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THE NEVER ENDING DEBATE: BRIDGING THE GAPS BETWEEN STRATEGIC POLICY AND TACTICAL EXECUTION

A Contemporary Look at Strategic Thinking and What the Past Could Teach Us

ABSTRACT: Warfare is always in a move. It always changes, adapts new technologies. This is why doctrines only in themselves are far not enough. Tactics are needed, which can always be changed if the circumstances require. Tactics (and techniques) must stay adaptive to remain the whole strategic policy efficient and combat worthy. There is a video footage from back in October 1990 (USAF Air University, Montgomery AFB, Maxwell, Alabama), where a member of the audience, participant of the Staff Course asked the presenter – a Hungarian representative of the Army, a fresh General – a question, concerning that after the 1989-1990 political change in Hungary, by the due-to-adapt new military doctrine, who actually the new enemy was? The presenter's – the Hungarian General's – answer was short but clear: "who attacks us" – he just said this simply. So, we have already made it clear at that time at a certain level that doctrines must change. In summer 2016, the French government admitted that since the end of the Cold War France – for the first time in centuries – has not had an "enemy", just "threats" and "risks". There are no fixed or concrete "enemies" as earlier, simply formed on ideological basis. The new enemies are threats and risks. And, with the doctrines, the strategic plans, policies and the way of tactical implementation, as the link between the two, must change too.

KEYWORDS: geopolitics, strategy, warfare

INTRODUCTION

In ancient times, the leadership distance between the *Strategos* and his foot-soldier was maybe half a mile, to his cavalry maybe two or three miles, and there was no tactical gap, the *Strategos* was usually all in one: Political leader, strategist, planner, and tactician. Assembling the force, marching distances, the enemy's options and timing were well known. Prussian King Frederick "The Great" had well-trained soldiers, and he was eager to occupy parts or all of Silesia, and had generals who knew how to move forces into battle; he occasionally gathered his generals and told them what they should accomplish. Napoleon had plans for large campaigns, but supplying the armies was usually done on the depleting stocks of the conquered lands and that was risky. His idea to go to Moscow was a strategic stepping-stone for a possible invasion of India – every European nation wanted to go to India – but the British were already there. Invading Russia was based on information about troops, terrain, rivers and roads, but it failed because of changing weather conditions and the supply problems, which he and his generals had underestimated – Russia was poor and rather empty.

In 1860 Winfield Scott drafted a strategic plan of how to defeat the new Confederacy, but the still small and untrained Union Army could not follow a Cannae-type strategy. In 1863 the same army was still not organized enough, even Lincoln's generals had trouble to transform ideas into combined operational moves. Even, when Lincoln had explained his "Grand Plan", the military needed two more years of manoeuvring to achieve tactical attrition of the Confederate Army. Contrary to this, in 1870 Helmuth von Moltke followed a detailed plan how to win by fast moves, using railroads, select terrain and his excellent artillery, whereas Napoleon III, his generals and the government, were unable to work out an efficient joint war plan, but even if there had have been one, the army was badly trained and supplied and like the French people politically split. There were too many broken bridges between politics and military leadership at all levels.

Air war in 1914 did not exist, but in 1918 all basic ideas of aerial warfare were already perfectly understood and developed – only the airplanes could not follow these new doctrinal ideas.

When Giulio Douhet published his book *Il Dominio dell' Aria (The Command of the Air)* in 1921, it was a blueprint for airpower and victory by bombing cities, but his ideas were attacked by Italian's top army and naval officers as insane, and it needed many more years before he influenced British and American theorists and engineers to built bombers with adequate range and payloads.

After 1924, the Reichswehr began to look into coming wars and in 1930 had plans ready for all possible scenarios Germany might face. A dozen of young officers made blueprints for an army with 108 divisions. Modern plans usually come from young officers with new ideas, rarely from generals and admirals as it could be seen in Great Britain after 1918, when army leadership opposed any modernizations. When Germany built its Wehrmacht after 1933, it followed the most promising ideas of leadership ("Auftragstaktik", tanks, aircraft, artillery, submarines, superb general-staff training etc.) and was far ahead of all other nations. Germany had well understood that any defence strategy was inferior to offensive operations; but also that retreat requires flexibility and firepower, but exactly that was in decline at the end of 1944.

After 1945, all strategy papers and all war planning were nuclear-weapons-heavy, and so was the "Active Defence" of the 1970s, when Army analysts considered that tactical nuclear weapons could stop Soviet advances effectively, and attacking Soviet "Second Echelon Forces" supply routes from the Western Military Districts to central Europe would be cut off by airpower. That, for EUCOM and NATO, could be a superb defence of Europe if one would disregard the affected German civilian population. And the Army had to be "dual capable", according to Army's training command TRADOC, led by the intellectual General William dePuy.

With conventional weapons improved, and the new *AirLand Battle*-concept as proposed by (many times revised) FM 100-5 *Operations* executed, the US returned to conventional warfare at campaign-level, later on with the focus on the "Centers of Gravity". The *AirLand Battle* was using speed, flexibility, new tanks, guns with target-seeking ammunition with high range, Precision Guided Munitions (PGM), quick targeting, and stealth, attack helicopters and high speed movements into the enemy's rear. Computers; 3rd generation fighters began to emerge as expensive, but effective assets for all levels of warfare. However, such warfare required additional training at operational and tactical levels. And if the *Active Defence* was the end, the *AirLand Battle* was the re-emergence of Clausewitz, who was now frequently quoted in military publications like *Military Review* (published by the US Army Command

and General Staff College) or *Parameters* (Army War College), and in many field manuals. However, 1989 put an end to all strategic thinking and the purpose of western armies, navies and air forces.

In summer 2016, the French government admitted that since the end of the Cold War that France – for the first time in centuries – has not had an “enemy”, just “threats” and “risks”: In 2008, France reduced its forces by 54,000, and in 2012 by another 14,000 persons (instead of 33,000 as envisioned, because of the situation in Mali, Ukraine, and internal terrorism).

The very informative German *Weissbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und die Zukunft der Bundeswehr 2016*, described national values, new insecurities, the importance of NATO and EU, and explained the need for more military tasks and know-how at all levels of the forces.

Technology and weapons sometimes made deep impression on interested politicians like on Donald Rumsfeld and his “Shock and Awe”-orientation in 2003.¹ Actually, electronics and computers, laser and stealth, influenced warfare in the same way, as did rifled guns, steam, electricity, and the railroad in the 19th century, the airplane and tank did after 1918, or nuclear weapons did after 1945. The theater- or unified-commands (now “combatant commands”) wrote numerous strategic contingency plans, which had to be updated permanently, or at least once every five years. The Army was also confronted with a number of organizational changes, which even hurt readiness and force-stability. In the years after 2000, the term “transformation” was a permanent process, until Robert Gates finally stopped it.

The Al Qaida, growing terrorism, and especially “9-11” changed that all, at least for more than a decade. It initiated a shift from conventional strategy into all modes of counterterrorism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq created tons of literature about “special operations” and counterinsurgency, but strategies were often missing – regime change alone is a weak strategy. That was the moment, when the European powers (including NATO) also deleted classical strategy, but drifted from force reductions into large-scale force eliminations, which were nearly devastating NATO and European defence capabilities. However, terrorism remains a severe problem and is – according to the CIA, FBI and other intelligence sources – largely financed by the government of Saudi Arabia and by private “investors” in Qatar, Kuwait, Sudan, and the Emirates. A new phenomenon is Islamic State insurgency, infiltrating dozens of states in Africa, Iran and the Central Asian republics;² operating in cities in Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

After 2000, the western world transformed astonishingly fast from prosperity into crisis, and became politically more and more fragmented, with high unemployment, horrendous national debts, contracting per-capita income, nearly zero-economic growth, plus a growing number of poor people and growing crime, numerous bank-failures, insecurity about the future, and a weird “political correctness”-mania that increasingly muzzled the freedom of speech, academic education and mass media.

THE POWER OF HISTORY

Even today, despite the “post-modern state”-ideas of One-World-liberals, nothing is stronger than history, and all the events in the former Soviet Union or the Russian Federation, the

¹ Rumsfeld was impressed by the book published years before: Ullman, H. K. and Wade, J. P. *Shock and Awe. Achieving Rapid Deployment*. Washington DC: NDU Press Book, 1996. Today this book is already “historical”.

