

Stryker brigade provides security as part of "surge" of troops into Baghdad, May 2007

U.S. Army (Antonieta Rico)

The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art

By JUSTIN KELLY and MICHAEL J. BRENNAN

War and politics, campaign and statecraft, are Siamese twins, inseparable and interdependent; and to talk of military operations without the direction and interference of an administrator is as absurd as to plan a campaign without recruits, pay or rations.¹

Brigadier Justin Kelly, Australian Army (Ret.), was Director General of Future Land Warfare in Army Headquarters and Commander of the Land Warfare Development Centre. Dr. Michael J. Brennan is Director of General Simulation in the Australian Department of Defence.

Wars are fought to achieve a distribution of political power that is satisfactory to the victor. Political power rests on the acquiescence of a population—however that is attained. Therefore, the fundamental challenge in war is to assemble a sequence of actions that seems likely to change the minds of a (hostile) population. Some stratagems, tactics, or weapons may be, or become, inimical to that shift in the popular consensus and be counterproductive. Some may have mixed impacts, influencing different parts of the target community in different ways. Actions to overcome armed resistance may alienate sectors of the population, while failing to do so may be a path to defeat. Shifts in the circumstances on the ground, in the domestic politics of the belligerents, or in the



wider international community may validate, invalidate, or alter the strategic objectives sought, the campaign plan pursued, or the tactics employed. Although these complexities are not new, they are becoming increasingly salient in the contemporary setting.

The aphorism “strategy proposes but tactics disposes” is important here. Unless strategy includes a tactical view, it may seek objectives that are practically unachievable, or it may miscalculate the costs and benefits likely to emerge from a conflict. These costs are not limited to the direct economic and social impacts of war on the belligerents but extend to international public opinion and international politics. The consequences of tactical actions can, more than ever, decide not only who wins the war but also the shape of the peace that follows it.

Equally, tactics need to serve strategy, and tactical action without strategic purpose is merely senseless violence. The strategic direction of a war needs to be intimately connected to the details of the warfare being conducted to ensure both that it is making realistic demands and that the warfare remains appropriate to the wider conduct of the war. Moreover, tactics need to be constantly seeking to contribute to the ends laid down by strategy with economy and efficiency, and with nuance shaped by an awareness of the wider conduct of the war. A two-way conversation between strategy and tactics is fundamental to the successful prosecution of any war.

Sound theory attempts to deal with this reality. The German school of military theorists that emerged around the end of the 18th century, for example, saw war as a “giant demonic force, a huge spiritual entity, surcharged with brutal energy.”² For those responsible for the management of this beast,

it was clear that to be understood and properly directed, war needed to be seen in the round. As Gerhard von Scharnhorst asserted, “One must habitually consider the whole of war before its components.”³ Michael Handel expands on this proposition, arguing that war needs to be viewed as a gestalt, or complex whole comprising concrete and abstract elements, and explaining that “because of its infinite complexity and non-linear nature, war can only be understood as an organic whole not as a mere compendium of various separate elements.”⁴

Nowadays, political leaders are not prepared from birth to be students of war, and war has expanded beyond a localized cluster of tactical actions. In the face of today’s complexity, the understanding and managing of war as a whole are shared across a bureaucracy. The military’s interaction with that bureaucracy is colored—if not quite regulated—by its doctrine. This article argues that the existing understanding of the meaning and role of operational art is based on poor

in the face of today’s complexity, the understanding and managing of war as a whole are shared across a bureaucracy

theoretical foundations, is implicated in a pattern of U.S. failures of strategy, and is not able to accommodate the evolution of warfare as it is currently anticipated.

From Strategies of a Single Point to Modern Campaigns

The need for operations was a product of changes brought about by the Napoleonic

concept of the nation-in-arms and the impact of the Industrial Revolution. The nation-in-arms provided huge armies, while the Industrial Revolution provided the means to equip, deploy, command, and sustain them. The result was that whereas in the wars of the 18th century, armies in the field seldom exceeded 150,000, Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812 with 600,000 men, and the Prussians invaded France in 1870 with 1,200,000. As a result of this increase, the size of the battlefield grew from a few kilometers wide in Frederick the Great’s time to several hundred kilometers in France in 1871.

