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**STRENGTH** *and* **WISDOM**

# The *Army War College* Review

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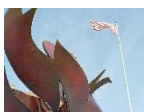
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Flag flying over the Strength and Wisdom statue, a gift from the class of 2014, capturing the mission, spirit, and history of Carlisle Barracks (photo by Laura A. Wackwitz, Ph.D.).

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# The United States Army War College Student Publications

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# Deterrence through Reassurance: Russia in Eastern Europe

Geoffrey William Wright

*The 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine returned the question of conventional deterrence to the NATO Alliance. Because of geographic challenges to NATO military operations in Eastern Europe, the U.S. and other Allies must develop a regionally-specific deterrence formula that will increase Allied resilience, allow for Allied freedom of movement, and limit Russian freedom of movement. Blending reassurance and deterrence activities will increase regional stability and maximize Allied opportunity to successfully deter both blitzkrieg and limited aim attacks.*

Keywords: *Allied Resistance, Ukraine Invasion, Baltic States, NATO*

Deterrence means that somebody who starts a conflict with you will regret that they did so.

—Dr. Ashton Carter<sup>1</sup>

The return of serious tensions in Eastern Europe has led to significant efforts to deter Russia and reassure Eastern European Allies. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, NATO Allies have engaged in a combination of reassurance measures in the Baltic States and Poland and deterrence activities aimed at improving a credible collective deterrent capability to respond to further aggression.<sup>2</sup> The challenge of deterring “limited aim” attack, however, requires better coordination of security cooperation activities, reassurance measures, and training in Eastern Europe. By working together to improve coordination and response options, NATO allies can more effectively produce a deterrent effect on a potential Russian adversary.

While a Russian conventional attack in the Baltics remains unlikely, the United States and its NATO Allies must develop a discrete, context-appropriate deterrence solution. Such a solution must provide for the possibility of rapid inclusion of Allied forces in combat, demonstration of the ability of NATO to support military operations in the region, and the ability to impose costs and to disrupt Russian freedom of

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<sup>1</sup> Ashton Carter, “Terrorism and American Security,” interview by Charlie Rose, *The Charlie Rose Show*, PBS, February 16, 2016, <http://www.fednews.com/transcript.php?item=565509&op>.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Breedlove, “U.S. European Command Posture Statement 2016,” February 25, 2016, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35164/u-s-european-command-posture-statement-2016>.

movement. Conventional deterrence theory focuses on the impact deterrent activities have on the perceptions, decision cycles and intentions of an adversary, positing that:

1. The physical presence and perceived commitment of a defender are essential.
2. Defenders must choose and resource an appropriate and executable means of defending, backed by political will to act.<sup>3</sup>
3. Defenders must leave an impression that offensive action will lead to quick action and high costs.<sup>4 5</sup>
4. Defenders must be aware that potential adversaries have several strategic options from which to choose, and defending against one option is not defending against all.<sup>6</sup>

Although grounded somewhat in Conventional Deterrence Theory, the solution offered in this paper moves beyond the traditional to better tie together deterrence, reassurance, and security cooperation in a defensive orientation that combines forward defense and alternative defense techniques. As Sun Tzu observed, “in War, numbers alone confer no advantage.”<sup>7</sup> A defensive NATO Alliance must find and use the right tools to deter a strong and nearby adversary by synthesizing current and past approaches to deterrence with ongoing reassurance measures.

### Russia’s motivations and strategic options

Russia’s National Security Strategy sees the NATO Alliance as a threat to Russian security.<sup>8</sup> Russian actions in Georgia and Ukraine in recent years have forced Allied leaders to consider the possibility of Russian military action against a NATO Ally.<sup>9</sup> Russia has, and has had, undoubted local military advantages in the Baltic region. The stationing of highly capable conventional forces in the Western Military District and in the Kaliningrad enclave gives Russia military dominance over any Baltic State. Russian Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) systems in the Baltic region will complicate US and Allied force deployment through temporary denial of regional Allied air and seaports.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, Russia likely would have a decision-making advantage over the relatively slower-moving NATO Alliance and could attempt to use fissures among NATO members to delay or weaken an Alliance response.<sup>11</sup>

The combination of Russian intentions and Russian capabilities makes the possibility of a major Russian military invasion of Eastern Europe impossible to ignore, even if unlikely. Russia could take this step due to miscalculation of NATO resolve or the extremely favorable military conditions as a means of

<sup>3</sup> Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 523-24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 528-529.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Rhodes, “Conventional Deterrence,” *Comparative Strategy* 19, no. 3 (2000): 243.

<sup>6</sup> John J. Mearshimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1985), 59.

<sup>7</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Oxford UP, 1971), 122.

<sup>8</sup> For analysis of the 2015 Russian Federation National Security Strategy, Roger McDermott, “Russia’s 2015 National Security Strategy,” *Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor*, January 12, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=44978&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=ed5e942d36129a964475c9a462a22660#.Vutpro-cFyo](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44978&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=ed5e942d36129a964475c9a462a22660#.Vutpro-cFyo).

<sup>9</sup> The complexity of Russia’s strategic outlook is well-documented and outside the scope of this paper. For examples of analytic work on Russia’s strategic outlook and geopolitical intentions, see for example: James J. Carafano et al., *U.S. Comprehensive Strategy Toward Russia* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, December 9, 2015), 19,

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/12/us-comprehensive-strategy-toward-russia>; Steven R. Covington, *Putin’s Choice for Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center, August, 2015), 11,

[http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/25676/putins\\_choice\\_for\\_russia.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/25676/putins_choice_for_russia.html); Andras Simonyi, “Why the Baltic Sea Region Matters to the United States,” *Transatlantic Relations Blog*, blog entry posted January 28, 2016,

[http://cms.polsci.ku.dk/publikationer/2015/Baltic\\_Sea\\_Security\\_final\\_report\\_in\\_English.pdf](http://cms.polsci.ku.dk/publikationer/2015/Baltic_Sea_Security_final_report_in_English.pdf); Hiski Haukkala and Nicu Popescu, eds., *Russian Futures: Horizon 2025* (Brussels, Belgium: EU Institute of Security Studies, March 2016),

[http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Report\\_26\\_Russia\\_Future\\_online..pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Report_26_Russia_Future_online..pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg, “Russians ‘Closed the Gap’ For A2/AD: Air Force General Gorenc,” *Breaking Defense Blog*, blog entry posted September 14, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/09/russians-closed-the-gap-for-a2ad-air-force-gen-gorenc/>.

<sup>11</sup> Kalev Stoicescu and Henrik Praks, *Strengthening the Strategic Balance in the Baltic Sea Area* (Tallinn, Estonia: International Centre for Defence and Security, April 19, 2016),

[http://www.icsd.ee/fileadmin/media/icsd.ee/failid/Kalev\\_Stoicescu\\_Henrik\\_Praks\\_-\\_Strengthening\\_the\\_Strategic\\_Balance\\_in\\_the\\_Baltic\\_Sea\\_Area.pdf](http://www.icsd.ee/fileadmin/media/icsd.ee/failid/Kalev_Stoicescu_Henrik_Praks_-_Strengthening_the_Strategic_Balance_in_the_Baltic_Sea_Area.pdf).

fracturing the NATO Alliance and removing NATO's ability to respond.<sup>12</sup> In a highly visible example of current Western analysis, a 2016 RAND study called the Baltic States “the next most likely targets for attempted Russian coercion.” The study concluded through wargaming that a Russian major conventional invasion of the Baltic would lead to occupation of Baltic capitals in about sixty hours.<sup>13</sup>

Other analysis, often from within the Baltic region, however, suggests that a limited aim attack would be more likely. Elbridge Colby and Jonathan Solomon describe Russian strategy as using “salami slicing probes” and other provocations that could justify a limited aim attack.<sup>14</sup> A 2016 unclassified report of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service states the most likely, though still remote, Russian conventional scenario in the Baltics would be a limited aim attack. “Moscow believes that it is capable of conducting a limited military operation before any effective response by NATO could be mounted. The goal of such operations would not be to seize the entire territory of Estonia or Latvia, but rather to impose control over some towns or areas close to the border.”<sup>15</sup> Russian control over “even a small part of NATO territory would deal a devastating blow to the credibility of the Alliance.”<sup>16</sup>

### Reassurance and Deterrence in Eastern Europe

The United States and NATO initially responded to Russian aggression in Ukraine with a series of conventional reassurance<sup>17</sup> measures. Led initially by the U.S. deployment of additional F-15C fighters and infantry companies to Poland and the Baltic States, the U.S. reassurance measures soon fell under the framework of Operation Atlantic Resolve.<sup>18</sup> President Obama's visits to Warsaw and Estonia in mid-2014 reiterated the importance of reassurance as a sign of Alliance resolve. In Warsaw, President Obama proposed a European Reassurance Initiative to support U.S. training in Eastern Europe as well as equipment grants for frontline NATO states, and in Tallinn stated that American reassurance measures would remain in place “as long as necessary.”<sup>19</sup>

At the September 2014 Wales Summit, NATO leaders focused on developing “adaptation measures” within its Readiness Action Plan to enhance deterrence through improved rapid reaction capability.<sup>20</sup> Allies agreed to transform the NATO Reaction Force by creating a larger-scale high-readiness unit (later known as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF))<sup>21</sup> as well as installing new NATO “nodes” in Eastern European states to coordinate peacetime training and to receive and integrate follow-on forces.<sup>22</sup>

The Wales Summit did not provide for the permanent stationing of Allied forces in the Baltic States or Poland, and Allies to date have largely focused on enhancing reassurance measures through regular joint

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, February 2016), [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND\\_RR1253.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Elbridge Colby and Jonathan Solomon, “Facing Russia: Conventional Defence and Deterrence in Europe,” *Survival* 57, no. 6 (December 2015-January 2016): 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> Estonian Information Board, *International Security and Estonia*, (Tallinn, Estonia: Estonian Information Board, 2016), 17, <http://teabeamet.ee/pdf/2016-en.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Kroenig, “Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War,” *Survival* 57, no. 1 (February-March 2015): 50.

<sup>17</sup> In general terms, “deterrence” actions affect the perceptions of an adversary while “reassurance” impacts the perceptions of Allies and partners. “Reassurance” is a term with a decades-old NATO lineage that generally means actions taken as a visible sign to demonstrate NATO's commitment to an Ally or Allies. Author thanks Professor Alan Henrikson of the Fletcher School for this point in an email on February 22, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Author observation. Donald M. Campbell and Michael T. Whitney, “Assurance in Europe: Why Relationships Matter,” *Military Review* 94, no. 6 (November-December 2014): 5-10.

