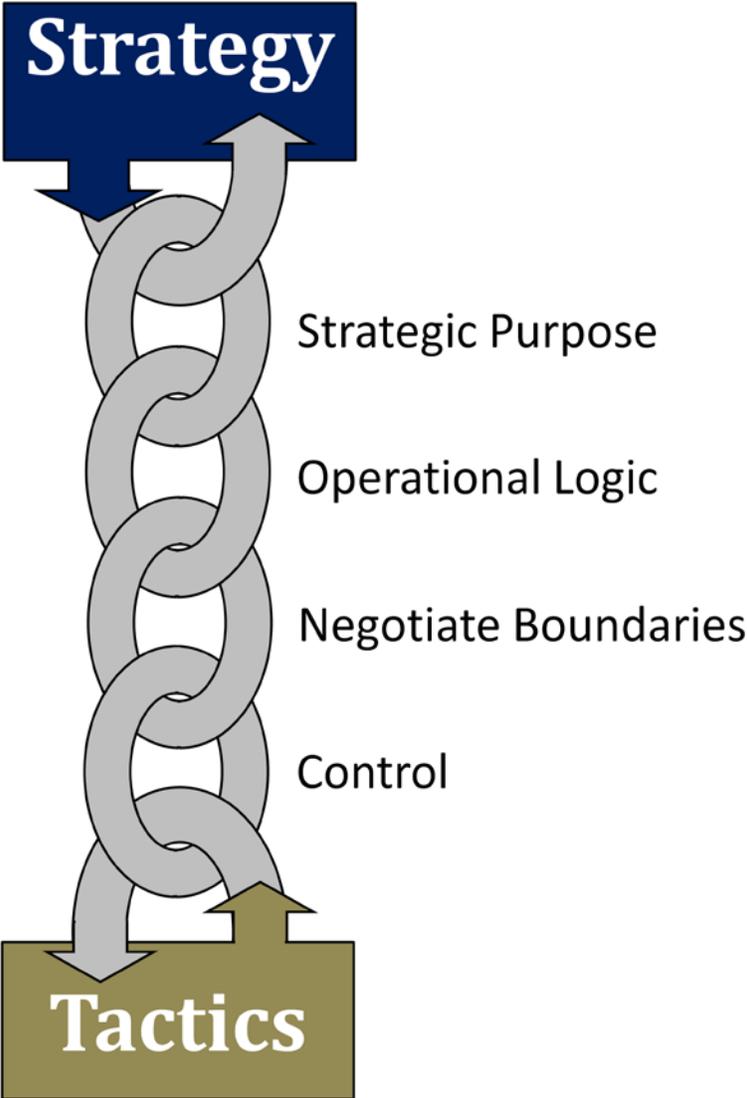
Joint doctrine accounts for all aspects of the theoretical model. Since it also has to cover organizations with strategic responsibilities, such as the Joint Staff and Combatant Commands, it is natural that Joint doctrine examines the relationship between operational art and strategy/policy more intensely than Army doctrine. This returns to the question of two operational arts.

Service doctrine (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps) serves a different function and has a different emphasis than Joint doctrine. The Army, for example, is primarily concerned with organizing the tactical actions of subordinate units and can usually expect to operate under a military, usually Joint, headquarters. Joint Force Commanders have additional concerns because of their responsibility to command Joint forces, integrate entities outside of the Department of Defense, and interact directly with strategic leaders. Therefore, it is natural that the two institutions would emphasize different aspects of operational art and develop seemingly different doctrine. Theory, however, suggests that if the purpose of operational art is the same, then only one model for linking strategic purpose to tactical action is necessary. The role of operational art is the same in both Joint and Army doctrine. The differences are in emphasis and detail. Having identical doctrine would become cumbersome and serve neither institution well. The important point in the methodology of this monograph is to identify how well the doctrine accounts for all aspects of the theoretical model. In this case, the conclusions about Army doctrine still apply. Army doctrine should explicitly address developing a full understanding of strategic purpose. This is for two reasons. First, it will help Soldiers, applying Army doctrine, to fulfill the purpose of operational art. Secondly, developing this understanding earlier in a career will help Soldiers transition to working in and commanding senior Joint headquarters.

The experience of the last ten years has informed current military professionals' understanding of operational art and this is reflected in the improvements in the most recent doctrine. As the Department of Defense pivots from the current conflicts to a future of austere

budgetary and uncertain security environments, doctrine will play an important role in how the nation prepares for and executes the next war. To negotiate these changes, theory is a useful tool in interpreting experience; it will be present even if it is not explicit – it should be explicit. Operational art serves an important link in ensuring that successful tactical action can lead to the fulfillment of policy objectives. Like tactics, however, even virtuosity in the application of operational art cannot overcome serious flaws in policy or strategy. In this respect, strategy, operational art, and tactics are interdependent and contingent upon a purpose that can only come from policy.

APPENDIX A: A Theoretical Model of Operational Art Graphic



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