The use of seemingly inexhaustible mass armies supported by the full economic power of increasingly well-organized states moved war, at least in Europe, from limited conflicts of dynastic maneuvering to unlimited and stupendously violent confrontations seeking the complete subjugation of the enemy. This raised the stakes of war for the belligerents at the same time that the increased scope and dispersion of action reduced the ability to maintain tight control. Therefore, whereas it remained a common practice for European monarchs to accompany their armies into the field until well into the 19th century, this no longer ensured that the means committed to tactical engagements remained yoked to strategic objectives.

G.S. Isserson describes a typical Napoleonic campaign as “a great, long approach, which engendered a long operational line, and a short final engagement in a single area, which, with respect to the long operational line is a single point in space and a single moment in time.”⁵ Echoing Carl von Clausewitz—“The field of battle in the face of strategy is no more than a point; in precisely the same way the duration of battle reduces to a single moment in time”—Isserson describes Napoleonic war as the era of single-point strategy since “the entire mission of a military leader was reduced to concentrating all his forces at one point and throwing them into battle as a one act tactical phenomenon.”⁶

In this context, the closely contemporaneous Austro-Prussian (1866) and Franco-Prussian (1870–1871) wars marked a watershed. The war of 1866 demonstrated the strategy of a single point—Koniggratz—but, by 1870, the larger armies and more expansive theater of operations created new needs. In 1870–1871, there were many battles that influenced each other and that extended through time and across space. War had outgrown the

U.S. Soldier on patrol outside Forward Operating Base Salie, Baghdad



U.S. Army (Albino Mendoza III)

strategy of a single point. Whereas in 1866 all the Prussian armies moved toward Koniggratz, in 1870 the Germans' frontage was 100 kilometers in their assembly areas, immediately increasing to 150 kilometers as the force advanced. The defeat of France required four discrete combat links: Spicheren-Werth, Metz, Sedan, and Paris, each of which represented a cluster of lesser battles of varying scale. This meant that battle, instead of occurring in a single place with the mass of forces of both sides engaged, became distributed into a number of subordinate battles across a sometimes expanding front. As a result, "[Helmuth von] Moltke was faced with a completely new problem of coordinating and directing combat efforts, tactically dissociated and dispersed in space to achieve the overall aim of defeating the enemy."⁷

As a consequence of this realization, toward the end of the 19th century, German thinking included awareness "that the battlefield had grown larger and deadlier. Battles and engagements had lost their distinctiveness and would blend into an all-encompassing 'Gesamtschlacht' [overall battle] that might extend across the entire width and depth of the theatre of war."⁸ Of course, without some unification, the *Gesamtschlacht* would threaten

to dissolve into an uncoordinated brawl. A framework to direct it was required and, at the latest, by 1895 one had emerged and is described by Colmar von der Goltz:

In the course of military events there will always be separate groups of affairs springing into prominence, the parts of which are more intimately connected with each other than the preceding or subsequent occurrences. Military activity then tends with livelier interest towards a special object and leaves all others to one side, or subordinates them, until the former is attained. After that, a certain abatement, or perhaps a brief pause for recuperation, may be observed until a more rapid course of action is again adopted, and, in a manner, a new idea, a second objective, becomes visible.

a common leading thought, and not arbitrarily or accidentally strung together, is a matter of course, and does not remove the distinction.

Again, among certain operations a more intimate relationship will generally be brought about by the fact that they are conducted under similar circumstance, at the same time of year, against the same hostile army and are separated from the rest of the operations through conditions of time or space, change of opponents or alteration in the method of conducting the war. Such an association of operations is called a "campaign," which forms a definite portion of the war.⁹

Therefore, by the end of the 19th century, there was an understanding that the evolution of warfare, increasing size of

by the end of the 19th century, there was an understanding that conditions had led to the need to group tactical actions into operations and to group operations into campaigns

Every such group of actions will be composed of marches, the assumption of positions, and combats, and is called an "operation." . . . That the different groups of occurrences . . . must be connected by the bond of

armies, improvements in firepower, communications, and logistics, and consequent expansion of theaters of operations had created new conditions. These conditions had led to the need to group tactical actions

into operations and to group operations into campaigns. As a result, strategy was faced with problems of a complexity that were new to it. Rather than war planning involving the design of a single campaign focused on creating the opportunity for a single decisive battle, it now involved a need to plan possibly several campaigns, each of which was itself a cluster of discrete, and largely foreseen, operations intended to achieve intermediate objectives, the summation of which represented the objective of the campaign as a whole. The summation of the objectives of each of the campaigns, in turn, represented the objectives of the war.