<sup>19</sup> Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia,” September 3, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia>.

<sup>20</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Fact Sheet: NATO Readiness Action Plan*, (Brussels, Belgium: North Atlantic Treaty Organization February 2015), [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_02/20150205\\_1502-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_02/20150205_1502-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Fact Sheet: NATO Force Integration Units* (Brussels, Belgium: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 2015), [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_09/20150901\\_150901-factsheet-nfiu\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_09/20150901_150901-factsheet-nfiu_en.pdf).

training. NATO Defense Ministers have indicated, without additional detail, that a larger multinational presence will be developed prior to the Warsaw Summit,<sup>23</sup> and European Command (EUCOM) Commander General Philip Breedlove has stated that the command's "focus will shift from assurance to deterrence."<sup>24</sup> But to date the U.S. and Western European Allies have not renounced the NATO-Russia Founding Act<sup>25</sup> and its general principles against permanent stationing of large-scale forces in Eastern Europe and have focused instead on increasing rotational training presence and participation in exercises.<sup>26</sup>

In sum, U.S. and Allied leaders appear to be outlining a force posture for Eastern Europe that uses a more robust in-region training or "reassurance" presence supplemented by an out-of-region rapid reaction "deterrent" force. NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow admitted that NATO "cannot replicate the deterrence posture that existed during the Cold War, even if we wanted to" and called for a "sufficient degree" of forward presence to balance rapid reaction units.<sup>27</sup> General Breedlove described U.S. efforts as "providing a mixture of assurance to our NATO Allies and Partners and activities that deter Russia."<sup>28</sup> U.S. Ambassador to NATO Douglas Lute calls this the "modern approach to deterrence... a much more modest forward presence backed up by much more responsive rapid reaction forces" without the robust forward presence of the Cold War.<sup>29</sup>

Eastern European leaders have expressed dissatisfaction at the division of reassurance and deterrence activities. Baltic military commanders in February, 2015 formally requested that NATO station a Brigade-sized element in the region,<sup>30</sup> and other NATO-state commentators have called for a return to Cold War-era forward presence to deter Russia.<sup>31</sup> Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves publicly stated his concern that Russian forces could make the decision to invade a Baltic State in a number of hours.<sup>32</sup> Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics linked deterrent posture to force size, saying "I think that we still need to develop the way where we have a permanent presence, rotational presence of allied troops that is

<sup>23</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, "Press Conference: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission at the level of Defence Ministers," public speech, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, February 11, 2016, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_127979.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_127979.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>24</sup> Agence France Presse, "U.S. General: NATO to Switch Assurance to Deterrence in Eastern Europe," *Defense News*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2016/03/31/us-general-nato-switch-assurance-deterrence-europe/82495752/>.

<sup>25</sup> The NATO-Russia Founding Act states that the "Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces. Accordingly, it will have to rely on adequate infrastructure commensurate with the above tasks." Whether this act remains in force is not universally agreed upon, particularly given Russia's non-adherence to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation* (Paris: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 27 1997, updated October 12, 2009), [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm).

<sup>26</sup> Several Allies, to include the UK and Germany, have announced significant annual training deployments to the Baltic States and Poland. Germany, working with the US and several other Allies, has launched the TACET initiative to coordinate Allied conventional force training in Eastern Europe. For additional information, see UK Ministry of Defense, "Defence Secretary Announces More Support in Baltics and Ukraine," October 8, 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-announces-more-support-in-baltics-and-ukraine>; Danish Ministry of Defense, "Denmark Participates in New NATO Initiative," February 18, 2016, <http://usa.um.dk/en/news/newsdisplaypage/?newsID=250CF751-95A5-4AF7-A672-B2D2A5D66DC8>.

<sup>27</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "21st Century Deterrence: Remarks by Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow," January 15, 2016, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_127099.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_127099.htm).

<sup>28</sup> Breedlove, "European Command Posture Statement."

<sup>29</sup> Douglas Lute, "February 9, 2016: Ambassador Lute's Pre-Ministerial Press Briefing," February 9, 2016, <https://nato.usmission.gov/february-9-2016-ambassador-lutes-pre-ministerial-press-briefing/>.

<sup>30</sup> Agence France Presse, "Baltic to Ask NATO for Thousands of Troops," *Defense News*, May 14, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/05/14/baltics-to-ask-nato-for-thousands-of-troops/27304579/>.

<sup>31</sup> For relevant examples, see John Grady, "Expert on NATO Calls for Permanent Alliance Military Presence as Hedge Against Russian Military Action," *NATO Source Blog*, blog entry posted February 17, 2016,

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/expert-on-nato-calls-for-permanent-alliance-military-presence-in-baltics-as-hedge-against-russia-military-action>; Martin Hurt, "Deployment of Allied Forces in Baltics in Significant Numbers only way to Ensure Deterrence," *News Err*, June 29, 2015, <http://news.err.ee/v/opinion/399ede72-40f2-4fd1-b775-74228b3a1e6d>.

<sup>32</sup> David Blair, "Sitting near a Nuclear Tripwire, Estonia's President Urges NATO to Send Troops to Defend his Country," *The Daily Telegraph*, April 11, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/estonia/11530064/Sitting-near-a-nuclear-tripwire-Estonias-president-urges-Nato-to-send-troops-to-defend-his-country.html>.



sufficient . . . to provide credible deterrence. . . . I think that the current numbers are not enough.”<sup>33</sup> While an expanded ERI budget request, to include a “heel to toe” presence of a U.S. armored brigade in Eastern Europe, has been well-received, it does not provide the long-term defensive presence as in the Cold War.<sup>34</sup>

Even today, debate over force posture in Eastern Europe lies in the shadow of the Cold war, with calls for NATO to return to its “basics” in deterring adversaries from attacking NATO territory as occurred in NATO’s Central Front during the Cold War.<sup>35</sup> In this model, a strong defensive force, backed by a series of exercises, diplomatic messaging, and the nuclear triad, convinced Soviet leaders not to attack the Alliance. An analysis of Forward Defense in light of the limited aim attack challenge, such as the “Hamburg Grab” scenario, however, demonstrates that this model would have significant limitations in the Baltic and that other measures in the border region would be necessary. NATO success in deterring the Soviet Union despite a significant Cold War-era shortfall in self-determined required forces indicates that perhaps factors other than numbers were more significant in establishing credibility.<sup>36</sup>

The NATO Cold War force structure emerged in the 1950s and 1960s due in part to uncertainty as to whether the Soviet Union would resort to a “blitzkrieg” or a limited aim attack. Many senior NATO Commanders argued that NATO should organize strong forward defenses near the border to force the Soviets to “use substantial force to breach the shield” and to “provide a degree of flexibility which removes the need of having to choose between total war and acquiescence.”<sup>37</sup> Others believed that the Soviets lacked a “breakthrough” capability, which would lead the USSR to attempt instead to seize a major border city like Hamburg, offer peace, and break the Alliance by defeating it politically rather than militarily.<sup>38</sup>

Forward Defense had both strengths and limitations within George and Smoke’s framework of conventional deterrence. NATO’s deterrence posture demonstrated a high degree of political and military commitment of the Alliance and the United States in particular to defend frontline Alliance states, to include the reconstitution and support of the West German military. The positioning of U.S. units on the NATO-Warsaw Pact border itself provided a “tripwire” force that would ensure that U.S. units were quickly and unequivocally involved in conventional combat. The time and effort required for the Warsaw Pact to mobilize would in turn trigger indicators to allow the general mobilization, reinforcement, and preparation of NATO, and increase risks to the Soviet Union. Likewise, NATO’s posture of Forward Defense likely had the ability to impose significant costs on a Soviet-led blitzkrieg and limit Soviet freedom of movement. The possibility of nuclear escalation remained a clear possibility for Warsaw Pact leaders, and Warsaw Pact planners had to account for a considerable, if not optimally sized, NATO force in Europe backed by a readiness to reinforce from other parts of Europe or the Continental United States.

Forward Defense had a more mixed record in terms of building appropriate capabilities for defensive operations. West German political considerations, not military expediency, drove much of the debate. West German leaders, noting the considerable proportion of the West German population living near the border, would not countenance any strategy that traded space for time or indicated acceptance of a permanent

<sup>33</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “Examining Latvia’s Challenges and Opportunities: A Conversation with Edgars Rinkēvičs,” February 24, 2016, [http://www.cfr.org/latvia/examining-latvias-challenges-opportunities/p37564?cid=soc-facebook-in-edgars\\_rinkevics\\_otr-022416](http://www.cfr.org/latvia/examining-latvias-challenges-opportunities/p37564?cid=soc-facebook-in-edgars_rinkevics_otr-022416).

<sup>34</sup> For a thorough analysis of the FY17 European Reassurance Initiative Budget request, see Mark Cancian and Lisa Samp, “The European Reassurance Initiative,” February 9, 2016, <http://csis.org/publication/european-reassurance-initiative>.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochnis, *NATO Summit 2014: Time for the Alliance to Get Back to Basics* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, August 19, 2014), <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/08/nato-summit-2014-time-for-the-alliance-to-get-back-to-basics>.

<sup>36</sup> For example, NATO’s assessment of the number of Allied division-equivalents required ranged from 96 in 1952 to 30 in 1954 with no significant change in threat assessment. Even at this lower level, NATO never met its troop requirements in peacetime and would only achieve these goals through a relatively slow wartime reinforcement. See in particular, Sir Hugh Beach “Improving NATO Deterrence,” in *The Conventional Defense of Europe: New Technologies and New Strategies*, ed. Andrew J. Pierre (New York: CFR Press, 1986), 157.

<sup>37</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1961), 120.

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of this topic, see Andrew Krepenivich, *The Last Warrior: Andrew Marshall and the Shaping of Modern American Defense Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 2015), 183.

division of Germany.<sup>39</sup> The loss of operational flexibility and the risk of encirclement to NATO forces forward positioned caused great concern to Allied leaders throughout the Cold War.