² Lynch, Th. L. III et al. *The Return of the Foreign Fighters to Central Asia: Implications for U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*. Washington DC: National Defence University, 2016.

conflicts in the Balkans after 1989/90 due to the collapse of Yugoslavia, had historical roots.³ The borders of 1914 are back. The ideas of an independent Scotland, of a Catalan state, Basque state, independent Corsica, or a split-off Northern Myanmar are creating more and more states who might fail after a few years like South-Sudan. But currently history and nationalisms are stronger than economic logic.

Logically, international institutions are getting weaker, especially the UN, World Bank and the IMF, the OECD and even NATO and especially the OSCE.

A question that historians will have to answer is how Western Europe could, during the Cold War, maintain large and effective military forces, have full employment, permanently growing GNPs and per-capita income, high national cohesion with low national debt figures, all based on solid democratic pillars, and why all that is gone today.

NOW EVERYTHING IS STRATEGY

If all is strategy, nothing is strategy: Contemporary strategy papers are less counterinsurgency-loaded and less counterterrorism-centered, they are looking for a new approach to combine technology and classical/conventional war-theories, are repeatedly quoting Clausewitz, Jomini, Corbett, Mahan or Billy Mitchell, are underlining the effective fighting of Le May, Nimitz, Guderian, Manstein or Patton. Since Mahan US policies have always been guided by geopolitics and national interests, but any new president might like to shift past priorities, and Donald Trump might avoid confrontations in Europe, but will take a tougher stance with aggressive China.

America's national interests are either "vital", or "major" ones, are "key Interests", or just "important" or "peripheral" ones. A joint commission in Washington is looking periodically into geopolitical shifts, new threats and challenges. Another commission looks into the geographical borders of the combatant commands every few years.⁴

Now we see the return of nuclear strategy and the modification/modernization of weapons like the B-61 bombs, also the ones on top of ICBMs and SLBMs, but even tactical nuclear weapons with a low yield might have strategic impacts on the receiving end.

New weapons that cover large distances and territories change policy, strategy, operations and tactics, make all less distinguishable, hierarchies are evidently merging.

New publication about strategy adapt to these changes by using terms like "national strategy", followed by "military strategy", "operational strategy", "tactical/battlefield strategy", "employment strategy", and the US Air Force conducts now "Strategic Operations" and "Tactical operations".⁵ It seems that everything is now strategy; all levels are directly influenced by the top decision-makers, have different labels for the same, had created a

³ Porter, P. "Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn of Studying War". *Parameters* Summer 2007. 45–58.; Ikenberry, J. G. *Strategic Reactions on American Preeminence: Great Power Politics in the Age of Unipolarity*. Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, 2003.

⁴ The last time in 2011, under supervision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with some minor alignments.

⁵ Numerous sources like Drew, D. M. and Snow, D. M. *Making Twenty-First-Century Strategy: An Introduction to Modern National Security Processes and Problems*. Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2006; Shaud, J. A. *Air Force Strategy Study 2020–2030*. Fort Leslie McNair, Washington, DC: National Defence University Press, 2011.; Gompert, D. *Analysis of Strategies and Strategies of Analysis*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008.; Moore, D. A. *The Art of Aerial Warfare*. Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2005.; *Joint Operation Planning*. Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011.; *Campaign Planning Handbook*. Carlisle, PA: Army War College, 2008.

“seamless” command-structure of equal force-levels as described in many publications. Evidently, strategy has merged with campaigns and operations and on the other end, operations is also tactics. One reason for that is the elimination of field armies, army corps and divisions with three or four brigades or regiments. The geographical operational area of a modern battle group resembles the area of a tactical Second World War-type division. The cost to create, equip, train and maintain a modern 4,000-strong sub-tactical force is many times higher than that of a former type triangular 20,000-man division.

Maybe, there are too many strategy papers in circulation, because the number published in the US is currently about 50, and with additional strategic papers coming from think tanks or service schools that number might reach 100. The conclusion is that there exists a top-heavy relation between commands and force-strengths. The US Army had for years experimented with the size and organization of Brigade Combat Teams or Combat Maneuver Groups, all lacking boots on the ground – all inadequate for combat in Europe or Asia, all need additional firepower and air support; the thinning out of ground forces reminds many of the failed *Pentomic* Division of the 1960s. It seems that a 1990-type 15,000-strong division will again be the ideal structure.

The US Army had never fully abandoned the army corps-structure, but they are now rather administrative commands. Within NATO, some organizations are already missing, like artillery, combat engineers and ground based air defence. The EU Battle Groups were seen as the key to an “EU Army”, but that remained a virtual idea, they will never be used without massive reinforcements.

Today, employed battalions and companies are overloaded with data and messages, unit commanders must permanently report something, it is command and control (C2) everywhere. What, if the radios are silent or the notebook-screens go suddenly black? General James Mattis warned that the military depends too much on technology and should learn to act with their radios turned off;

Mattis: Mission-Type Order leadership style (“Auftragstaktik”) is more important than to know about radio bandwidth, and a lance corporal in Iraq can better explain the situation there than a general far away.⁶

THE OTHER DIMENSION: GEOPOLITICS DOMINATE BIG-POWER-THINKING

Because geopolitics is a geographical issue, it is the battle ground of concepts of large states. Small states have no such global concepts, have no geostrategy to enforce or protect their interests, and a small economy has no geo-economy either. Geostrategy is (national) “grand-strategy” is to implement, maintain, or improve a geopolitical stance, is combining the assets on hand to fight geopolitical or geostrategic ambitions of other nations, and will, by using political, diplomatic, economic, cultural and especially military means, defend what is “ours”.⁷ Geopolitics became the superior and guiding term for

- Geostrategy (defending the geopolitical empire, protection of the lines of communications),
- Geo-economy (trade, trade war, sanctions, access to resources, water, energy),

⁶ Cavas, Ch. P. “Mattis: military should rely less on technology”. *Marine Corps Times*. May 14, 2010. http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2010/05/military_mattis_technology_051310w/, Accessed on 06 April 2017.

⁷ Lombardi, B. “Assumptions and Grand Strategy”. *Parameters* Spring 2011. 29–40.

- Geoculture (another word for “public diplomacy” or “propaganda”, exporting culture, ideology and ideas to promote democracy to win people over when wars had ended.)⁸
- Finally, there is Geocology (dealing with climate issues, water, air and soil).

Currently, all elements of geopolitics have re-emerged, and geopolitical ambitions are guiding not only the US, China or Russia, but the politics of Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and of Saudi Arabia as well with ups and downs. In fact, for the poor masses religion replaces real culture; Huntington pointed to culture clashes of Islam with other religions, but there is a clash within Islam as well. Religious clashes are actually the worst kind of common irrationality.

European alliances in the 19th century reflect the fear of the unexpected, but the “enemy” was always in the east: For England it was France, for France it was Germany, for Germany Poland, for Poland (and again) Russia. Nations would seek options for expanding their boundaries to enhance economic chances or to overcome limitations of national security. Tools for such a policy are political agreements, alliances, bilateral-, multilateral and “multitrack”-diplomacy, the weakening of antagonists and building up national power. Security policy can be unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, but there is always the interest of other states who also seek territory and economic strength.

Bulgaria could never have become a large power, because it had no industry, Austria-Hungary collapsed as an entity mainly for demographic reasons, and Hungary had no alpine barriers to support a successful defence in the north and east.

When in England the issue of controlling India and occupying the Transvaal turned into a public debate, the Labour Party and the “Little England” protagonists recommended no further colonial expansions, but more social programs for Great Britain. But the group around Alfred Milner, Herbert Kitchener, Cecil Rhodes and the newspaper *Times* (plus others) decided to occupy the Transvaal with its gold and diamond mines. The Boer War, planned as a small campaign that should have been over in six months, then lasted for three years, was witnessing genocide-type British atrocities, required a total of 450,000 men, and nearly caused the crash of the Bank of England. Little wars can turn into expensive near-disasters.