At the same time, the need to coordinate multiple blows distributed across time and space but supporting a single unifying idea broadened the understanding of the campaign (adding a geographic meaning to its previous temporal one) and created the special meaning of *operation* that we retain today. Within the campaign, clusters of tactical actions, grouped in time or location, and pursuing their own unifying idea—but one subordinate to that of the campaign—formed individual operations. The arrangement of these tactical actions and the retention of their focus on the campaign intent formed the entirety of the new, and as yet nameless, kid on the block—operational art. Whereas in 1866, the congruence of the war, the campaign, and the Battle of Koniggratz made operational art unnecessary, by 1870–1871, it had become essential.

Giving the New Kid a Name

It was the Soviets who gave us the term *operational art*. Although the term *operation* in its special meaning of a sequenced group of tactical actions had been around since the second half of the 19th century, the identification and codification of operational art had to await the arrival of the socialist state. The Soviets, guided by dialectical materialism, found it necessary to distill “science” out of the universal experience of war and as a result produced a comprehensive and multipartite taxonomy of its components.¹⁰ In Soviet usage, *military science* was understood as a system of knowledge facilitating the understanding of practical experience. *Military art*, as a subset of military science, involved the application of this system of knowledge in practical situations.¹¹ *Operational art*, a subset of military art, combined tactics and logistics to assemble a series of tactical problems intended to achieve an intermediate aim within a campaign.

By 1923, Mikhail Tukhachevsky had begun to articulate the broad shape of Soviet operational art:

Since it is impossible, with the extended fronts of modern times, to destroy the enemy's army at a single blow, we are obligated to try to do this gradually by operations which will be more costly to the enemy than to ourselves. . . . In short, a series of destructive operations conducted on logical principles and linked together by an uninterrupted pursuit may take the place of the decisive battle that was the

*form of engagement in the armies of the past, which fought on shorter fronts.*¹²

Tukhachevsky and his colleagues saw maneuver as having physical rather than moral objectives—the Soviets wanted to *annihilate* the enemy. As a result, Tukhachevsky was quite clear that “an operation is the organized struggle of each of the armies for the destruction of the men and material of the other. Not the destruction of some hypothetical, abstract nervous system of the army, but destruction of the real organism—the troops and real nervous system of the opponent, the army's communications, must be the operational goal.”¹³

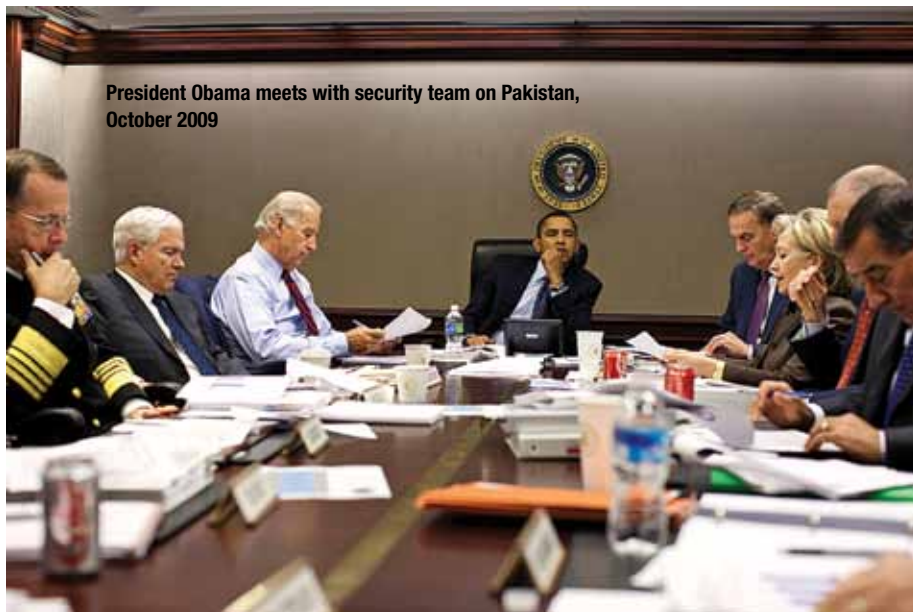
This statement encapsulates the two dominant streams in Russian operational art: successive operations (the infliction of a series of damaging blows) with deep operations (the linking of these blows to achieve penetrations of increasing depth until the enemy defensive zone, including deep reserves, had been