The need to reinforce Forward Defense units led to significant known logistical shortfalls. NATO and U.S. planners had challenges finding the resources to logistically support not only NATO's initial defense, but also the arrival of units falling in on prepositioned stocks in Central Europe for integration into NATO's military operations. These stocks of prepositioned military equipment would have presented an attractive target to Warsaw Pact conventional strikes and likely would have represented a large vulnerability. Furthermore, the procedures for Reception, Staging, and Onward Integration in a conflict environment were often speculative.<sup>40</sup> The ability of United States and other Allies to deliver forces by the planned timetable with available sealift and airlift remained in doubt.<sup>41</sup> NATO also struggled to establish a strong standardization program to manage operational logistics for the seven Corps headquarters operating in Germany, each of which had its own supply chain and requirements.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the Forward Defense model left doubt as to whether NATO forces were organizing around the most dangerous Soviet course of action while ignoring the possibility of limited aim attack. Scholar Philip Lindner noted that some analysts believed what NATO actually needed was the ability to deter a limited aim attack targeting NATO's cohesion with the capacity to "repel probes, restore boundaries, or freeze any conflict quickly and efficiently so that an appropriate political response could be made."<sup>43</sup> Likewise, former UK Deputy Land Forces Chief General Sir Hugh Beach saw a "gap" between NATO's ability to repel (and thus deter) a blitzkrieg and a limited aim attack.<sup>44</sup>

To fill this deterrence gap, some Cold War defense thinkers proposed that West Germany organize around the principles of "alternative defense" organized in the border area to provide a visible capability to impose costs on Soviet and Warsaw Pact attackers. While not fully adopted, many of the principles of alternative defense adapt themselves well to the reality of small conventional force structure, extensive "home guard" structures, and limited Allied presence of Baltic militaries. Early on, many saw alternative defense as a method to reduce the security dilemma by adopting a defensive posture with modern weapons, which in itself would reduce the risk of war in West Germany.<sup>45</sup> Basil Liddell-Hart, believing that "frontier 'bites', quick or gradual" by Soviet forces represented the most likely risk, envisioned a network of "light infantry divisions" made up of conscripts and "Home Guard" forces in the immediate border area, which would fight primarily in their home regions with stores of weapons in the immediate area. Liddell-Hart believed that such forces would relieve the burden on conscript systems to provide large, heavily mechanized forces into the field and would better take advantage of Germany's population centers.<sup>46</sup>

Other concepts, such as that described by German strategist Boleslaw von Bonin, envisioned a large "defensive belt" of anti-tank weapons, anti-tank mines, bunkers, and obstacles within 80 kilometers of the intra-German border. Among many writers, Major-General Jochen Loeser in 1981 proposed a defensive plan for light infantry units near the inter-German border, armed with infantry weapons, and moving in light vehicles.<sup>47</sup> Retired U.S. Army Colonel John C.F. Tillson proposed a "landscaping" program including the reinforcement of natural and artificial obstacles in a defensive zone. The defensive zone would integrate

<sup>39</sup> David Gates, "Area Defense Concepts: The West German Debate," *Survival* 29, no. 4 (September 1987): 308.

<sup>40</sup> William P. Mako, *U.S. Ground Forces and the Defense of Central Europe* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution 1983), 70; Philip Lindner "Conventional Defense of Central Europe," in *Conventional Deterrence*, ed. James R. Golden et al. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1984), 117.

<sup>41</sup> Bill Keller, "NATO Chief Finds Conventional Forces Lacking," *New York Times Online*, March 2, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/03/02/world/nato-chief-finds-conventional-forces-lacking.html>; For an extended treatment of the military and especially political challenges to mobilization, Richard K. Betts, "Surprise Attack: NATO's Political Vulnerability," *International Security* 5, no. 4 (Spring 1981), 117-149.

<sup>42</sup> Donald Cotter, "Potential Future Roles for Conventional and Nuclear Forces in Defense of Western Europe," in ESECS, *Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe: Prospects for the 1980s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 213.

<sup>43</sup> Lindner, "Conventional Defense of Central Europe," 115.

<sup>44</sup> Beach, "On Improving NATO's Strategy," in *The Conventional Defense of Europe: New Technologies and New Strategies*.

<sup>45</sup> Hans Brauch, ed., *Jonathan Dean: Pioneer in Détente in Europe* (New York: Springer, 2014), 75.

<sup>46</sup> Basil Liddell Hart, *Deterrent or Defense: A Fresh Look at the West's Military Position* (New York: Praeger, 1960), 64-65.

<sup>47</sup> Gates, "Area Defense Concepts," 306.

anti-tank and mortar positions with the on-order destruction of key infrastructure and would be linked by a secure land-line telecommunications system. Recalled reserve forces would provide much of the manning, with units potentially tied into the border police as well as multinational forces stationed in Germany.<sup>48</sup>

In theory, an Alternative Defense system could be activated more quickly and at lower cost and better use Germany's terrain and military systems in an integrated manner. There were also significant drawbacks. SACEUR General John Galvin noted that such a stance used as the organizing principle for NATO could be seen as reactive and had no offensive capability to retake lost territory.<sup>49</sup> Alternative Defense offered several advantages to deterrence, however. Notwithstanding West Germany's political considerations, organizing around the border in this manner would greatly improve situational awareness and while demonstrating resilience and the ability to impose costs. The light nature of the forces would have exposed troops to greater risk, but the dispersed nature of the forces and their light vehicles could offer greater freedom of movement under challenging tactical conditions. Finally, a system of obstacles tied in with anti-tank capability would degrade Soviet freedom of movement.

### Toward a New Conventional Deterrence

Two interrelated challenges affect establishing a credible deterrent regime in the Baltics. First, the division of Allied activities between out-of-region deterrent units and in-region reassurance activities leads some regional leaders to assume that NATO plans to liberate the Baltics only after a Russian attack, which is not desirable to regional Allied leaders. Second, NATO's activities focus on a high-end blitzkrieg assault but generally ignore the possibility of a limited aim attack that means regional leaders perceive the possibility that NATO could be deterred, perhaps through Russian nuclear threats, from military action necessary to restore the border.

The most common solution currently offered is a significant increase in either "permanently rotating" heavy forces or prepositioned stocks,<sup>50</sup> which succeed in increasing resilience but suffers in terms of appropriateness to the regional situation. A larger NATO force positioned in the region would indeed increase the visibility of NATO forces but also would also expose these forces to the same Cold War-era logistical and operational challenges, significantly impacting Allied freedom of movement. The organization of a "multinational force" at Warsaw may create an ad-hoc unit with below-optimal military cohesion and capability, particularly if the NATO unit is not directly assigned its own combat service support and other enablers. A large-sized force, positioned in the Baltic, would present an imposing defensive capability but would also be logistically vulnerable were Russia able to deny air and sea port access for a time.

Another option, the proposed "preclusive defense," encourages regional efforts to establish a "denial" capability focused on anti-tank and anti-air capabilities.<sup>51</sup> This generally aligns well with Baltic military force structures, light forces backed by limited mechanized forces. The plan could also compliment NATO's current efforts at improving responsiveness through the VJTF. Relying exclusively on such an approach, however, could lead to a perception either that the Baltics would be fighting alone or that Allies could "contribute" to the defense of the Alliance through means other than credible conventional power. In addition, this approach does not offer a solution for integrating "reassurance" forces into a specifically deterrent framework without the costly and risky employment of large-scale forces.

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<sup>48</sup> John C.F. Tillson, "The Forward Defense of Europe," *Military Review* (May 1981), 68-70.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> For two typical examples, see Kathleen Hicks and Heather Conley, eds., *Evaluating Future U.S. Army Force Posture in Europe: Phase One Report* (Washington, DC: CSIS, February 2016), [http://csis.org/files/publication/160203\\_Hicks\\_ArmyForcePosture\\_Web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/160203_Hicks_ArmyForcePosture_Web.pdf); and German Marshall Fund Advisory Panel, "NATO in a World of Disorder: Making the Alliance Ready for Warsaw," March 17, 2016, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/nato-world-disorder-making-alliance-ready-warsaw>.

<sup>51</sup> Wess Mitchell and Jakub Grygiel, "A Preclusive Strategy to Defend the NATO Frontier," *The American Interest Online*, December 2, 2014, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/12/02/a-preclusive-strategy-to-defend-the-nato-frontier/>, (2016); Wess Mitchell, "A Bold New Strategy for NATO," *The National Interest*, January 6, 2016; Pauli Jarvenpaa, "Can Estonia Be Defended," *ICDS Blog*, blog entry posted February 22, 2016, [www.icds.ee/blog/article/can-estonia-be-defended-1/](http://www.icds.ee/blog/article/can-estonia-be-defended-1/). The work of these authors is invaluable to better understand the dilemmas of planning for Baltic defense.

## Deterrence through Reassurance

Efforts to create a credible “punishment” force to restore the territorial integrity of NATO Allies should continue. The link between “reassurance” and other security cooperation activities, however, must be strengthened to demonstrate Allied readiness to impose costs on a Russian limited-objective attack. In keeping with the deterrence model, The U.S. and NATO should focus efforts on credibly demonstrating three key deterrent capabilities. First, that frontline Allies have the resilience capacity to identify, assess, and quickly respond to Russian aggression in the border region. Second, that Allies training in the region can quickly transition, with political guidance, to effective multinational combat operations and have freedom of movement within the region to conduct and support combat operations on short notice. Third, that Allies have capability to impose costs on and deny freedom of movement to Russian military forces attempting to invade a Baltic State.<sup>52</sup> NATO’s deterrence formula should focus on countering Russia’s advantages in decision-making speed and demonstrate the risk to Russia that even a limited aim attack could be quickly and credibly met by an Allied conventional response.

### Develop Allied Resilience

Enhance Host Nation and Allied ability to understand and interpret activity in border regions. Given the small size of Baltic populations and militaries, police and border forces are likely to be the first responders in a limited aim attack. Within the limitations of national and European law, connecting host nation border forces with U.S. and Allied commands through exercises and equipment operability will help speed reaction time to border incidents. EUCOM and USAREUR should advocate for additional budgetary authorities to allow direct military assistance for the Baltic border and for forces in support of recognizing and resisting Russian conventional and unconventional activity.<sup>53</sup>

Invest in Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) procurement and training for Allied nations. Baltic nations have solid knowledge of tactical UAVs from experience in Afghanistan. Investing in Baltic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capacity through Foreign Military Financing or ERI funding at the Brigade and Battalion level provides frontline Allies additional capacity to locate and attribute Russian Federation military activity quickly.