The Russian idea of expansionism into a “Great Russia” began around 1850, and was a combined ideology of czarism, imagined cultural and racial superiority. Orthodoxy was considered the real Christianity, and Russia was to expand all the way to the English Channel and the Nile, to Canada and California. Pan-Slavism, Pan-Russism and Pan-Orthodoxy were enhanced by Ivan Sergejevich Axakow, Konstantin Sergejevich Axakow, Alexei Stepanovich Chomjakow, Nikolai Yakowlevich Danilewski, Iwan Vasiljevich Kirejewski, Fjodor Dostojewski,⁹ finally by Soviet politicians like Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and Stalin, all “expansionists” and devoted „Anti-Westerners”, creating an ideological barrier that is present even today. Sociologists and historians explain this attitude with cultural inferiority, backwardness, oppressive rule, communism, fear of encirclement, and so on.

⁸ Korkisch, F. “Die Geopolitik der USA; Szenarien und kommende Konflikte: aus der Sicht Washingtons: Neue Mächte, Amerikas Grand Strategy und die Marginalisierung Europas”. In Eberhard, B. (ed), *Technik – Innovation – Strategie*. Fürstenfeldbruck: Gneisenau Gesellschaft, Offiziersschule der Luftwaffe, 2010. 42–53.; Korkisch, F. “Globale Strategie: Die Geopolitik der USA - Von der Western Reserve über den Panama-Kanal zur Gegenküste: Teil 1”. *ÖMZ* 2/2010. 151–167.; Korkisch, F. “Globale Strategie: Die Geopolitik der USA - Von der Western Reserve über den Panama-Kanal zur Gegenküste: Teil 2”. *ÖMZ* 3/2010. 342–353.; Korkisch, F. “Globale Strategie: Die Geopolitik der USA - Von der Western Reserve über den Panama-Kanal zur Gegenküste: Teil 3”. *ÖMZ* 6/2010. 730–739.

⁹ Pan-Slavism had a high acceptance in the Czech part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, also in Serbia and Bulgaria.

Between 1880 and 1930, many states dreamed about expansion, so the Poles of a Greater Poland (with its western border in the outskirts of Berlin), the English of a Great(er) Britain and the French fearing a Great Germany, there were ideas circulating of a “Great Albania”, “Great Greece”, “Great Hungary”, “Great Rumania”, “Great Bolivia”, a Czechoslovakia with the Danube as its southern border. An extremely racist Japanese state wanted its empire reaching to India and even to Australia. The “Erez-Israel”-idea, considered by Ben Gurion and others, included parts of the Lebanon, the Sinai and parts of Jordan, showing that even small states had ideas of expansions at the expense of their neighbours.

In America, expansionist ideas flourished especially after the Civil War. Geographic interests and nationalist and political-missionary-thinking (the term “geopolitics” didn’t exist at that time) included the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, central and northern South America (the Amazon was even seen as “extension of the Mississippi”), wanted Canada and parts of eastern Siberia. The Social-Darwinist idea of an “Exceptionalism of America” and the superiority of the “American Race” lived until the late 20th century and were until the late 1950s textbook language.

In the same way, as Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover saw the Rhine River as “America’s line of defence”, the US was ready, if necessary, to help to defend this line along with the British, who wanted to contain Germany after 1871 and Russia after 1917: Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson were willing to support and defend Great Britain, also with nuclear weapons.¹⁰ The USA was always willing to defend NATO-Europe, even with using nuclear weapons, but today, a third of the US population lives west of the Mississippi, and the traditional links to Europe and then historical solidarity to ancestors is getting weaker. Strategic planners should be aware of this.

As Henry Kissinger wrote, nations have no friends, they have interests, and these can change. Therefore, geopolitics has always become an issue whenever a large power collapses, and when an aggressive member of the international community tries to take advantage of a disengaging moment of a competitor, as Russia did in Georgia 2008 (in fact politically abandoned by the EU), tried in Ukraine 2014-2016, or for two decades in Moldova, and Putin might even risk a war about the Baltic States.

Zbigniew Brzezinski saw the Middle East and Central Asia as the center of coming conflicts, now that is probably shifting to East Asia and the Western Pacific when China is expanding at the expense of its neighbours, but that is challenging America’s interests and concepts of controlling essential lines of communication. But what about a China that could, due to migration, win control over certain parts of Siberia’s territory? Or might demand access to the Arctic Region as it has already indicated? A clash with China is expected by experts within two or three decades – including the probability that both states would even use nuclear weapons – shifting the geopolitical landscape for a century,

RUSSIA IS AGAIN IN DECLINE, BUT WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

After 1990, with a much smaller Russia on the map, experts warned about a re-emerging Russia that might, within one or two decades, try to regain control of the split-away outer belt

¹⁰ Nuclear weapons should remain under US control; when the *Skybolt* air-to-ground missile (developed for the B-58 and B-52) should be delivered to the UK as agreed for the RAF *Victor* or *Vulcan* bombers, Kennedy explained that these weapons would not work as anticipated what was totally incorrect and led to the quick development of British nuclear weapons.

of republics in Europe and Asia, backed up by 15,000 nuclear weapons. Such resurrections could be based on 200 years of observed decline and recovery, but in Western Europe such comments were undesired, were even suppressed by liberal pro-Kantian peace-enthusiasts and by trendy European governments, and millions of people who looked to Putin as an example of an efficient statesman. Some “Eurasian” enthusiasts demanded the disbandment of NATO or wanted Russia to join it.¹¹ And the EU’s passiveness and “soft-power”-policy was the main reason why Russia, after the defeat in the Cold War, could, with the support of certain European politicians, get the upper hand again in essential issues, simply by reminding a number of states about economic realities.

Russia has turned into a modernized copy of the former Soviet Union, and is, besides its nuclear weapons, weak, it resembles a “failing state”. It has neglected non-military manufacturing and since 2010 has been spending again nearly all of its economic gains on defence like the former Soviet Union did. But even Russian conventional military power is very limited and if it provoked a war it would probably quickly be defeated. But then China would immediately grab large parts of Siberia, and Japan would occupy its Kuril Islands.

Cyber attacks shifted lately into occasional cyber wars, e.g. when aggressive Russian and Chinese government-hackers not only tried to disrupt networks, but were interfering with whole government-operations (like during US elections, and attacking Germany in November 2016) that cannot be tolerated, the US will retaliate.

Cyber-issues became very much political; attacks are aimed at foreign, security, internal policies, military planning and intelligence, industrial espionage, theft of intellectual property, government operations, energy systems, and non-government institutions. Russia is fully exploiting its propaganda warfare, especially via Russian Television (RT) and its cultural exports, with the purpose to manipulate the public opinion in Europe.

As long as NATO exists, Russian will have to face American involvement in European affairs and defence. But Russia knows that in the case of growing tensions with Peking it will need at least some support from Washington and Brussels, and such a support means that Russia must open its market for US investors and foreign products. In this case, the relations to China will become even more confrontational. Over the last three years Russia violated the airspace of Norway, Sweden, Finland, the United Kingdom, of the three Baltic States, of Turkey and of Japan; nearly all were pre-planned violations or provocations.¹²

Officially, Russia and China are allies, but experts admit that Moscow feels growing Chinese pressure regarding Central Asia. Especially China’s “Silk Road”-ideas are a clear attempt to weaken Russia, India, the EU, and the transatlantic relations, and serve to undermine possible EU-Russian alliances. Chinese investments are strategic footholds, like the one in Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Greece, Montenegro, in Central and Southern Asia. Chinese foreign policy includes open threats to European governments who dare to dispute Chinese rights in Tibet, Nepal, and the South China Sea, or when denying strategically sensitive commercial take-overs.¹³

¹¹ Mueller, J. *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War*. New York: Basic Books, 1989.

¹² During the Austrian election campaign for the presidency in 2016, Russia openly sided with the right-wing liberal party FPÖ, which had over the years established close links to a number of Russian politicians.

¹³ When the US government blocked ownership attempts of dubious Chinese companies, Peking immediately tried to threaten European governments for “violating trade policies”. But China is in fact denying free trade and investments by foreign companies herself. It couldn’t have been any surprise for Peking that the west is finally stopping unwanted take-overs by disguised military interests.

The reason why Putin supports Assad is geostrategy, it is the danger of losing its only naval base outside Russia. Russia does everything to keep Assad in power and fights a war with massive war crimes to maintain her presence, besides hoping for exploring Syrian oil and gas.