because single decisive battles were no longer expected, the path to the annihilation of the enemy needed to be broken into a series of operations

pierced and the conditions for mobile warfare thereby reestablished). This would create the conditions for the encirclement and subsequent annihilation of large enemy groups. These two ideas were eventually combined in Soviet deep operations theory, in which a deep attack was understood as simultaneously destroying, suppressing, and pinning down not only those defending forces designated to repel an attack from the front, but also those located well behind the front.

The evolution of the theory of the deep attack took place in conjunction with a refinement in Soviet understanding of operations and operational art. Because single decisive battles were no longer expected, the path to the achievement of the annihilation of the enemy needed to be broken into a series of operations. Operations were understood as a sequence of tactical actions that were:

directed towards the achievement of a certain intermediate goal in a certain theatre of military operations. . . . On the basis of the goal of an operation, Operational Art sets forth a



President Obama meets with security team on Pakistan, October 2009

White House (Pete Souza)

*whole series of tactical missions . . . [and] dictates the basic line of conduct of an operation, depending on the material available, the time which may be allotted for the handling of different tactical missions, the forces which may be deployed . . . and finally the nature of the operation itself.*¹⁴

In this, there is a clear hierarchy of responsibilities: strategy frames the campaign; that is, it defines the theater, sets objectives, and allocates resources while the campaign commander, working within this framework, decides on the successive operations necessary to achieve his campaign objectives.¹⁵

The Heresy Emerges

In 1982, the U.S. Army published a revised version of Field Manual (FM) 100–5, *Operations*, which described how the Army intended to fight. The 1982 version formed a key component in the post-Vietnam renaissance that was sweeping through the Army at the time. The advent of the all-volunteer force brought with it a renewal of military professionalism in the widest sense, and this flowed into approaches to training and education as well as how the Army as an institution viewed war and preparation for it. Most importantly for our purposes, however, it introduced to the U.S. Army the idea of the *operational level of war*.

It is not clear how the German view of war as a whole or the Soviet recognition of operational art became translated, in American usage, into a discrete level of war existing somewhere between strategy and tactics, but therein lies the source of much subsequent confusion. This confusion is demonstrated in the single paragraph that introduced this new species to the military menagerie:

*The Operational Level of War involves planning and conducting campaigns. Campaigns are sustained operations designed to defeat an enemy force in a specified place and time with simultaneous and sequential battles. The disposition of forces, selection of objectives and actions to weaken or outmaneuver the enemy all set the terms for the next battle and exploit tactical gains. They are all part of the operational level of war.*¹⁶

Here, FM 100–5 removes from strategy its traditional role of planning campaigns and conflates the term *campaign* with what the Soviets would recognize as an *operation*—a

sequence of simultaneous and sequential battles connected by a unifying idea and intended to defeat an enemy force. This original error was further developed in the 1986 version of FM 100–5 when the term *operational art* was introduced to the American lexicon and defined as “the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater through the *design* [emphasis added], organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations.”¹⁷ This new and heretical understanding of operations and operational art spread through the Anglophone world like a virus, and, with minor variations in spelling, the same definitions appeared in British, Canadian, and Australian military doctrine by the early 1990s and remain relatively unchanged to this day.

There is nothing wrong with ascribing new meanings to existing terms, and therefore the FM 100–5 definition is not necessarily wrong. However, in this case it has the pernicious effect of perverting the original purpose of operational art—facilitating the two-way conversation between tactics and strategy—and instead, in association with a discrete and influential level of command, actually works to weaken this connection. The misunderstanding of the role of operational art proselytized in FM 100–5 and the creation of the notion of an “operational level of war” has led it to assume a level of independence that has usurped the role of strategy and thereby resisted the role that politics should play in campaign planning.