Continue to involve Baltic States in out-of-area missions. The U.S. and other NATO Allies should continue to encourage East European militaries to deploy to overseas missions. Overseas missions provide a powerful recruiting and retention incentive for the professional force. Opportunities to serve abroad support national resilience by offering the next generation of military leaders the opportunity to participate in and contribute to challenging missions with Allied personnel.

### Establish Allied Freedom of Movement

Understand the Physical and Operational Environment. U.S. and host nation forces, coordinating with U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), 21<sup>st</sup> Theater Sustainment Command, the USAREUR Mission Command Element (MCE) and other entities, should support Allied Freedom of Movement by building and disseminating awareness of logistical and infrastructure capabilities within the Baltic States and Poland. Long distance movements like the 2015 “Dragoon Ride” also provide exceptional opportunities for improving situational awareness, command and control, and logistical support concepts.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Nuclear deterrence remains a cornerstone of NATO’s deterrent posture.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Embassies in the Baltic have partnered with the U.S. State Department to improve border security through the Foreign Military Financing process. Author thanks LTC William McNicol, Chief, Office of Defense Cooperation Estonia, for sharing his views.

<sup>54</sup> The “Dragoon Ride” involved 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment units conducting road marches from the Baltic States to Germany, a model that has been repeated in southeast Europe. U.S. Army MPs have been involved in route reconnaissance of roads in Eastern Europe. Michelle Tan, “New NATO Units Help US Army Move across Europe,” *Defense News*, March 17, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/show-daily/ausa-global-force/2016/03/17/new-nato-units-help-us-army-move-across-europe/81897446/>.

Prepare Command and Control nodes for initial combat and logistical operations. The establishment of the USAREUR MCE<sup>55</sup> in 2014 provided increased command and control capacity for U.S. forces training in Eastern Europe. In particular, the MCE includes expertise across the warfighting functions not available at the small unit level or within Embassy country teams. In the absence of a Corps or Division headquarters in Europe, the MCE plays a vital role in fusing political direction into operations to counter potential Russian aggression in the Baltic. Further developing its visible capability to transition quickly to combat operations during exercises will establish U.S. commitment and presence during a limited aim attack. Likewise, the establishment of NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) after the Wales Summit provides additional capacity for coordination of NATO's initial operations in theater. With Allied and host-nation personnel, the NFIU has expertise across warfighting functions and will provide direction to Allied logistical operations as well as situational awareness for Allied warfighting commands. USAREUR has taken steps to include the NFIU in all exercises and deployments.<sup>56</sup> Making the NFIU the focus of NATO's immediate response to potential Russian aggression will also enhance NATO's credibility to act.

Be ready to fight on the first day. The credible possibility of rapid Allied participation is a key component of deterrence. Regardless of the type of units training in the Baltic at any time, senior U.S. elements should work with host nation and NATO officials to establish rapid integration and deployment of rotating U.S. forces with host nation forces when required. Practicing the tactical and logistical subordination of U.S. units to host nation battalions and brigades will further enhance the appearance of readiness to fight when granted appropriate political direction.

Prepare for the temporary denial of key transportation nodes. The 21<sup>st</sup> Theater Sustainment Command is rapidly changing its logistical support procedures in light of the complex nature of military activities in Eastern Europe.<sup>57</sup> Russian forces will have little difficulty identifying and potentially temporarily denying key transportation facilities to U.S. and Allied forces. U.S. forces need to consider how to resupply forces and provide aviation support in a non-standard manner until they are able to restore access to transportation nodes. Demonstrating both the existence and capability of alternative logistical means through regular training and exercise will communicate to the Russians that attempting to deny access to the Baltic States will not be simple.

The U.S. should look to establish alternate airfields using highways and other regional infrastructure.<sup>58</sup> Because the Baltic States are thinly populated, using the existing highway network provides possibilities to support U.S. Air Force and Army Aviation activities. Likewise, the Baltic States have existing former Soviet alternate airfields that could be enhanced to provide longer-duration and higher-capability airfields until main airfields return to service.

Estonia and Latvia have a limited number of commercial ports usable by Allied Forces, but the extensive coastline provides numerous locations suitable for smaller vessel offloads. The length and complexity of the coastline, to include a large number of large and small islands, would make effective monitoring and targeting by Russian forces difficult. Such locations could be used to offload heavy equipment or other classes of supply, which then would be picked up by host nation or other forces and delivered to end users.

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<sup>55</sup> The MCE is currently composed of personnel from the headquarters of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, led by a Brigadier General.

<sup>56</sup> As an outstanding example, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Timothy Jenkins of the 21<sup>st</sup> Theater Support Command has been instrumental in developing common procedures between the NFIUs and U.S. Army Europe. Email from LTC William McNicol, February 22, 2016.

<sup>57</sup> See Duane Gamble, Matthew Redding, and Craig Daniel, "Balancing Sustainment Priorities for a New Security Paradigm in Europe," February 29, 2016, linked from *The Official Homepage of the United States Army*, [http://www.army.mil/article/162200/Balancing\\_sustainment\\_priorities\\_for\\_a\\_new\\_Security\\_paradigm\\_in\\_Europe/](http://www.army.mil/article/162200/Balancing_sustainment_priorities_for_a_new_Security_paradigm_in_Europe/).

<sup>58</sup> During the Cold War, U.S. and Allied forces practiced using the Autobahn network as non-standard airfields. Allied forces identified locations, prepared them for possible operation, rerouted power lines, and established removable road barriers, thus allowing these locations to be converted to airfields within 24 hours. For a visual depiction, see Joris Niewwint "1984: Testing the Autobahn," January 11, 2016, <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/featured/1984-testing-the-autobahn-airfield.html>.

Establish the “NATO Schengen Zone.”<sup>59</sup> USAREUR is working with Allies and partners to streamline border procedures for the entrance of military equipment and personnel for training. While the civil-military basis for these laws is understandable, assuming that wartime operations will be fast and efficient remains an untested assumption. Updating the NATO Status of Forces agreement of 1954 to facilitate rapid force movements within theater would be a tremendous demonstration of Allied preparation to act.

### Deny Russian Freedom of Movement

East European Allies, and the Alliance as a whole, enhance deterrence by demonstrating the institution of appropriate defensive capabilities that will impose costs on Russian offensive activities. Allies should work together, through NATO or through programs like ERI, to improve the ability to hinder Russian military activity in the border region.

### Improve Countermobility in the Border Area

Taking lessons from the Alternative Defense approach, the United States should consider providing funding or support to countermobility activities in the border area to delay or disrupt Russian military operations. This approach offers a low-profile way to increase the cost of a limited-aim or even a blitzkrieg Russian military operation. Frontline Allies could learn from Swiss and South Korean experiences in developing obstacles and demolition plans for key infrastructure.<sup>60</sup> Continue to invest in anti-armor and air-defense capabilities. The Georgia and Ukraine conflicts have highlighted the importance of anti-armor and air defense systems to imposing costs on Russian forces, with anti-tank systems in particular providing a cost-effective capability. Both Estonia and Lithuania have recently invested in U.S.-made Javelin anti-tank missiles, and all three nations use the Carl Gustav recoilless rifle with a regional agreement for ammunition procurement. Encouraging all three states to adopt a common system will better enable regional resupply and interoperability.

## Conclusion

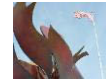
NATO allies must work together to bring about the suggested changes. The NATO defensive model used during the Cold War would be even more difficult to execute in Eastern Europe. NATO and NATO Allies, then, must find the right formula to shape perception, increase coordination, and successfully deter both a limited aim conventional attack and a blitzkrieg attack.<sup>61</sup> To focus solely on one course of action over another (e.g., the most dangerous course of action—a blitzkrieg attack—over more limited attacks) or to consider only the solutions of an earlier time could prove disastrous. Employing a more comprehensive approach to deterrence through reassurance could effectively enhance Allied resilience and responsiveness to a Russian limited territorial incursion and in so doing preserve both regional integrity and the power of the alliance.

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<sup>59</sup> In early 2016, for example, Estonia radically overhauled its border control procedures for entering Allied forces, requiring clearance in no more than seven days. In practice, it passed within hours. “Estonia Eyes a Military Schengen,” *Balkandefense.com*, February 1, 2016, <http://www.balkandefense.com/estonia-eyes-a-military-schengen/>.

<sup>60</sup> Jan Osburg, *Unconventional Options for the Defense of the Baltic States: Learning from the Swiss Approach* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016), [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE179/RAND\\_PE179.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE179/RAND_PE179.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Ivan Arreguin-Toft, “Why the Weak Win,” *International Security* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 108. Arreguin-Toft notes that small states almost always lose when directly defending against large state direct attacks. Small states gain advantages when they do something different than the attacker.



# Major General Fox Conner: “The Indispensable Man”

Carter L. Price

*As a strategic adviser, Fox Connor was arguably responsible for the development of a President, a Secretary of State, and one of the most prolific military leaders of a century. This essay identifies the attributes that made Fox Connor such an effective advisor and leader. Senior strategic leaders require advisors like Fox Connor to maximize their ability to lead effectively, yet the advisory role is largely ignored in professional military education. Senior Service Colleges, therefore, require nothing less than an embrace of the symbiotic relationship between leader and advisor as they prepare graduates for future responsibilities in either capacity.*

Keywords: Strategic Advisor, Senior Leader, Professional Military Education, Lukaszewski

The moral of this quaint example, is to do just the best that you can, be proud of yourself but remember, there's no indispensable man.

—Saxon White Kessinger <sup>1</sup>

As a strategic advisor, was Fox Conner an indispensable man? In an interview with Stephen Ambrose for his book, *Supreme Commander*, President Eisenhower would say that “Fox Conner was the ablest man I ever knew.” Staggered by this statement, Ambrose responded, “General Eisenhower, you have dealt with Roosevelt, Churchill, Marshall, MacArthur, Stalin and you say that Fox Conner was the ablest man you ever knew. My God!”<sup>2</sup> Retired General of the Armies John J. Pershing remarked, “I could have spared any other man in the A.E.F better than” Fox Conner.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carlo D’Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier’s Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 705.

<sup>2</sup> William B. Lee, *Major General Fox Conner, November 2, 1874-October 13, 1951*. [S.l. : s.n., between 2002 and 2008], 3.