THE MISSING STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Strategic direction helps to coordinate ways and means; in US manuals it is defined as:

*... the common thread that integrates and synchronizes the planning activities and operations of the Joint Staff (JS), combatant commands... It provides purpose and focus to the planning for employment of military force. As an overarching term, strategic direction encompasses the processes and manner by which the President and the Secretary of Defence provide strategic guidance to the joint force.*¹⁴

During the Cold War, the enemy was the Soviet Union and her satellite states, plus China, and the West was reacting to permanent threats like the “revolution by the working class, the use of nuclear weapons, wiping out capitalism, western elites, and private ownership”, but after 1988 such threats became quite hollow, the Soviet Union, “Upper Volta with nuclear weapons” was in deep crisis.

But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the west had lost its strategic direction, and when China emerged forceful on the political stage, it became less a military but an economic threat. Donald Trump tries to develop a new strategic direction by attacking Chinese interests to protect American national interests, and is using Russia’s fear of Chinese long-term interests.

WHAT ABOUT STRATEGY?

Strategy is “National Interest”, “National Security Objectives”, it is about achieving national political aims peacefully or with military and economic means. It is divided into Policy, Defence Strategy and Military Strategy, and is usually a top-down approach. A definition can be as short as “*The most intelligent way to use available means to win a war or to prevent defeat*”, or:

*"The art and science of developing and using political, economic, psychological and military forces as necessary during peace and war, to afford the maximum support to policies, in order to increase the probabilities and favourable consequences of victory and to lessen the chances of defeat."*¹⁵

All definitions of strategy – about 30 can be found in relevant literature – are usually defining national aims from the highest levels of decision-making.¹⁶ Naturally, such definitions cover all ideas and interpretations of what political and military interest typically are, they look convincing, but definitions are usually too hollow, are inadequate to provide more than a wise tautological accumulation of ideas, and rarely provide much guidance. Politicians prefer answers as how a conflict can be avoided or won.

¹⁴ *Joint Operation Planning*. Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011. IX.

¹⁵ United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Dictionary of the United States Military Terms of Joint Usage*. Washington DC, 1964. 135.

¹⁶ Storr, J. “Warfare and Strategy”. *Infinity Journal* 4/2. 2014. 20–23.

Strategy can be “continental” or “maritime”; in the case of the US maritime strategy comes first, because it is the fundament for the continental-strategy and for deploying forces on a global scale. Strategy is (a) also theory, “strategic thought”, (b) it is often about geopolitics, (c) contemporary political and military fact-finding and rational assumption about the future, and (d) it is processing and practice. Many universities teach strategy, like Georgetown, Yale, Columbia or Tufts, so do Army, Navy and Air Force service academies and war colleges, and the National Defence University in Washington, DC., but in Europe such institutions are rare to find, in Germany strategy is analyzed by the “Clausewitz Gesellschaft” or “Gneisenau Gesellschaft” which are private initiatives with many military members, in Budapest it is taught at the National University for Public Service, the former Zrinyi Miklos National Defence University, and in Austria by the Landesverteidigungsakademie in Vienna.

For years, many experts like Colin Gray, have complained that today it is not clear what strategy the United States is really following. During the Obama-era the *National Defence Strategy* became a text loaded with catchwords like “effects based”, “resilience”, “comprehensive approach” and so on, which later on disappeared. Strategy papers are now covering all aspects of internal and external security, like economy, energy, bank-problems, globalization, climate and environmental issues, but the original idea of a strategy – clarification of policy like providing clear direction – got lost. Speeches of the president, and strategy papers often became contradicting.

Strategy should be a clarification and an alignment of political will embedded in policy and civil-military relations.¹⁷ Military strategy, however, is different, it follows an established policy for maximizing chances and planning. Interestingly, most planners in the Second World War were below the rank of colonel. War planning requires a different approach, it follows a set of basics, like “Rules of War” – the classic experience and wisdom how to fight and win, supplanted by military theory which is a classroom topic. Detailed planning must be specific, requiring resources, intelligence data and an assessment of options. The military also needs some good men who will ask the right questions.¹⁸ The Red Army planned simple but efficient operations, using superiority in men and arms, but often lost the initiative when the execution was too slow or lacked tactical surprise, but was insensitive to high losses.

In fact, a good war plan can be composed “out of the blue”, like the Reichswehr planners had to do in 1924/25, like the RAF’s “Western Air Plans” for bombing German industry in the Ruhr area, written in the late 1930s, or when Haywood Hansell and his staff wrote the AWPD-1 in 1941, without any preliminary experience. Evidently, common sense, weighting means, intelligence data, possibilities, technical data, doctrine, and a “how can we do it” approach might be sufficient.

¹⁷ Ricks, Th. E. *The Generals: American Military Command From World War II To Today*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012.; Johnson, D. E. *Modern U. S. Civil-Military Relations: Wielding the Terrible Swift Sword*. Washington DC: National Defence University, 1997.; McFetridge, Ch. D. “Foreign Policy and Military Strategy: the Civil-Military Equation”. *Military Review* 66/4. 1986. 22–30.

¹⁸ Johnsen, W. T. et al. *The Principles of War in the 21st Century: Strategic Considerations*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1995.

But a good commander can win even with a bad plan as good plans are no guarantee for success. There are different strategic planning requirements:

- Strategic planning is long-term budget planning, organizing the forces, industrial planning for manufacturing, building of camps, airports and harbors, communication and training facilities, writing manuals and doctrines, prepare civil defence and think about large-scale evacuation.
- The antagonist? Options? What about a possible Worst-case scenario?
- Prepare energy and food stocks? Logistics?
- Reinforcing the terrain for defence, bridges and essential roads.
- Define deficiencies and risks, and compare capabilities to war aims.
- Select commanders and organize staffs for strategic and campaign-levels.
- Prepare the mobilization, for Alert Orders and Warning Orders,
- War planning in peacetime is “Future Campaign Planning”, is contingency and operational planning; will follow experience, common wisdom and predictions, uses doctrine, but compose policy or strategy papers critically with reality.
- Check if tactical capacities match operational requirements and if planning oversteps aims with means.

In the United States, the air planning process was traditionally divided into (a) winning air superiority, followed (b) by interdiction at selecting target-priorities and strategic attacks by bombers, cruise missiles or land attack weapons, and (c) close air support, which is a tactical process, quite complex, was always at the planning end. Today, all three phases are run rather parallel under labels like “Operation Strategy” (the planning), “Strategic Operations” or “Strategic Attack” (aimed at specific strategic targets) and “Tactical Operations”. “Thinking About War” is the task of higher service schools which also develop doctrines.

*Strategy used to fight campaigns and links military strategy and operations. Because this level of warfare is conducted by combatant-/unified commands, it is also called Theater of War-Warfare (also called Theater Campaigns).*¹⁹

Naval Operations were always clear, they were always the moving of fleets, task forces, aircraft carriers and submarines to protect the oceans, to guarantee the lines of communication, and defeat the enemy on the high seas. Here, the distinction between strategy and operations is quite clear: The strategy tells the fleet what to do, and operations means doing it. Flying air-to-ground or anti-ship missions from a carrier to bomb land or ship targets was never “strategic”, but a battle won always was. Similar explanations can be formulated for special operations, counterinsurgency, amphibious warfare and ballistic missile defence; they all are types of strategies and are operations at the same time.

Land-warfare has never had such clear separations. The US Army doesn’t even have a specific “land strategy”:

- If it is “war planning”, it is on the top of the planning process, including transportation and logistics, because combat units have always had to cross half of the globe. Strategy was a concept, was “national defence policy”, “military objectives”, because the term “security policy” did not emerge before the late 1960s,
- or it was “campaign strategy” with “campaign objectives”. Campaign planning was guided by “grand tactics” seeking advantages, like surprise and risk-taking.

¹⁹ *Strategic Attack: Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.2*, United States Air Force, 2003.

- At the lower end it was pure tactics, the combined arms planning, amphibious landings etc.

The force commanders, “the doers” – only a few were “born leaders” – learned via “on the job training”: If one could command a regiment or a brigade, he could do so with divisions and corps as well, but in Vietnam the Army realized that many of their brigade commanders had to be quickly replaced.