Art Lykke, in an influential article in 1989, described strategy as consisting of ends (objectives toward which one strives), ways

(courses of action), and means (instruments by which some end can be achieved).¹⁸ If we accept this, we can conclude that strategy necessarily requires the simultaneous consideration of ends, ways, and means. In the case of a specific conflict, the choice of ways includes campaign design: the decisions on whom, where, and how to fight. Campaign design would also include a clear view on the scheme of maneuver, the operations that seem likely to be necessary, and therefore the resources required. Failure to complete this examination, or errors in its completion, risks seeking to achieve too much with too little or, conversely, incurring opportunity costs that might detract from the prosecution of the wider conflict. Equally, each individual campaign needs to be examined in the wider strategic context to ensure that the ends-ways-means rationale for it internally is in accordance with the higher direction of national strategy and is politically sustainable through its planned duration. In this context, operations—as a sequence of tactical actions and tactics, actual battles, and engagements—clearly come under the category of means.

Pleasingly, this analysis seems to lead to a model broadly in accordance with Scharnhorst’s and Clausewitz’s direction that we consider war as a whole. Furthermore, it apparently encapsulates the idea of war as a gestalt and offers opportunities for the multiple loops and connections that recognize war as a complex, adaptive system. This model, shown in figure 1, is broadly in accordance with theory and is entirely consonant with German and Soviet approaches to operational art. In contrast, however, if we conduct a similar

Figure 1. Ends, Ways, and Means in War as a Whole

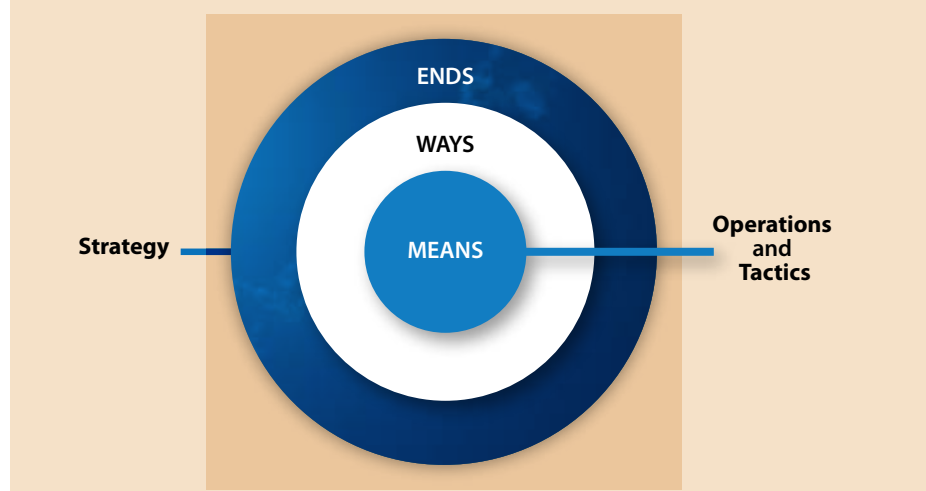
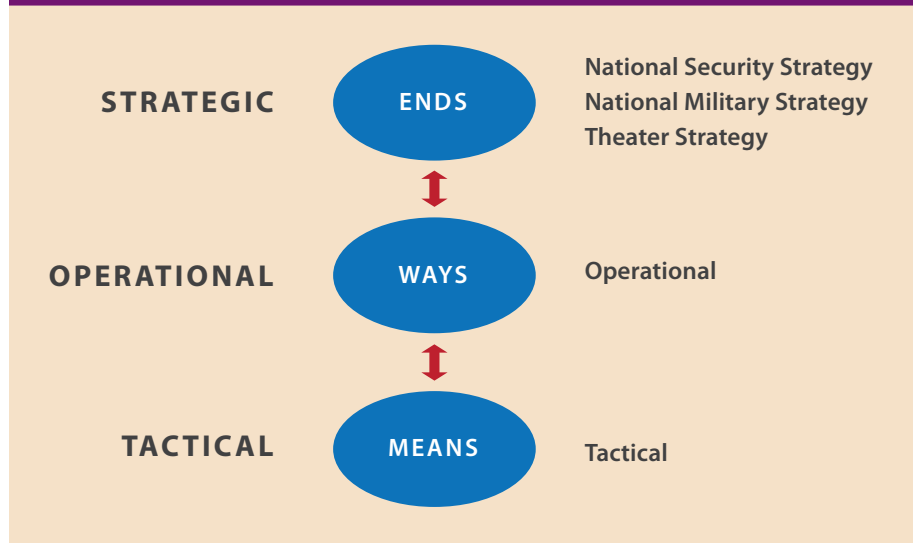