<sup>3</sup> Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 267

Despite praise from arguably the most famous if not most capable military leaders of the 20th Century, Fox Conner remains a mystery to most. Even in his time he was referred to as a “mysterious *grey eminence* in the Army, whose power was indirect and often concealed. Conner wielded immense authority years between the World Wars.”<sup>4</sup> Fox Conner was visionary enough to believe in the importance of tanks as a new weapon that could change the modern battlefield.<sup>5</sup> He deemed this so much that he persuaded Patton to become their champion.<sup>6</sup> Seeing the ineffectiveness of the Army structure in World War I, Conner almost single-handedly set about to restructure the Army division resulting in his recommendations being used word for word in the National Defense Act of 1920.<sup>7</sup> Convinced that the treaty of Versailles would create inevitable conditions for yet another war with Germany, Fox Conner selected, encouraged and developed an impressive group of military leaders to win the war he had predicted.<sup>8</sup> Conner told these future leaders that in “fifteen, twenty, at most thirty years... You must be ready! Make yourself strong and cunning. Don’t waste a moment or overlook a bet. The survival of America and all that it means to humanity will depend on your will and fortitude alone.”<sup>9</sup> In totality, there is likely no other man who more profoundly influenced the outcome of a war in which he never directly participated.

Why was Fox Conner so universally trusted by both senior and junior leaders? How did he so accurately predict future conflicts and so effectively influence others toward their resolution? Why was he so often called upon to solve the most complex problems? Why was he so proficient in recognizing patterns? How was Conner able to see beyond the boundary conditions of his day and foster innovation? Why was he so adept at giving advice? Is there, or has there ever been an, *indispensable man*? This essay seeks to answer these questions by exploring Major General Fox Conner’s personal and professional life to determine what made him such an effective strategic advisor.<sup>10</sup> Instruction at military institutions is rarely directed toward creating effective strategic advisors. Yet, effective strategic advisors are invaluable to effective strategic leadership. Professional military education, therefore, should pursue means of developing the types of advisory competencies exemplified by Fox Connor.

Strategic advisors differ from strategic leaders in that they help make decisions for which they may have no direct responsibility. Strategic advisors may be of any rank or position. In fact, many, if not most, senior strategic leaders regularly advise other senior civilian and military leaders. To be a strategic advisor one must work at the strategic level of the organization, have access to strategic leadership, possess expertise, knowledge and skills in a particular area that is important to the organization, and engage strategically significant matters. In addition, strategic advisors must often collaborate across organizational boundaries toward a unified goal. Fox Conner was an effective strategic advisor and leader. His role in advising some of our nation’s most significant leaders is a model against which strategic advisors can both be formed and measured.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Blumenson, *The Patton Papers and Patton: The Man behind the Legend, 1885–1945* (New York: Morrow, 1985)

<sup>5</sup> Matthew F. Holland, *Eisenhower, Between the Wars, Making of a General and Statesman* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 99.

<sup>6</sup> Carlo D’Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper, 1995), 202-204.

<sup>7</sup> Roger J. Spiller, ed. *Dictionary of American Military Biography, Volume 1 (A-G)* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 200.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew F. Holland, *Eisenhower, Between the Wars, Making of a General and Statesman* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2001), 90.

<sup>9</sup> Alden Hatch, *General Ike: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1944), 79.

<sup>10</sup> I have omitted ranks for many actors to eliminate confusion. Throughout this period, officer ranks rose and fell based on their position and the issue of the day. During World War I, Conner and Marshall were given temporary ranks that reverted after the war. Patton, Marshall, and Eisenhower were, at the time of their meeting with Conner, significantly junior to him in rank and time in service. Marshall and Patton were contemporaries. Eisenhower was six years junior to both.



## The Life of Fox Conner

On November 2, 1874, Fox Conner was born the first of three children to Robert Henry Conner and Nannie Fox. His father had been a Confederate sharpshooter who, blinded by a bullet wound, later became a teacher in the village of Slate Springs, Mississippi. He grew up in an occupied Mississippi during the reconstruction period following the Civil War. From the war stories he heard from his father, local Mississippians and Federal soldiers, he gained an appreciation for warfare and the military.<sup>11</sup> Both of Conner's parents were instructors in what became known as the Slate Spring Academy while they scratched out an existence through subsistence farming. Although military service was not an esteemed profession in the post-Civil War South, Conner sought and received a political appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1893 from United States Senator Hernando DeSoto.<sup>12</sup> Due to an illness, his entry was delayed a year. He used this extra year wisely and prepared for what he was certain would be a challenging academic environment.<sup>13</sup> No recorded or anecdotal evidence suggests that prior to boarding the train to West Point in 1884, the twenty year old Fox Conner had ever travelled beyond Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>14</sup>

### The Academy Years

Conner was apparently an enthusiastic student while attending the Military Academy. He would often write home to his family, relaying his "works for the week" in great detail.<sup>15</sup> He did not chafe at the rigor and discipline of military life, writing, "I don't care how hard they are on me as it will strengthen me and develop me generally," and "I like it though even better than I had expected."<sup>16</sup> Conner would go on to graduate seventeenth of fifty-nine in his class.<sup>17</sup> Although he had excelled in equitation while at West Point, his class rank coupled with the needs of the Army prevented his desired commission in cavalry. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant of artillery and assigned to Fort Adams, Rhode Island. Denied transfer to Cavalry on four separate occasions, Fox Connor became one of the greatest artillerymen in American military history.<sup>18</sup>

### Early Career

Conner spent his first commissioned year as an artillerymen in Rhode Island, Alabama, and Georgia. On 21 January 1899, he set out for Havana, Cuba for his first foreign tour.<sup>19</sup> While in occupied Cuba, Conner became fluent in Spanish and passed his first examination for promotion. The board noted however, that there was "considerable room for increased technical knowledge of artillery and military engineering."<sup>20</sup> Conner obviously took this evaluation seriously and went about becoming a technically proficient artilleryman during his next assignment in Washington, D.C. where again he passed his promotion examination. During this tour he showed his ability to innovate

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<sup>11</sup> Lee, *Major General Fox Conner*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Cox, *Grey Eminence, Fox Conner and the Art of Mentorship* (Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>13</sup> United States Military Academy, *School History of Candidates*, Vol. 1 1880-1899 (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy).

<sup>14</sup> Russ Stayanoff, "Major General Fox Conner: Soldier, Mentor, Enigma: Operations Chief (G-3) of the AEF," <http://www.worldwar1.com/dhc/foxconner.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Lee, *Major General Fox Conner*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Theodore Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 87-88.

<sup>17</sup> Lee, *Major General Fox Conner*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Spiller, *Dictionary of American Military Biography*, 198.

<sup>19</sup> Brevet-Major-General George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of US Military Academy*, Supplement, Volume IV (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1901), 646.

<sup>20</sup> Spiller, *Dictionary of American Military Biography*, 198.

by designing an improved elevating hand wheel for mortar carriages that was adopted by the Army. This recognized potential landed him an assignment at the War Department and later the company command of the 123rd Coastal Artillery Company at Fort Hamilton, New York.<sup>21</sup>

By 1904, Fox Conner had become such a proficient artilleryman and administrator that he skipped the General Service School and attended the Army Staff College. Considered a shortcoming by Conner and his fellow students, the only available maps for study during his schooling at Leavenworth were of the Franco-German border area around Metz.<sup>22</sup> These maps, and Conner's self-taught fluency in French as well as Spanish, would be of significant benefit to him in the very near future. Conner was assigned to a training unit at Fort Riley following his graduation from Staff College. His proficiency was again noted, resulting in an assignment to the Army General Staff with the Army War College in route.

The Army War College of 1907 taught leadership through map exercises and the general principles of war. Military history played a significant role as it depicted the principles in application rather than in the abstract.<sup>23</sup> It was at the Army War College that Fox Conner gained an appreciation for history and the "causes of triumph and disaster" of strategy.<sup>24</sup> Again, Conner's performance was exemplary. As a result, he was asked to remain as one of five Army officers to teach strategy. Always an enthusiastic and self-motivated learner, Conner used his time to immerse himself in doctrine, tactics and a third foreign language: German.<sup>25</sup> While a student, he also participated with a group of staff officers who examined the United States history of preparedness to conduct war concluding that Congress should take "the reasonable and necessary measures to fulfill the duties imposed on it by the Constitution."<sup>26</sup> This statement, which he penned, became the introductory line in the 1912 proposal for Land Organization of the United States.<sup>27</sup> This early aptitude toward organizing units for combat would become important for Conner's future.

As his assignment came to a close, General Wotherspoon, the head of the War College, recommended him for a one year assignment in France as a liaison officer to a French Artillery Regiment. Conner served in the 22nd Regiment, Field Artillery, French Army. He remained in Paris to teach at the French War College, L'Ecole de Guerre, but his assignment was cut short due to a change in Army regulation requiring officers to spend two of every six years in line units.<sup>28</sup> Between 1914 and 1917 Conner stayed on the move in regiments from Fort Riley, Kansas to Laredo, Texas as well as training and administrative assignments from Fort Sill, Oklahoma to Washington, DC.<sup>29</sup> It would be on one of these train rides to Fort Riley that Conner would meet a newly minted, yet already well known, Lieutenant George S. Patton.<sup>30</sup>

## World War I - American Expeditionary Force

Both Britain and France sent delegations to the United States to consult on the role of American Forces following the United States Declaration of War with Germany on 6 April 1917. Conner was

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> I. B. Holley, *General M. Palmer, Citizen Soldiers, and the Army of a Democracy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 186.

<sup>23</sup> Major E. Swift, *Remarks on the Course of Instruction, Academic Year 1907-1908, Army War College Curricular Archives* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1907), 8-14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

<sup>25</sup> Spiller, *Dictionary of American Military Biography*, 199.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Virginia Conner, *What Father Forbad* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1951), 26-27.

<sup>29</sup> Spiller, *Dictionary of American Military Biography*, 200.