Clausewitz was well known, but was rarely read, was not always understood, was for planning actually irrelevant. Even the term “strategy” emerged rather late in the war, was an air power term for the “Big Week”, especially, when planning the combined bombing offensive, which in 1944 was seen as a “strategic air war”. The 8th and 15th Air Forces became the *U.S. Strategic Air Forces, Europe*, and the B-29 under the leadership of the 20th Air Force carried out devastating attacks on the cities of Japan, also dropped the two atomic bombs. Not surprisingly did the bomber generals claim in 1945 that airpower had won the war, and bombers and nuclear weapons were “strategic”, the Army and Navy were logically not. National security was a task for the Air Force, and seen from a pure economic side, nuclear bombing was cost-effective and that was the reason, why President Eisenhower wanted a deterrence – or “massive retaliation” – strategy to prevent huge outlays for conventional weapons. In 1946, the bomber forces came under control of the newly created Strategic Air Command (SAC), which separated itself from the rest of the Air Force and became the core of the United States Air Force in 1947, dominated by strategic and nuclear thinking until the end of the Cold War, and “strategic air war” was now a combination of 300 and more single bomber missions without any classical “operations” or “tactics”.

Logically, a definition of tactics might read like “*The best use of troops and materiel to win a battle*”. For the Army, successful tactics is gaining ground, for the Marines it is killing the enemy in the next foxhole. A more official interpretation was falling back to the earlier “Battlefield”-term, and linked battle or tactics to strategy:

*Battlefield strategy is the art of employing forces on the battlefield to achieve national security objectives.*²⁰

THE EVOLUTION OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

The term *Strategic Culture* was coined by Jack L. Snyder in his book *The Soviet Strategic Culture* (1977) when he analyzed the Soviet strategic thinking in regard to nuclear war. Later on the term was used by many authors, was mainly linked to civil-military relations and strategic war planning.

Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow see strategic culture as a national, historical, and mainly elitarian approach, especially about the acceptance of military thought, combining tradition, the role of the military services and service schools, and the ability to maintain capable and ready military forces. It can be measured by the prestige of the military and its acceptance by mass media, especially when it is necessary to use force.

America’s strategic culture is based on history, patriotism, force capabilities, military leadership, and the proposals about “how to fight”, duty, honor, country and patriotism. Debating about a possible war never stopped after 1945, or after 1990, and included NATO,

²⁰ Drew, D. M. and Snow, D. M. *Making Twenty-First-Century Strategy: An Introduction to Modern National Security Processes and Problems*. Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2006.

the protection of allies, bi- and multinational security, the role of the UN, annihilation, attrition, mobility, bombing campaigns, Massive Retaliation, Flexible Response, the *AirLand Battle*, Force XXI, Military Technological Revolution (MTR), Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), strategic planning principles, force transformation, Net-centric Warfare, Effects Based Operations etc. It was and is based on overseas deployments, moving large forces over long distances, seeking superior technology, more than sufficient logistics, but it is also based on optimism, a “gung ho”- and a “can do”-attitude, plus occasionally on political fear of a high number of casualties.

A fear to engage was typical for the eight years of the Obama era, who misread the never existing “Arabic Spring” early in 2011 as an “upheaval for democracy” and not as the Muslim Brotherhood’s desire for power and for enforcing radical Islam on Egypt, Tunisia and other states in the region. Later on, Obama even considered the restricted and short Libyan operation in 2011 as “my biggest political error”, but it was foremost a failure of France, Great Britain, of NATO and the torn EU. Moving a few squadrons into disputed areas do not require much strategic thought, but insisting during an ongoing NATO operation to destroy an existing and well-functioning NATO structure, as some European governments did in 2011, raised a number of questions, e.g. why it was done, and why it was accepted by the military leadership – or was there none?

Strategy can have many faces and the corresponding culture is often radical, what Michael Sherry wrote, when he questioned the air power mania of Roosevelt and air power-generals.²¹ Currently, critics point to the implementation and dependence on leadership-conformism, the problems to keep the public “positively engaged” in long wars. Because the fact that only 0.5% of the American population (and EU population as well) is currently in uniform, and that only a few members of Congress have actually done their military service, raises questions about budgets and programs.

However, important defence issues are supported by the fact that an estimated 15 million people live directly and indirectly from defence and have influence on national and local politics, additionally there are more than 30 million veterans, usually supporting defence, generally critical of Obama and in favor of Trump.

In Europe, the popularity of the military was always contained by the devastating wars in the 20th century, and neither the British nor the French or any other military had prevented the loss of colonies. Even the best theory could not prevent the decline of defence after 1990. If risks are low, military warnings will be neither understood nor appreciated. If risk-taking is low, even the most convincing strategy paper will be ignored.²² A “soft power”-strategy written by political cabinets is usually useless, but if political culture is dominating military culture, politicized military will not speak out.

After 1990 long-term strategic thinking was missed in most EU-member-states, replaced by Kantian peace-euphoric, low-budget defence policies, and an inability of the military leadership to tell the public what the ongoing budget cuts would mean for security, moreover, it was even proposing further cuts by favoring small inexpensive “professional” forces. Political indifference to defence matters had hit the whole EU. What about Sweden’s security policy, when it nearly eliminated its army and navy? Finland maintained strong defence capabili-

²¹ Sherry, M. S. *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1987.

²² The author had witnessed best intentions by authors of strategy papers that were ignored by all levels of government.

ties, because it had learned from history, Sweden did not. Budget problems had hit Great Britain, France and Italy, and Germany's Bundeswehr was transformed into a "voluntary force", in the 1980s it had 550,000 men, in 2016 fewer than 170,000. Of 3,000 *Leopard* and 800 M-48 tanks in 1991, the armour force numbers now 240, the rest (300 *Leopard* II are in depots) in gone. The Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium nearly abandoned their armies, cut 50% of their air forces, all done under the title „transformation“ and changed "challenges" like terrorism, and hoping for a "ten-year pre-warning"-time". However, 50% of the equipment currently on hand is not combat ready, the Luftwaffe in 2016 had only 40% of their Eurofighters in operational conditions, and all NATO air forces have only small stocks of PGMs and anti-air systems. The advertised rebuilding of the European forces is hit by low budgets, high social expenditures, image problems, and a shortage of officers and NCOs.

Austria's EU-membership was actually a contradiction of permanent neutrality but also of a "homogenized EU", was opposed but then accepted for geopolitical reasons by France, whereas Austria fully accepted the Maastricht Treaty, the agreements of Amsterdam and Nice, declared officially that it would join a "European Army" (which is still not existing) and even had in mind to join NATO (1999, again 2001, fully supported by the military), and for many years has been sending numerous experts to Afghanistan. Today, it again insists on neutrality, but cannot explain under what circumstances it will abandon neutrality. It tries to be a "security provider" but is rather a "security consumer", however with a highly professional and well trained military. Politics tried to reduce the military to an engagement in international peace missions and humanitarian tasks and nothing else.

The *Sicherheitsstrategie* (2013) was therefore strongly linking national security to a new kind of "security-internationalism" and hoped to be protected by the EU, UN and OSCE. The question of many observers was what politicians would expect from these institutions.

Internal security is plagued by growing crime figures and "soft" crime fighting by an overburdened police and by a government that is deducting from every income 50% taxes, but doesn't protect the people. Logically, it cannot expect loyalty either. The problem is the unwillingness of the EU to act on "imported" crime, and mass migration, whereas a *laissez-faire* legal system regards crime as a product of society and inequality, which means, the situation is politically accepted.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGISTS PUSH STRATEGIC ENGINEERING

Alfred Thayer Mahan and other authors identified a number of specifics that are important for great powers, like the geographical situation, the physical topography, the chances for expansion, the unity of population, the national character and political will. He also created a number of terms, some borrowed from Theodore Mommsen, Antoine-Henri Jomini or Alexander Hamilton, which are frequently used today, such as "Middle East", "control of the opposing coasts", "national interest", "national strategy", "national security", "national character", "national policy", "political strategy", "sea frontier", "operations of war", "grand tactics", "doctrine" and "lines of communication". As Carl H. Builder explains in his book *The Masks of War*, the individual services developed an individual strategic culture over 200 years, but in fact mainly since the 1920s.²³ The Air Corps promised in 1938 to prevent any

²³ Builder, C. H. *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989.; Watts, B. D. *The foundations of US Air Doctrine: the problem of fiction in war*. Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1984.

invasion emerging from the Atlantic by bombing the approaching ships, but it turned out that sometimes bombers had problems to find ships or hit a ship, no matter if anchored or sailing.