Figure 2. The Continuum of War



analysis with a discrete level of war and its associated level of command, a hierarchical model emerges such as that in figure 2.

This, the “continuum of war” model, is in accordance with most extant Western doctrine and reflects what Eliot Cohen has referred to as the “Huntingtonian” or “normal” theory of civil-military relations.¹⁹ In this model, it is the “duty of the statesman to formulate a ‘clear, concise and unambiguous declaration of national policy’ to guide the military.”²⁰ Once this declaration is provided, the politicians should simply get out of the way and let the military get on with its job. As the Command and General Staff School wrote in 1936:

*politics and strategy are radically and fundamentally things apart. Strategy begins where politics ends. All that soldiers ask is that once the policy is settled, strategy and command shall be regarded as something in a sphere apart from politics. . . . The line of demarcation must be drawn between politics and strategy, supply and operations. Having found this line, all sides must abstain from trespassing.*²¹

Although this is admittedly an extreme view which was written in 1936, it continues to echo today, and “a simplified Huntingtonian concept remains the dominant view within the American defence establishment,” with the Caspar Weinberger and Colin Powell doctrines reflecting its continuing authority.²²

The existence of an independent level of war, served by its own level of command and operating free from unwelcome interference from strategy, represents the foundation on which the U.S. military defines its profes-

sional jurisdiction. In this context, operational art, as defined in the 1985 version of the pamphlet, represents the pinnacle of the profession of arms. It was therefore both a product of the self-perception of the U.S. military and a necessary input to it. This arguably is the true reason for the unchallenged theoretical solecism that appeared in FM 100–5 in 1982.

Unfortunately, the hierarchical separation of levels of war on which the continuum of war is based is not reflected in practice. Strategy is free to expand, contract, or alter its objectives as circumstances create new opportunities or foreclose others, or as the costs-and-benefits calculus alters. The connection between war and politics gives strategy functionality, and therefore war is necessarily vested with the same volatility as politics. Any attempt in theory to insulate the practical conduct of war from this volatility is erroneous. This means there is not an overlap between strategy, operational art, and tactics; they are completely fused. Tactical actions necessarily carry strategic implications, and strategy conceptualizes, creates, and applies tactical forces, as well as shaping their diplomatic, economic, demographic, and operational environments. An American soldier on a street corner in Baghdad personifies not only a strategic decision to invade Iraq, but also the entire political, social, diplomatic, cultural, and economic evolution of the United States from its colonial origins. The actions of this strategic private carry military, Iraqi domestic political, U.S. domestic political, and international political implications. Any attempt to conceptually separate tactics from strategy denies this connection.

Despite tactical successes, the failure to adequately involve the strategic level in campaign planning is manifest in America’s recent wars. The 1990–1991 Gulf War is an example. In this single campaign, there were two successful examples of operational art: Operation *Instant Thunder*, the air operation to shape the environment, and *Desert Storm*, the ground operation to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Despite the clear success of both operations, the 1991 campaign was not sufficient to end the war with Iraq—for that, a succession of additional campaigns was required, and it apparently is only now coming to a conclusion.

The Iraq War that began in 2003 is another instructive example of the problems of the existing doctrinal approach. In 2003, who was responsible for anticipating that the campaign to remove Saddam would necessarily be followed by one to establish a successor regime? To simply answer “Bush” or “Rumsfeld” is to hide what has become a doctrinal void. Political leaders are no longer routinely students of war. Therefore, there is a need that they be supported to prevent them from demanding the unachievable. Equally, though, they need to be made fully aware of the costs and risks attendant on the choices being offered to them. These costs and risks span fields as diverse as minor tactics and international economics, and they are not amenable to consideration at the provincial headquarters of a combatant commander or even in the office of a Secretary of Defense. Binding the conduct of a campaign to that of a war and ensuring the war contributes to the state’s role in the march of history are the embodiment of the idea that war is an extension of politics.