<sup>30</sup> Louise Ligon, "Biographical Sketch of General Fox Conner," *The Monitor-Herald*, March 12, 1936, 2.

selected as the liaison to the French delegation due to his mastery of French as well as his expertise in both French and American artillery. When President Wilson chose General John J. Pershing to lead the American Expeditionary Force, Conner was one of the one hundred and eighty seven officers and enlisted men to accompany him on his initial reconnaissance to France. Conner's boss, the Division Inspector General Andre Brewster, selected Conner as his artillery expert to accompany Pershing.<sup>31</sup> Since Pershing had heard of Fox Connor from his aide George Patton during the American Punitive Expedition in Mexico, he was more than comfortable with the choice. It was also certain that Conner's fluent French would make him an important participant as the staff poured over the after action reports of the French military. While sailing for France, Lieutenant Colonel John M. Palmer, Pershing's Chief of Staff for Operations, became convinced that he needed Fox Connor to serve within the operations section. In a testament to Conner's reputation among his superiors, Palmer knew that Conner was senior and upon his promotion would displace him. Palmer would later say that Conner "soon proved his worth many times over in the Operations Section."<sup>32</sup>

Conner's initial assignment as part of the American Expeditionary Force was to plan for the half-million man army's artillery needs. Since American factories had never produced the required guns, United States forces were required to utilize French cannons. The French cannons were the exact models Conner had mastered while assigned to the 22nd Regiment, Field Artillery, French Army.<sup>33</sup> His next task was to draw up the table for organizations of the Standard American Division as it would fight throughout the war.<sup>34</sup> Following several uneventful yet productive days at sea, Pershing's party landed in Liverpool, England on 8 June 1917. Throughout their time in England as well as after their arrival in France, there was much cause for celebration. While many would think that this celebration time was wasted while allied men were dying in trenches, it bares mention that only one hundred years prior, British forces had burned the American capital to the ground. This time of celebration cemented trust and respect among the allies. Conner would learn that these relationships were integral to forming coalitions.<sup>35</sup> Some twenty-eight years later, the Supreme Allied Commander of Allied Forces would credit Conner for teaching him how to successfully build the coalition that would gain a foothold in France on the beaches at Normandy.

By summer 1917, Fox Connor had been promoted. He replaced Palmer as the Operations Chief of the American Expeditionary Force in France. In this position, Conner sent for George Patton and introduced him to a French tank enthusiast. Upon hearing out the Frenchman, Patton responded in what he termed "euphemistic jargon appropriate for official correspondence," that the "Frenchman was crazy and the Tank not worth a damn."<sup>36</sup>

On 1 September 1917, Colonel Fox Connor traveled with the Headquarters Company Commander, George Patton, to set up the American Expeditionary Force General Headquarters in Chaumont.<sup>37</sup> With more than 61,000 American Forces in France, Pershing was anxious to leave Paris to get closer to the fight. American Forces had swelled to more than 300,000, by 21 March 1918. The 1st American Division was ordered to join the French Army in battle at a place called Cantigny. Despite that by 21 May 1918 most of the German force had displaced, the American success in capturing the small town showed that American forces could execute operations at the division level.

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph W. A. Whitehorne, *The Inspectors General of the United States Army 1903-1939* (Washington, DC: Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Army), 116.

<sup>32</sup> Holley, *General M. Palmer*, 278-279.

<sup>33</sup> Lee, *Major General Fox Connor*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Cox, *Grey Eminence*, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Blumenson, *The Patton Papers and Patton*, 403.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

During these operations, Conner observed and began to groom yet another important figure, Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall, the 1st American Division's Operations Officer during operations around Cantigny. Conner observed him throughout, devoting one day a week to mentoring Marshall at the 1st Division Headquarters in Menil-la-Tour. Conner set out to bring him into the American Expeditionary Force's General Headquarters.<sup>38</sup> On 17 July 1918, George C. Marshall reported to Colonel Fox Conner at the General Headquarters in Chaumont.<sup>39</sup>

Conner brought Marshall into the General Headquarters with the intent of launching an offensive through the Lorraine region. Since this had been the historic invasion route into France, Conner believed that an attack at this point could reduce the German salient that had formed at Saint-Mihiel.<sup>40</sup> Conner had become Pershing's chief advisor due to his mastery of French and familiarity with the French countryside. Marshall would essentially fill the role of the Chief of Operations under Conner's tutelage enabling him to spend more time advising the Commander. Conner assigned Marshall, with another more senior officer, to prepare individual competing plans for the offensive in an effort to assess Marshall's capability. After assiduous weeks of planning and revisions, each officer presented his plan to Conner for review. Marshall's was the chosen plan to be executed beginning in September 1918. Against Conner's advice, Pershing named himself Commander of the First Army of the American Expeditionary force. Conner could not convince Pershing that his decision to simultaneously command both the American Expeditionary Force and the First Army with two separate and distinct headquarters was a mistake.<sup>41</sup> To mitigate the risk of this decision, Conner assigned Marshall to the First Army as Pershing's Operations Officer. This move placed Marshall in the key position of implementing the plan which he devised.<sup>42</sup>

On 30 August 1918, following the Second Battle of the Marne, recently awarded Marshal of France, Ferdinand Jean Marie Foch, visited Pershing and unexpectedly suggested that Pershing join the French Army in an attack into the Argonne Region.<sup>43</sup> This change would amount to Pershing fighting the force he spent more than a year building in a piecemeal fashion. Pershing appealed, and the French and American leaders reached a mediated compromise in which the Americans joined forces with the French immediately after the attack on Saint-Mihiel. This compromise amounted to two major operations that the First Army would have to conduct in less than two weeks.<sup>44</sup> Pershing, ever eager to prove the value of U.S. forces, knew that much of the German force had been withdrawn. He launched the assault into Saint-Mihiel on 12 September 1918 with more than half a million Americans organized into twelve divisions.<sup>45</sup> After the overwhelming success in Saint-Mihiel, Marshall executed the monumental task of moving more than 400,000 soldiers and equipment to Meuse-Argonne. The Meuse-Argonne Campaign, which began on 26 September 1918, broke the Germans, rendering the historic city of Sedan within striking distance.<sup>46</sup>

The Germans captured Sedan in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian war. It was such a symbolic objective for the French that Marshal Foch imposed a boundary that would prevent American forces from taking the city. Conner knew that the capture of Sedan appealed to Pershing so he set out to

<sup>38</sup> Forest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 142.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Vandiver, *Blackjack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, Vol. I (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 936-939.

<sup>43</sup> Larry H. Addington, *The Patterns of War Since the Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 167-68.

<sup>44</sup> Cox, *Grey Eminence*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>46</sup> Vandiver, *Blackjack*, 984.

give his boss that honor. He dictated a memo to Marshall detailing the order to capture Sedan without Pershing's permission. This memo, known as the Souilly Memo, caused controversy for both Marshall and Conner long after the war. In his order to Marshall, Conner expressed that the Foch's boundaries between American and French forces were not to be considered binding, thus enabling Marshall to maneuver two divisions toward Sedan. The language to disregard boundaries nearly caused the two divisions to attack one another. So great was the confusion that another towering figure, then brigade commander Douglas MacArthur, was detained for a period by members of another American brigade. This incident, would haunt Pershing, Conner and Marshall for years to come, but it also sealed the bond among them.<sup>47</sup>

### Peace and the Inter-War Period

Conner attended the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty along with Pershing, later confiding to Marshall that the agreement virtually guaranteed that war would soon return to Europe. Pershing, Conner, and Marshall spent significant time together after the treaty attending to the business of redeploying more than two million U.S. soldiers. Knowing that Pershing would be called upon to share his views of the future of American forces, Conner and Marshall set out to assist him. Upon their return to the United States, they sequestered themselves at Conner's family home in New York, finalizing Pershing's testimony on the future organization of the Army.<sup>48</sup> Pershing espoused the views of Conner and Marshall, the two men flanking him at the three daylong hearing.<sup>49</sup>

By 1920, Conner's circle of officers were well placed throughout the Army. Pershing was the Army Chief of Staff with Conner as his chief of staff and Marshall his aide. George Patton had formed an Infantry Tank School at Fort Meade, Maryland.<sup>50</sup> By coincidence, it was in this position that Patton would introduce Conner to his most heralded protégé. In October, Conner and his wife travelled to Fort Meade to visit with the Pattons. Conner was to take command in Panama and mentioned that he needed a capable executive officer. George Patton lived next to a young Major named Dwight David Eisenhower, known to all as "Ike."<sup>51</sup> Eisenhower and Patton had very little in common. Patton, six years Eisenhower's senior, was well known and socially connected. Eisenhower and his wife were folksy and mostly kept to themselves. The Pattons maintained a formal recurring Sunday dinner party. On one occasion, they invited the Eisenhowers to meet the Conners. This dinner proved to be the pivotal moment in Eisenhower's career.<sup>52</sup> At their first meeting Conner did not mention the assignment in Panama but Eisenhower was certainly in need of a change and a mentor. The Eisenhowers had lost their son to scarlet fever and Ike had not been making any friends within the Infantry community as a tank champion. Eisenhower also had significant guilt for not having combat experience in an Army just returned from war. His leadership was not supportive of his departure partly because he was a very successful football coach on Fort Meade. The combined effects of all these factors weighed heavily on the Eisenhowers. Although it would take a year and the personal intervention of Conner and Marshall on his behalf, the Eisenhowers joined the Conners in Panama on 7 January 1922.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cox, *Grey Eminence*, 76.

<sup>48</sup> Larry I. Bland and Sharon R. Ritenour, eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 2 Volumes (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 194.

<sup>49</sup> Mark Stoler, *George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 46.

<sup>50</sup> Cox, *Grey Eminence*, 81-82.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>52</sup> Dorothy Brandon, *Mamie Doud Eisenhower: A Portrait of a First Lady* (New York: Scribner's, 1954), 112-122.