The Navy has always been able to master operations and tactics, and thanks to a dozen of excellent thinkers and tacticians, it has never lost an important battle, but in 1948 it wanted large aircraft carriers and nuclear weapons. In 1941 the Army was transformed by General Marshall when he replaced most regiment and division commanders because they were either too old or were still debating horse cavalry.

But the events in the Philippines were a real tragedy, because the American troops were simply abandoned there. It was always clear that there were no further reinforcements and no further supplies coming, and evacuation was not possible either. And what about Europe? Strategically seen, at least Great Britain was an unsinkable airbase, if that was lost, as assumed in Washington in 1941, long range bombers like the B-29, B-32 and B-36 would reach Europe from Greenland, Iceland, Morocco, Libya, Egypt or Iraq.²⁴ None of these bombers had become operational before 1944 and Germany could not cross the English Channel.

Nuclear war-planning was beginning as early as 1945, and included some 50 large war plans before a conventionalization of forces was back in the service schools in the 1980s. David Petraeus was able to transform large parts of the Army's strategy into one with a small-tactics counterinsurgency-dominance.²⁵ The much applauded FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* was replacing fire and maneuver with "cultural competence", but today, counterinsurgency is now replaced by classical "large-force" tactics, shifting back to "conventional thought" which is an indicator that coming confrontations will become "continental" again.²⁶

Strategic innovation comes again from service schools and think tanks. RAND saw the need for a new "Grand Strategy"²⁷ as early as 2008.

A NEW EU GLOBAL STRATEGY

Without any EU-forces there is no need for an EU-strategy, but now the EU has published a second text under this title. The EU's chronic lack of clear guidelines in regard of a valid strategic assessment, has led to diverse policies in regard to challenges like Russian threats, China's aggressive behavior, immigration waves, and cyber-attacks. The EU is fighting unemployment but also faces high national debt figures and inflation. Other issues are a closer cooperation with NATO. In late summer of 2015, EU member states were invited to write proposals for a new strategy and many states sent texts.

²⁴ Hansell, H. S. *The Air Plan that Defeated Hitler*. Atlanta, Georgia: Arno Press, 1972.; Hansell, H. S. *The Strategic Air War Against Germany and Japan: a memoir*. Washington DC: Office of the Air Force History, 1986.; Freeman, R. *The U.S. Strategic Bomber*. London: MacDonald and Jane's, 1975.; Pape, R. A. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996.; See also: Korkisch, F. "Der strategische Luftkrieg in Europa und Asien: Teil 1". *ÖMZ* 2/1985. 121–126. and Korkisch, F. "Der strategische Luftkrieg in Europa und Asien: Teil 2". *ÖMZ* 3/1985. 203–211. (These articles include detailed data, production figures and the results of the attacks between 1941–1945.).

²⁵ Corbin, M. "Reshaping the Military For Asymmetric Warfare". CDI Terrorism Project Report, 5 Oct 2001. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120410201159/http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/asymmetric.cfm>, Accessed on 17 May 2017.

²⁶ McDonough, W. "Time for a New Strategy". *Parameters* Autumn 2008. 109–119.

²⁷ Such a typical short proposal was: Dobbins, J. "Does America Need a New Grand Strategy?" CT-311 Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee, 15 July 2008. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2008/RAND_CT311.pdf, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

In June 2016 the EU published a paper with the promising title *Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, replacing the former *European Security Strategy* (ESS) from December 2003. Viewed from the outside, the new “strategy” looked good and promising. But it turned out that, besides a good narrative of the current problems, the “Global Strategy” did not make any recommendations, had no “action plan” on foreign policy and defence matters, and bypassed the issue of “European forces”. If a strategy doesn't give any advice, then it is not a strategy. But then, why this “Global Strategy” paper at all?

In Alpbach 2016, Nathalie Tocci, Cathryn Clüver and Heather Crabbe pointed out the necessary improvements, and especially Cathryn Clüver from Harvard University reminded the group of experts that the EU has neither foreign policy, nor any defence policy and has no military forces either. With the UK gone, all military potentials are reduced, including nuclear deterrence. Most EU member states do not want a common security strategy anyway and oppose the EU forces outside any national command.

This problem, however, is not new, and became a severe problem in the Balkans, in Iraq and in Afghanistan, as delineated by Wesley Clark²⁸ and Rupert Smith.²⁹

Every order given by a NATO commander was counterchecked in the European capitals if it should be followed or not, also Rules of Engagements (ROE) were interpreted differently by governments. Low defence budgets have been subject of critical comments from US authorities since NATO was created in 1949, expressed just recently by Donald Trump, but were aired over decades by Caspar Weinberger, John Carlucci, Madeleine Albright, Donald Rumsfeld, Robert Gates, David Panetta, Chuck Hagel, Ashton Carter, and by a dozen of SACEURs.

In 1999 (Kosovo, attacks on Serbia) NATO was short of pilots, PGMs, night-flying, air-to-air refueling and operational readiness. In 2011 (Libya) the situation was even worse, even standardization agreements (STANAG) agreed to 30 years ago, have not been implemented by all NATO members yet.³⁰

It is a fact that “no strategy” is also a strategy. Many European states have no strategy, and some have their national strategy based on the NATO strategy of 2010 *Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Adopted by Heads of State and Government* is too unspecific. The paramount question – not only for Russia – would be, how and when the British and French governments would use nuclear weapons; both states have denied any control of these weapons by the EU, but have coordinated targeting with the US nuclear planning staff at Offutt, Omaha.

THE ROLE OF DOCTRINES – FUNDAMENTAL FOR STRATEGIC THOUGHT

Modern doctrines explain, in political, strategic, operational, tactical and technical terms, the advantage or disadvantage of specific developments and their impact on warfare at all levels, and also their effect on leadership and organizations. An armour doctrine will explain what armour warfare is about, generally and maybe even in details: It could be a perfect one

²⁸ Clark, W. K. *Winning Modern Wars: Iraq, Terrorism, and the American Empire*. New York: Perseus Books, 2003.

²⁹ Smith, R. *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*. London-New York: Allen Lane-Penguin, 2005. See also the criticism of British generals regarding missing German support during combat operations in Afghanistan, because German commanders did not get permission to engage in the fights.

³⁰ But otherwise, many PfP-states did so, like Austria and Finland.

like the German doctrine of 1937, a wrong one like the British, a quite successful one like the one applied by the Red Army, or it might be partially wrong and partially right, like the American one, implemented in 1939/40 but corrected later on.³¹ When the *AirLand Battle* doctrine emerged, the artillery branch faced the question of either speeding up processes or being eliminated from the combined arms team. Doctrine is therefore about rules and ideas:

Doctrine provides a common language and a common understanding of how forces conduct operations. It is rooted in time-tested principles but is forward looking and adaptable to changing technologies, threats, and missions.

*Doctrine is detailed enough to guide operations, yet flexible enough to allow commanders to exercise initiative when dealing with specific tactical and operational situations. To be useful, doctrine must be well known and commonly understood.*³²

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps have identical views about doctrine; Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 (FMFM-1) states:

*“Doctrine establishes a particular way of thinking about war and a way of fighting. ... Doctrine provides the basis for harmonious actions and mutual understanding.”*³³

An air power doctrine will describe the role of air forces, or the difference of offensive and defensive air defence.³⁴ The evolution of a good doctrine can be seen when comparing the Air Force Basic Doctrine of 1953, then a little booklet with some extra texts for tactical warfare and reconnaissance, which grew over time into many volumes. General Curtis E. Le May wrote along the same thoughts:

*“At the very heart of warfare lies doctrine. It represents the central beliefs for waging war on order to achieve victory. Doctrine is of the mind, a network of faith and knowledge reinforced by experience which lays the pattern for the utilization of men, equipment, and tactics. It is the building material for strategy. ... Doctrine shapes the manner in which the Air Force organizes, trains, equips, and sustains its forces. ... is a statement of officially sanctioned beliefs and warfighting principles that describe and guide the proper use of air and space forces in military operations.”*³⁵

Doctrine and manuals are often the same: The first manual using the term “doctrine” was TR No. 440-15 of 1926,³⁶ which changed in 1940 into the FM 1-5, *Employment of the Aviation of the Army*, with some severe misgivings about the use of air assets by the overall ground commander, but the shift to full authority over air assets was clarified in 1943, when

³¹ LtGen Leslie McNair recommended the “tank destroyer” (M10, M-18, M-36) as the ideal anti-tank weapon, whereas the tanks would be supporting infantry. This was World War I thinking, and that viewpoint resulted in the M4 Sherman tank with a totally inadequate 75mm main gun. The unprotected tank destroyers with excellent guns were now used as tanks. The light tanks like the M3 and M5 series were tactically useless. This deficiency was repaired in 1944, with the new and heavy M-26 tank, and finally by an upgunning of the M4 with a 7,62cm gun late in the war.