The 2007 “surge” was conducted when President George W. Bush, substantially alone, balanced the economic, diplomatic, strategic, political, and military costs and benefits of the alternatives available to him and chose to fight on. This was a return to “classic” campaigning in which the head of state, rather than merely acceding to the advice proffered, laid out the objectives and constraints of the campaign and chose the general who would be responsible. It is almost unique in recent U.S. history. The more familiar disjunctions among politics, strategy, campaign planning, and the conduct of operations were also demonstrated in Somalia (1992) and Kosovo (1998).

What allowed the conduct of a war and strategy to become so disjointed? Strategic

failure cannot be sheeted home to any one idea or problem but rather tends, like most accidents, to be the result of a confluence of otherwise unconnected errors. The aim of military doctrine, planning, and organization is to reduce the number of errors being made in order to reduce the frequency of these accidents. Not everything is within the control of military leadership, but doctrine largely is. Current U.S. doctrine creates a gap

that perpetuates the failing identified by many. By conflating two very different ideas, the United States (and the Anglophone world in lockstep) has reinforced the difficulty of the strategic management of wars and exposed an Achilles' heel. At the same time, by expanding the meaning of operational art to be nearly all-encompassing, the detailed examination of its necessary evolution is prejudiced. When the United States finds itself fighting Serbia,

as described in FM 100-5, operational art became the principal focus for a "level of war" and assumed the responsibility for campaign planning. In time, the vigor of this conception reduced political leadership to the role of "strategic sponsors" and quite specifically intervened to widen the gap between politics and strategy. The result has been a well-demonstrated ability to win battles that have not always contributed to strategic success: "a way of battle rather than a way of war." The creation of an operational level of war undid a lot of good work—to connect politics and tactics—that had been done by theorists since Clausewitz.

This pernicious solecism has confused our response to the continuing evolution of warfare.

At a time when the connections between tactics and politics are being continuously strengthened and exploited by actual and putative enemies, we have stretched the meaning of operational art until it has become a near synonym for the entirety of warfare. In combination with its role as a defining component of the jurisdiction of the profession of

not everything is within the control of military leadership, but doctrine largely is

between politics and war, whereas "good" doctrine should acknowledge *both* the need to fully engage political leadership and the national bureaucracy in campaign planning *and* the challenges of doing so. Good doctrine does not guarantee success but at least offers a promising start.

The U.S. military's decision to extend the meaning of operational art to encompass campaign planning is a theoretical dead end

Somali warlords, or failed and failing second- and third-rank states, these weaknesses may be apparent but their consequences manageable. If, at some time in the future, the United States finds itself at war with a great power, these theoretical obfuscations may prove to be more damaging.

Rather than meeting its original purpose of contributing to the attainment of campaign objectives laid down by strategy,

Iraqi residents survey damage from a truck bomb explosion in Tal Afar



U.S. Army (Robert C. Brogan)

arms, it has prevented us from beginning to make the institutional adaptations necessary to cope with the increasing connectedness of the more-military and less-military aspects of contemporary warfare.

If operational art is the entirety of warfare, from campaign design down to battalion level—and if it is principally the purview of the military—then the type of “national campaigns” envisaged in the joint operating environment, seeking the coherent and direct application of all of the elements of national power, are beyond our reach. Perhaps we should use the term *strategic art* to encompass the bureaucratic effort required to deal with the types of diffuse, nuanced, and complex problems envisioned in the joint operating environment. At present, operational art has filled that space—as it surreptitiously threatens to fill the space occupied by tactics and even minor tactics. If battalion commanders are operational artists, then surely the strategic corporal also needs to be one.