<sup>53</sup> Lester David and Irene David, *Ike and Mamie: The Story of the General and His Lady* (New York: Putnam, 1981),

Conner took personal interest in Ike. The two spent long hours in what Eisenhower later referred to as "a sort of graduate school in military affairs and humanities, leavened by the comments and discourses of a man who was experienced in his knowledge of men and their conduct".<sup>54</sup> Eisenhower was not an enthusiastic student, nor had he ever been. In his own words he declared "I didn't think of myself as either a scholar whose position would depend on the knowledge he had acquired in school, or as a military figure whose professional career might be seriously affected by his academic or disciplinary record."<sup>55</sup> Conner saw and developed Eisenhower's potential. He relayed his belief that the Versailles Treaty had left war virtually inevitable and determined that Eisenhower would have a significant role. Twenty-four years before Eisenhower would lead allied forces in the Normandy Invasion, Conner went to great detail describing how to build coalitions, and even drilling Eisenhower on cross channel amphibious operations.<sup>56</sup> Conner and Ike forged a lasting bond in Panama that would influence American history. Conner was not about to see all of this development go to waste at the end of Eisenhower's tour in Panama. In response to Eisenhower's less than stellar next assignment, Conner called in several favors to remove Eisenhower from the control of his branch so that he could attend the Command and General Staff College where, in his class of two-hundred and seventy-five, he finished first.<sup>57</sup>

This would not be the only time that Conner would intervene on behalf of his protégés. George Patton, as would happen throughout his career, managed to have himself removed as the G3 in Hawaii as a result of his outspokenness. Conner, who replaced the previous division commander, held significant influence over the division chief of staff who quickly remedied the Patton situation with a glowing evaluation. Personal encounters between Conner, Eisenhower, Marshall, and Patton would become infrequent following Conner's assignment in Hawaii. Each exchanged extensive correspondence throughout the remainder of their lives, but rarely met personally. In one such letter to Eisenhower in 1934, Conner said he would resign if offered the nomination for Chief of Staff of the Army. Later that year, President Roosevelt himself hinted at such an opportunity to which Conner responded, "I wouldn't go to Washington for a damn sight. I'd resign first."<sup>58</sup> Having flatly refused the President, Conner recommended that Roosevelt consider Marlin Craig or George Marshall to succeed MacArthur. The President did so in exactly that order.

Conner and his wife retired quietly to their property in upstate New York in 1938. He and his protégés corresponded on matters both professional and personal for two decades. Marshall became the Chief of Staff of the Army and named Eisenhower as the Supreme Allied Commander. Although the two had only met twice, and only briefly, there is little doubt that Marshall's confidence in Eisenhower was due to his association with Conner. Conner advised Eisenhower by letter to open a second front to relieve the pressure on Russia and regularly received messengers from Washington laden with packages full of maps and plans to review. Conner's emphasis on coalition building as a result of his World War I experiences in France was not lost on Eisenhower. Ike became so obsessive about coalition operations that at one point he relieved an officer who disagreed openly with a British counterpart.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Bradford G. Chynoweth, *Recollections of His Army Career, 1890-1941* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1967).

<sup>55</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease, Stories I Tell My Friends* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1967), 10, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Lee, *Major General Fox Conner*, 16.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-27.

## Fox Conner - Strategic Advisor

Fox Conner's story can be told based on the writings and comments of very prominent leaders he helped to develop. Conner was self-deprecating, often saying "always take your job seriously, but never yourself".<sup>60</sup> Offered the chance to have a book written about his service with the American Expeditionary Force, Conner did little to trumpet himself. Ultimately, until Edward Cox's book published in 2011, there was no book written about Conner because he actively withheld information that may have been disparaging to his superiors and his protégés.<sup>61</sup> While sailing across the Atlantic Ocean to attend the twentieth anniversary of the invasion of Normandy, President Eisenhower read aloud the following portion of a poem to relate his profound sense of self and his place in history: "The moral of this quaint example, is to do just the best that you can, be proud of yourself but remember, there's no indispensable man."<sup>62</sup> Yet, looking back across a century punctuated by a resurgent, unified, and powerful Europe, the decline of communism, and a world view of war as a coalition endeavor, as a strategic advisor, Fox Conner may well have been an indispensable man.

### The Disciplines of an Effective Strategic Advisor

On the whole, a miniscule percentage of all military officers lead at the strategic level. Moreover, even the most senior strategic leaders are, in actuality, advisors to civilian leaders. In a strictly military context, few codified jobs contain the title of strategic advisor. Since personnel systems do not provide strategic advisors, many commanders and senior leaders have assembled shadow staffs specifically charged with the task of providing advice. Neither Joint nor Army doctrine provide a definition of the role. In fact, neither the word strategic nor advisor appears in the Department of Defense Dictionary.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps, it is the lack of definition or nebulous set of requirements that have caused the military services to neglect addressing the core competencies of a strategic advisor. While there are numerous institutional professional military education opportunities, military schools lack an institutional focus on being an effective strategic advisor. Also lacking is an agreed upon set of disciplines that would be taught if such a course did exist.

In more recent history, notable examples of strategic advisors are available for study. General Colin Powell is often cited as an effective strategic advisor, while General William Westmoreland is often cited by some as ineffective. However, studying these examples with no criteria against which to measure them, is fruitless. The following pages propose a list of disciplines or competencies of effective strategic advisors. To amplify the disciplines, Fox Conner will be evaluated against each of them.

Although focused on personal professional gain, James E. Lukaszewski proposes a set of disciplines applicable to the development of strategic advisors: being trustworthy, being a verbal visionary, developing a [leadership]<sup>64</sup> perspective, thinking strategically, understanding the power of patterns, advising constructively, and showing others how to use advice given.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *IKE/Abilene to Berlin* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 56.

<sup>61</sup> George C. Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall: 'The Soldierly Spirit,' December 1800- June 1939 (Volume 1)* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981, letter dated April 25, 1934).

<sup>62</sup> D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 705.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, November 8, 2010, as amended through October 15, 2015), [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\\_dictionary/index.html?zoom\\_query=STrategic+Advisor&zoom\\_sort=0&zoom\\_per\\_page=10&zoom\\_and=1](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html?zoom_query=STrategic+Advisor&zoom_sort=0&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_and=1).

<sup>64</sup> James E. Lukaszewski, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008). The discipline of "Develop a Management Perspective" is changed by the author to "Develop a Leadership Perspective" in order to have a more understandable and acceptable military meaning.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

## Being Trustworthy

Trustworthiness is the most important discipline because it provides a bedrock for the remaining competencies. At the very core of the leader-advisor relationship is his or her belief that the advisor is acting on their behalf. Irrevocable damage to the relationship results if the advisor's motivations are for personal gain rather than to benefit the leader or organization. Advisors build trust through competence in their own field. Strategic leaders are rarely experts in every facet of their broad span of responsibility. They must rely on advisors who are highly experienced in at least one aspect of their area of responsibility. Advisors who exercise good judgment within their area of expertise gain trust and thereby increased access to, and influence on leaders. Strategic advisors at senior executive levels agree that access is vital to being an effective advisor.<sup>66</sup>

Trust is the discipline in which Fox Conner likely cements his place in history as an exceptional strategic advisor. Conner built trust largely because he was remarkably humble. This humility, rooted in a childhood in impoverished and occupied Mississippi, attracted and disarmed his protégés and superiors. Conner never sought personal gain in any of his relationships. He was offered and refused the Army's most coveted position. Even in the twilight of his career he refused to boast about his experiences because he believed that doing so might disparage others. Rather than write a book about his achievements for recognition, Conner routinely spoke at professional forums and chose to influence the Army through coaching and teaching. Pershing, Marshall, Patton, and Eisenhower revered Conner, considered him a friend, and recognized that he placed their welfare above his own.

## Become a Verbal Visionary

No leader ever follows advice they do not hear. Advisors must anticipate the decisions required of a leader and be prepared to provide timely, accurate, and memorable counsel. Because strategic leaders often do not have time for lengthy detailed discussions, their advisors must use short bursts of time to guide their boss toward the best decision. Good advisors communicate through facts, questions, comparisons, recommendations, and options pulled together in a coherent storyline that is easily understood and conveyable to other leaders.<sup>67</sup>

Fox Conner was certainly a verbal visionary. From his meeting of George Patton on a train to Fort Riley, to his interactions with Pershing during the interwar period, Conner delivered succinct counsel tempered by historical fact. The relationship between Pershing and Conner best exemplifies this discipline. Pershing had been hit with tragedy in 1915 when his wife and three daughters were killed in a house fire while he was preparing for expedition into Mexico to capture Pancho Villa. From that point on, he was a terse man with little patience for prolonged and embellished rhetoric.<sup>68</sup> Conner had great empathy for Pershing. Since he understood that Pershing could be short and stern, he tailored his interactions with Pershing into concentrated events. Although their personal relationship grew after their time together in the American Expeditionary Force, Conner's succinct, matter-of-fact style suited Pershing. Much of what Conner said or wrote was used verbatim by Pershing. Conner wrote the National Defense Authorization Act of 1920 for General Pershing. Conner's ability to capture Pershing's attention while communicating effectively was so well developed that the opinions of the two were considered by most as indistinguishable.

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<sup>66</sup> During a staff ride to Washington, DC, several senior government, industry and academic leaders attested that access was crucial to being an effective advisor.

<sup>67</sup> Lukaszewski, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?* 68.

<sup>68</sup> Vandiver, *Blackjack*, 593-594.



### Develop a Leadership Perspective

Good advisors are advocates for their boss and the organization. If advice cannot be implemented, it has no value. Leaders need advisors who understand their authorities and guide within them. Often advisors mistake the nature of the relationship with their boss and sound off on the ills of the organization. Although the boss may agree, that advisor is placing himself between his boss and the organization. This could ultimately weaken the leadership team environment, diminishing the advisor's role. Advisors need to help their bosses solve problems, not merely highlight them.

The most striking example of Conner's mastery of this discipline was during the Saint-Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne Campaign when Pershing named himself commander over both the American Expeditionary Force and the First Army. Unable to convince Pershing otherwise, Conner mitigated the decision by assigning Marshall as the First Army Operations Officer. Although in this example, his advice was ignored, he remained an advocate for Pershing, keeping Pershing's success and that of the organization paramount. Conner never groused to Pershing about Marshal Foch's ego driven decision to force the sequential conduct of the Saint-Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Campaigns. Although such complaining would have been welcomed, it would have placed Conner between Foch and Pershing. Rather, Conner sought to ensure success of the mission regardless of his leaders' egos.

### Think Strategically

Strategic thinkers intentionally vary their approaches to important decisions and question every assumption.<sup>69</sup> Strategic advisors use reflective, critical thinking to deconstruct problems and develop solutions to the sub-components, rather than becoming bound by the whole problem.<sup>70</sup> Strategic thinkers are effective advisors because they provide options that are implementable.

Evidence that Conner was a strategic thinker is apparent in his interactions with Eisenhower. Conner had correctly predicted that Eisenhower would be instrumental in the war soon coming to Europe. He developed a personal curriculum for Eisenhower that included education on building and maintaining coalitions and cross-channel amphibious operations. Conner also helped maintain force structure in the Army through the National Defense Authorization Act as well as revising the personnel replacement system that he believed would be ineffective in any coming conflict. His predictions on personnel losses during the Normandy invasion were much more accurate than those who ultimately chose a North African loss model.<sup>71</sup> Conner would lecture at the Army War College more than a dozen times on topics ranging from personnel and logistics to operations. In 1934, President Roosevelt ordered Conner to put down strikes among a number of New England textile factories and to "return violence with violence" if required. Understanding the strategic implications of this order, Conner replied that force would not be necessary. He settled the matter peacefully.