³² Definition adapted from Army Doctrine (based on joint doctrine); see FM 3.0: Operations. Headquarters Department of the Army, Feb 2008. 11–12., 1–45. <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-0.pdf>, Accessed on 20 May 2017.

³³ Reese, W. G. III. *The Doctrine Gap: The 27 Year Wait for a New Air Force Operational Doctrine Document*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, 1996. 3.

³⁴ Curry, B. L. *Turn Points in the Air: Using Historical Examples to Illustrate USAF Doctrine*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, 1997.; Jones, J. R. *Development of Air Force Basic Doctrine 1947–1992*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1997.

³⁵ Reese. *The Doctrine Gap...* 3.

³⁶ *Air Service: Fundamental Principles for the Employment of the Air Service*. Washington DC: War Department, 1926.

FM 100-20 *Command and Employment of Airpower* was released, but the debate about close air support went on till 1948, until the Key West Agreement, but in fact it has never ended even by today.

The B-17, the new (and overrated) Norden bombsight, and doctrinal evaluation of the effects of strategic bombing resulted in the already mentioned AWPD-1 air war plan for bombing Germany that favoured high altitude precision daylight attacks by masses of bombers. Hansell's planners had selected approximately 95 strategic targets and calculated the required number of bombers to destroy them, respectively to win the war by air power.

The plan even calculated the exact number of bombers to be built and bases needed.

This plan was revising Douhet's primitive mass-bombing on cities, because the American planners wanted an air offensive with precision attacks on industrial and energy targets, a great theory that had been worked out at Maxwell in the 1930s, supported by modern bombers (still under development), whereas the RAF Bomber Command did stay with Douhet and the massive night-time city-bombing. In fact, both strategies nearly failed and ended in a mix of specific target- and carpet bombing.

Hansell's calculations on bombers were wrong by 500%, but it was the very first plan ever written down with such details, following innovative thinking. The problem of bomber development, doctrine and employment was the growing potential of German air defence – and fighter – development that caused nearly 35% of all bombers employed over Europe lost. The bombers B-17, B-24, B-29 and B-36 were developed by specifications based on doctrine-requirements and newly required qualities, promised by industry (with the A-bomb still unknown to planners) but either were bombers technically behind doctrine-demand, or the defence environment was advancing faster than bombing-doctrine had predicted (early warning, radar-directed guns, jet-fighters, air-to-air rockets). After 1945, defence improved with IR- and radar-guided missiles, far-reaching ground bases of air defence with missiles and integrated command systems, whereas bombers (B-45, B-47, B-58 and B-52) had only the option to fly faster at high altitudes or very low to avoid detection and missiles.

In 1953, the AFM 1-2 *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine* was published, followed by later editions in 1954, 1955, 1959. In 1964 the first AFM 1-1 *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine* appeared, which was revised periodically until it was split into a number of individual texts in 2016. The major push for new doctrinal thought came from airpower experts like John Warden, selecting the political *Center of Gravity* as the main target for an offensive aerial warfare, using PGMs, Stealth, Data Link, Computers etc.³⁷

The Army had a number of Field Manuals dealing with the *Army* (FM 100-1), the *Corps* (FM 100-15), the various types of *Divisions* (FM 71-100), plus numerous others, and changed tactics with the FM 100-5 *Operations*, all regularly updating organizations, armour warfare, artillery, engineers, logistics, tactical airlift, attack helicopters etc. The biggest doctrinal change came in 1982, when the Army implemented the *AirLand Battle Doctrine* with the new FM 100-5 *Operations* (now really dealing with that level) plus the idea of the *Follow-On-Forces Attack* (FOFA) against the “*Second Strategic Echelon*” of the Warsaw Pact forces. (The FM 100-5 in 2001 became the FM 3.0.)

³⁷ Warden's ideas were rated highly by USAF Chief of Staff Michael Dugan but never understood by LtGen Chuck Horner, Air Component Commander CENTCOM, who wanted to run the air war in 1991 in the “traditional style” of air doctrines, even explaining that he wouldn't care for doctrine at all.

The Navy was fighting like in World War II, with carrier operations unchanged since Midway, altered Maritime Strategy and *Sea Power*,³⁸ and was publishing its *United States Fleet Publication*. And a navy has always been the most expensive service.

Doctrines implemented the Air Force Expeditionary Wings, new ideas about close air support or how to fight counterinsurgency more effectively. Other titles guided through the use of space, capabilities, roles and missions, technical options, best organizations and better tactical principles. But what looks ideal today, can be wrong a short while later, like the above mentioned *Pentomic* division idea of the US Army in the 1960s, the “surveillance tanks” (M-103) of the 1960s, or the abandoning of armour warfare at all, as envisioned by many European “military experts”, and doctrines about Cyber War written five years ago seem already outdated today.

Presidential Doctrines are describing political principles, usually addressing new ideas in speeches, implementing an answer to a political problem, but usually will follow established national interests. Such principles were in nearly all cases coined later on by historians or are labeled as “doctrine” by mass media: George Washington’s *Farwell Address* is seen as a doctrine to stay out of foreign conflicts; see also Thomas Jefferson (maintaining neutrality), James Monroe (and John Quincy Adams: Hands off from the Western Hemisphere), John Tyler (“Open Door”), Theodore Roosevelt (“Global Power”), Woodrow Wilson (“Make the World Safe for Democracy”; The 14 Points), Franklin D. Roosevelt (Defeat Fascism, “The Four Freedoms”, “The Great Design”, Germany First); the more recent ones were the Truman Doctrine (Containment “Fair Deal”), Eisenhower (Massive Retaliation, Formosa, the “New Look”), Kennedy (Flexible Response, NATO), Johnson (fight communism), Nixon (Guam Speech), Carter (Detente), Reagan (Roll Back) and George W. Bush (Counterterrorism). European states do not have such an unbroken tradition.

BRIDGES FROM POLICY TO TACTICS: PLAN FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Military planning and command and control work by hierarchies, command flexibility and adjustments to changing situations; current strategic and operation planning is Joint Warfare Planning. Such planning is bridging the various command levels and forces either by jointness, or by combining assets under one commander. Jointness is usually an advantage but should never degrade the capabilities of any force or service.

Typically, planning for a campaign is based on two types of planning:

- Deliberate Planning (planning in peacetime, usually contingency planning, always based on best possible assumptions), and
- (b) Crisis Action Planning (in emergencies, time sensitive, often the result of a Warning Order).³⁹

A valid definition of such planning is the following:

“Joint operation planning consists of planning activities associated with joint military operations by combatant commanders (CCDRs) and their subordinate joint force commanders (JFCs) in response to contingencies and crises.”

³⁸ Hoffman, F. G. “A New Maritime Strategy: Navigating Uncertain Waters”. Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2 Nov 2006. <http://www.fpri.org/article/2006/11/a-new-maritime-strategy-navigating-uncertain-waters/>, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

³⁹ See: *Army Planning and Orders Production*. Washington DC: Department of the Army, 2005.

*It transforms national strategic objectives into activities by development of operational products that include planning for the mobilization, deployment, employment, sustainment, redeployment, and demobilization of joint forces.*⁴⁰

Strategy should guide, but never limit subordinated commands in their freedom how they should accomplish their task, neither should the operational level forward detailed orders about tactical moves. It is evident that multinational and combined or joint operations require more detailed orders, so does defence; evidently the are “free style” operations like in World War II. When attacking, “Auftragstaktik” is recommended (a term which cannot be translated or explained correctly into English) for the operational level,⁴¹ whereas in retreat situations “Befehlstaktik” (*Detailed Order Tactics*) is used on the tactical level. But even Auftragstaktik can fail, if the involved commanders ignore the situation up front, or disregard weather, topography, logistics, or the strength of the enemy.