Despite the doctrine that is presently published by the world’s militaries, there is no evidence that politicians are content to set concrete objectives and then sit back and passively watch the conduct of a war for which they are responsible to both their domestic and international audiences now and for the rest of history. The U.S. theory of an operational level of war charged with campaign planning and working in conjunction with

an operational level of war charged with campaign planning and working in conjunction with the post-Goldwater-Nichols hierarchy threatens effective campaign planning

the existing post-Goldwater-Nichols hierarchy threatens effective campaign planning. Specifically, it threatens to resist close engagement with the political and bureaucratic leadership until either strategic pressures become intolerable, at which time the “10,000-mile screwdriver” pierces the carapace of the operational commander—often to his chagrin—or, more usually, it means that a campaign is undertaken without the strategic level being fully engaged in examination of the ends-ways-means interaction, with

resultant self-imposed strategic surprise that needs to be dealt with as the war progresses.

The result has been characterized as “compression” of the operational level of war, in which the strategic level is charged with being guilty of intrusion into the realms of operations and tactics. Rather than the operational level being compressed, strategy is reasserting its role and attempting to meet its responsibilities, but in the face of the dual resistances presented by the enemy and a dysfunctional military doctrine.

The term *operational art* can, in the end, mean anything we want it to mean, but it cannot usefully mean everything we presently think it does. It is not at all clear that interagency operational art is practical or that a logical line of operation seeking to establish the rule of law can truly be said to contain opportunities for operational art. Arguably, we are here confusing operational art and purposeful action. To be useful, trainable, and applicable, operational art needs to have meaningful boundaries.

It is time we returned operational art to its enclosure. Operational art is not the entirety of warfare. It is not the design and conduct of campaigns. It is not an interagency problem. Operational art is the thoughtful sequencing of tactical action to achieve a subordinate objective within a campaign. Good operational art, demonstrated as often as necessary to support the achievement of campaign objectives, ensures that tactical actions contribute to the attainment of the purpose of a war. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ From John G. Nicolay and John M. Hay, *Lincoln*, quoted in Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 51.

² Herbert Rosinski, “Scharnhorst to Schlieffen: The Rise and Decline of German Military Thought,” *Naval War College Review* 29 (Summer 1976), 85.

³ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴ Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 345.

⁵ G.S. Isserson, “The Evolution of Operational Art,” in *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art: 1927–1991—The Documentary Basis*, ed. H.S. Orenstein (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 55.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸ Antulio J. Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers Before the Great War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 212.

⁹ This is the first mention that the authors can find of the use of the term *operation* with its special meaning. See Colmar von der Goltz, *The Conduct of War* (1895), section 8, “The Operations,” a photocopy of which (produced by the U.S. Army War College *Art of War* colloquium in February 1983) is in possession of the authors.

¹⁰ *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, xiii–xviii, describes this taxonomy in detail.

¹¹ A.A. Svechin, “Strategy and Operational Art,” in *The Evolution of Soviet Operational Art*, 7.

¹² James J. Schneider, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994), 178.

¹³ M. Tukhachevsky, “*Voyna Klopov*,” *Revolutsiya i voyna*, no. 22 (1923), quoted in Jacob Kipp, “Two Views of Warsaw: The Russian Civil War and Soviet Operational Art, 1920–1932,” in B.J. McKerchner and M.C. Hennessy, eds., *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theory of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 53. Tukhachevsky wrote the preface to the Russian version of Fuller’s *Reformation of War*, in which he challenges much of what Fuller had to say. The foreword in its entirety is reproduced in Richard E. Simpkin, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevsky* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1991), 125–134.

¹⁴ Svechin, quoted in Schneider, 175.

¹⁵ Vladimir Triandafilov, “The Nature of Operations of Modern Armies,” in Schneider, 191.

¹⁶ Field Manual 100–5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1982), 2–3.

¹⁷ Australia defines the *operational level of war* as “the planning and conduct of campaigns and major operations in order to achieve strategic objectives.” See Australian Defence Force Doctrine Publication–D, *Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine* (2002), paragraph 3–9. British Defence Doctrine (JDPO–01 2008, paragraph 231) describes the *operational level of war* as “the level at which campaigns are planned, conducted and sustained within a theatre or area of operations.”

¹⁸ Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., “Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcolm, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2001), 179–185.

¹⁹ Cohen, appendix.

²⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 307–308.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Cohen, 228.

²² Cohen, 229.