The Trident Conference and the following Combined Chiefs of Staff meeting in May 1944 had not decided about strategic and operational details for the landing in France or the operations later on. After the liberation of Paris, it was Eisenhower, who decided with his American-British staff to establish a rather straight front-line running from north to south to the Swiss border. All armies were ordered to reach the Rhine River approximately at the same time in November 1944, then cross the river and push to the center of Germany.⁴²

In late August, and bypassing Eisenhower and his staff, Field Marshal Montgomery, commander of the 21st Army Group, had the idea to push to the northeast and go from there to the east and prevent that the Red Army would eventually reach Denmark early in 1945 with access to the North Sea and the Channel. His idea was being backed up by Field Marshall Alan Brooke, but it was a clear violation of an agreed strategy. Eisenhower, who already lacked enough troops, would have to shift 50% of his theater-forces into northeastern direction. He immediately wanted Montgomery’s resignation who finally apologized.⁴³ This controversy involved Churchill, Roosevelt, Marshall, Bradley, Bedell Smith, and a dozen of other generals, and overshadowed the American-British relations for the next few years,⁴⁴ despite the fact that a number of Americans thought that Montgomery was actually right, and that Eisenhower, who was ignoring British geopolitical insight, was wrong.

One more interesting detail: At the strategic-operational level, Omar Bradley, then commander of the 12th Army Group, ordered the 1st Army to push forward, take the Siegfried Line in the forests in the east, and get across a number of small rivers and towns to reach the Rhine River. When Patton had to stop at Metz, the considered north-south frontline was already somewhat bended, but Courtney Hodges – a veteran of World War One and a favourite of Eisenhower and Bradley – then commander of the 1st Army with three corps, was facing a

⁴⁰ Joint Operation Planning. Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011. IX.

⁴¹ Widder, W. “Auftragstaktik and Innere Führung: Trademarks of German Leadership”. *Military Review* 81/5. 2002. 3–9.

⁴² Ross, S. T. *American War Plans 1941–1945*. London, Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997.

⁴³ Dozens of sources by the participants who made the decisions in 1944; see e.g.: Eisenhower, D. D. *Crusade in Europe*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1948.; from Bradley’s position see: Bradley, O. N. and Blair, C. *A General’s Life: an Autobiography*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.; Bradley, O. N. *A Soldier’s Story*. New York: Holt Rinehard and Winston, 1951.; Bernard Montgomery’s own story was however somewhat different, but he never admitted that his ideas were beyond his means: Montgomery, B. L. *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*. Cleveland: The World Publ., 1958.

⁴⁴ Eisenhower even in the 1960s criticised Montgomery harshly, and during the Sues Crisis in 1956 was unwilling to support British-French ambitions in regard to Egypt.

large number of rather steep hills and dense woods, including the Hurtgen Forrest south of Aachen. He wanted to do what he was told, acting along standard procedures, and ordered Collin's VII. Corps to proceed to the east as planned.

Despite the problems already faced by a number of divisions in late October, Hodges was unwilling to change the Course of Action, and so was Collins. The 1st Army suffered heavy casualties, with Collins blaming the badly trained officers and soldiers at battalion- and company-levels, the terrain and weather, and Hodges was blaming the division commanders.

This is an example of multiple failure of all command levels, especially when blaming division commanders (of the 4th, 8th, 9th, 28th. 83rd Inf and 5th Armour Div.) who were simply following orders. Collins suffered in the Hurtgen area for 12 weeks, 35,000 Americans were killed or wounded, and such losses would have had some questioning about planning, execution and judgment of Hodges and Collins, but both rose to 4-star rank later on. A dozen of books are now dealing with the Hurtgen-issue, but none could tarnish the decision makers of 1944. Additionally, all was overshadowed by more severe misjudgments, when the German overwhelmed US forces in the Ardennes a few weeks later.⁴⁵

Eisenhower's strategy (guided by the limitations of forces and logistics) is a good example for a perfect bridging from a Grand Strategy all the way down to the tactical level, but somewhere the involved commanders failed, beginning with Bradley, intelligence, staffs, all blinded by earlier successes, with no one proposing a different "course of action" when the first attacks had already failed, finally Hodges and Collins.

Another well known example of misjudgment top-down was the handling of the X. Corps by Edward Almond 1950 in Korea. Walton Walker, commander of the 8th Army, did not keep Almond under tight control, because he was MacArthur's former Chief of Staff, and Almond wanted to show his superb aggressiveness but was also a man of occasional bad judgment. His permanent attack-orders came even when the 8th Army in the west was already under heavy attack and retreating south.

The X. Corps, with no contact to its right, was partially encircled, and when retreating, Almond was leaving the 1st Marine Division behind in the mountains and the Chosin Reservoir to protect the retreat of forces to Hungnam and Wonsan. But the 1st Marine Division fought its way down south and was then evacuated by the Navy. The acid-loaded commentaries of Marines about "Army leadership" went all the way to Tokyo and Washington.

In the same way as Hodges and Collins were protected by Bradley, Almond was protected by MacArthur, and in 1951 Almond was even promoted to three-star rank.

⁴⁵ Historians and eyewitnesses later on blamed all involved: (1) Eisenhower for downplaying the problems in the 12th Army Group, even in his Book "Crusade" he only wrote of some severe fighting but avoided any questioning of Omar Bradley's command style, he was Bradley's mentor. (2) Bradley, who wasn't evidently not concerned about what happened in "his" 1st Army's area, because he had recommended Hodges for command, who also was his friend. (3) Hodges, with his conservative and unimaginable command style, periodically not up to the task, depended too much on his experiences corps commanders. (4) Collins did not dare to recommend a bypassing of the forests in the north, and shared responsibility for not fully supporting and then defending his division commanders. All of these generals had certainly their merits; also German resistance was excellent, organized by Feldmarschall Walter Model. The Hurtgen disaster was quickly overshadowed by the German offensive in the Ardennes, one large disaster was followed by an even larger one. Bradley became a 5-star general and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Hodges, now 4-stars, became CG Army Continental Command, and Collins became Chief of Staff, US Army. Who wanted to rock the boat with Eisenhower in the White House?

Today, bridging the gap between political strategy and military strategy is often disturbed by interference from outside, because today war is not only a decision of a few politicians and the military,⁴⁶ rather it became one of societal attitudes, opinion polls, social media, resistance from radical opponents, mass media, human rights activists, parliamentarians and hostile NGOs, budget cuts, dubious allies, etc. Ongoing compromises might undermine clear aims, and language and resolutions might be vague. Today, even the word “war” is often banned from texts and is replaced by “crisis”, “disturbances”, “destabilization”, “intervention” etc. Strategy is rarely Clausewitz, and war plans depend on political parties, elections and ideologies. In democracies political leaders often disregard advice of experts, but so do military planners; such can results in “strategic malpractice”.⁴⁷ Getting it rights must be an objective by planners.⁴⁸

Yes, there are manuals on hand, like FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, FM 2-0 *Intelligence* or the FM 3-0 *Operations*, just to name a few, but their disadvantage is their sheer volume. Current manuals describe all eventualities and try to list a solution for each problem, but too many details will not be of much help when the shooting starts two blocks away.

The European Union has currently given up the idea of a common defence or of any “European Forces” as proposed for the Helsinki Headline Goal in 1999. If the EU and NATO are now joining ranks, it means that the EU will depend on NATO which means that the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 must be revised. As already proposed by Jean-Claude Juncker in December 2016, a new treaty should be less complex, giving member states the chance to select their own courses. Therefore, the individual European nations will be well advised to keep NATO alive, properly equipped and trained, and ready for any eventuality that might come.

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⁴⁶ Betts, R. K. “The Trouble with Strategy: Bridging Policy and Operations”. *JFQ* 47/2. 2001. 23–30.

⁴⁷ Mihara, R. “Strategy Malpractice and the False Hope of Experts”. *Infinity Journal* 4/1. 2014. 10–12.

⁴⁸ Riper, P. van. “From Grand Strategy to Operational Design: Getting it Right”. *Infinity Journal* 4/2. 2014. 13–18.

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