### Be a Window to Tomorrow

Effective strategic advisors understand patterns and avoid applying failed solutions to like problems. Strategic advisors who exercise this discipline look to the past to anticipate and to help develop advice for problems that their bosses have yet to encounter. Where trust is the bedrock of the advisor-leader relationship, this discipline enhances each of the other disciplines.

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<sup>69</sup> Lukaszewski, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?* 119.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>71</sup> In planning for the invasion of Europe personnel and equipment loss models from the invasion of North Africa. Conner recognized that these models would be inaccurate and set about to influence Eisenhower to rework these systems.

Perhaps Fox Conner's the most remarkable attribute was his near prophetic ability to predict future events. His certainty that there would be another world war within thirty years of the First World War was crucial in the development of three of the most influential leaders of the century. Conner was adept at recognizing patterns and had rightly predicted, not only that there would be war, but also that there would be a need for a cross-channel invasion of the European continent. He also developed specific ideas on how means would be applied during that war. Conner identified the significance of the tank as to any future war. His prediction likely enabled the United States to enter into tank development early enough to make a difference in World War II. He personally witnessed the manner in which World War I was fought and understood that the Germans would develop methods to defeat static defenses in France, later known as blitzkrieg. Conner also used this discipline to predict the loss rates of a cross-channel invasion. This led to the development of a personnel and logistics system to mitigate the predicted losses. In a number of War College lectures, he coached future leaders by using the patterns of his own experience to illustrate his points.

#### Advise Constructively and Show the Boss How to Use Your Advice<sup>72</sup>

Effective advisors align their way of thinking and decision making behavior with the leader they are advising. The way in which information is structured is often more important than the information itself. Learning how an audience receives information is vital to advising constructively. These disciplines focus on delivering advice in a way that will not offend. One must advise from a position of humility with a focus on service to the leader and the organization. Success across all the other disciplines will not mitigate failure in these disciplines.

Arguably, Fox Conner advised two of the most difficult military leaders of the twentieth century in John Pershing and George Patton as well as two of the most loyal in George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower. In each case, Conner delivered his advice in a manner which it would best be received. Notably, of the four, only Eisenhower recognized himself as a Conner protégé. Marshall looked to Pershing who did not have a teacher's temperament and Patton recognized no one as superior enough to be called his mentor.<sup>73</sup> Even with this deleterious mix of personalities, Conner gave sage counsel to each of them. He innately knew how each man would receive his counsel and adjusted his delivery. Perhaps because of his humility and tact, Conner formed relationships that were not only close, but useful to the person he was advising.

Pershing was reliant on Conner to rebuild the Army during the interwar years. Conner formulated many of his opinions on the Army structure during his service in the American Expeditionary Force but only Pershing had the influence sufficient to implement the recommendations. Pershing saw Conner as a loyal, trusted servant and Conner delivered even when his boss went against his advice. Pershing needed Conner and Conner humbly served Pershing. Patton viewed Conner as an older brother. Patton fawned for Conner's attention and sought his constant approval. Like a proud big brother, Conner doted over Patton dismissing many of his shortcomings because he recognized his operational genius. In this relationship, Conner delivered counsel in a way that preserved Patton's self-image. Even though he was very senior to Patton, Conner portrayed himself as a peer.

Marshall viewed Conner as a friend and confidant and maintained the most consistent contact with Conner following World War I. This contact became even more frequent during World War II when Marshall served as the Army Chief of Staff. Marshall regularly confided in Conner in what both men viewed as a peer relationship.

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<sup>72</sup> These two disciplines for this section are combined as the examples from Fox Conner's life illustrate both.

<sup>73</sup> Holland, *Eisenhower, Between the Wars*, 94.

Perhaps Conner's masterpiece relationship was with Dwight Eisenhower. This was a true protégé-mentor relationship. During their time in Panama the two had formed a near pact with one another. Conner agreed to teach and guide, Eisenhower to learn and act. Although their contact was less frequent during World War II, Ike would ask Conner specific questions of operational and strategic importance because both men recognized their roles in relation to one-another. Though Conner's interaction with each of the four was significant, it was the recognition of this mentor-protégé relationship between Conner and Eisenhower that made it so productive.

### The Missing Discipline: Access through Competence

A common thread spanning—but missing from—Lukaszewski's seven disciplines is that strategic advisors gain access through competence. Access to strategic leaders is granted to advisors based on their technical and conceptual competence and their capacity for learning. Fox Conner gained access to his strategic leaders because he was, first and foremost a trusted expert in artillery. His assignments to the French Field Artillery Regiment, the Army Inspector General and eventually the Operations Officer for the American Expeditionary Force were the result of this specific expertise. Conner was an aggressive student of the profession while having a voracious appetite for learning outside of his area of expertise. He anticipated and built expertise in areas he believed would be important. Conner taught himself Spanish, French and German. Although the Army provided the instruction in artillery, his mastery of French rendered him invaluable in preparing Pershing for operations in France. The seed of Conner's influence on history was sewn by this self-study of languages and his professional competence in artillery.

## Conclusion

An emotionally distant General, an arrogant and wealthy lieutenant, a virtually unknown staff officer and a demoralized mid-grade Army major revolutionized the way America fought, rebuilt Europe, and changed the world. In addition to innate talent, Pershing, Patton, Marshall, and Eisenhower, all had one thing in common: they all were recognized, encouraged, developed, and advised by Fox Conner. Each of these great men are now considered pillars in American history. Yet, absent the influence of one man—one strategic advisor—their talent may have gone unrecognized and uncultivated.

Undoubtedly, there are people with talent of this magnitude in military service today. The services should recognize the need to generate strategic advisors with the requisite disciplines. To that end, the service Senior Service Colleges should refocus their missions on developing strategic advisors. At least two formally established elective courses exist at the Senior Service Colleges specifically designed to deliver strategic advisors who can immediately impact the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational environment.<sup>74</sup> The throughput is insufficient, however, to meet the demand for effective advisors at the strategic level.

Some may contend that programs such as the Army's Strategist profession, "career field 59," or the Schools of Advanced Military Studies and Advanced Warfare are sufficient. While these programs have certainly filled a planning gap, they have not met the need generated by strategic leaders for competent advisors. Otherwise, the trend for strategic leaders to form advisory groups outside of their organic staffs would not occur so often. Although the strategist profession and these schools provide personnel who have expanded capabilities to plan at the strategic level, they characteristically lack the professional competence in a specific field essential to gaining access to

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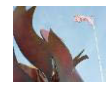
<sup>74</sup> These courses are the Advanced Strategic Arts Program and the Basic Strategic Arts Program at the USAWC.

strategic level leadership. The majority of leaders at the executive level will never command beyond Senior Service College. Educating leaders skilled at providing advice is imperative, a shrewd use of dwindling resources, and the surest way to develop a broader talent base.

Fox Conner was an indispensable leader who had instinctive abilities established through a lifetime of uniquely humble service. He was never taught the disciplines discussed herein, yet he exhibited each of them in great measure. Our military and, to some extent, society may have overemphasized competition to command and leading from the top, overlooking the critical role that advisors play. Fox Conner, for example, was not even included on Mississippi's list of significant individuals until 1987, thirty six years after his death.<sup>75</sup> Certainly competitiveness and the drive to lead from the top is advantageous at the tactical and operational levels. Yet, commanding at the strategic level will be unattainable to the vast majority of military professionals. Becoming a strategic advisor—one who develops great leaders as Fox Conner did is a worthy effort with a great and enduring impact.

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<sup>75</sup> Stayanoff, "Major General Fox Conner: Soldier, Mentor, Enigma: Operations Chief (G-3) of the AEF."



# Unaligned: Maneuver Warfare Theory and the Australian Army

Darren D. Huxley

*To successfully engage future military challenges, the Australian Army is in need of realignment to reduce disparities between strategic vision, structural organization, and force preparation.*

*At present, the Australian Army's embrace of Maneuver Theory as an overarching approach is not well supported in practical terms. To implement its vision, the Australian Army should abandon both the concept of an operational level of command in war and its current understanding of tactics, both of which are undermining preparation and inhibiting organizational change. Ultimately, a closer relationship between the strategic and tactical levels of command and a broader, risk-based view of tactics are needed to deliver to national leadership an army aligned with its espoused warfighting philosophy.*

Keywords: *Levels of War, Military Doctrine, Cultural Change*

The Australian Army officially adopted Maneuver Theory as its underpinning war fighting philosophy in the late 1990's and each successive version of the Army's capstone doctrine has supported Maneuver Theory as the official Australian Army approach to war fighting.<sup>1</sup> As a concept for the prosecution of military operations, Maneuver Theory offers the rationale that a more agile force can fight and win against a more numerous adversary. This agility comes from a close understanding of the strategic outcomes being pursued by tactical actions and an opportunistic approach to the inevitable chaos of war. In essence, Maneuver Theory is a high risk concept, but one that offers the promise of disproportionate results if implemented effectively. In this sense it is an attractive military doctrine for a middle power with a small, but highly professional, force.

Two doctrinal approaches of the Australian Army are working against its ability to effectively implement Maneuver Theory, however. The first is the Army's acceptance of a division of the military into conceptual warfighting levels that, within the existing military bureaucracy, distances tactical actions from strategic outcomes. The second is that an opportunistic approach to war is unlikely given the fact that the tenets of Maneuver Theory have failed to replace the deliberate tactics developed by the Army from its experience of warfare in the early twentieth century. Both of these

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Army, *The Fundamentals of Land Power*, Land Warfare Doctrine 1-0 (Canberra, Australia: Defence Publishing Service, April 2014), 26.

incongruities are undermining the ability of the Australian Army to prepare its future commanders to implement Maneuver Theory in the complex battlespace of the near future. This, in turn, is placing the national approach to military security at risk. If a dissonance exists between how a military thinks about its actions in war and how it is organized and equipped, the consequences can be significant for the success or failure of a nation's application of military power. If a nation's military doctrine is offensive, opportunistic and reliant on the actions of informed junior leadership then its military must be cognitively and physically aligned to execute that doctrine. This is not the case with the Australian Army. To achieve this alignment, this paper proposes the abandonment of the concept of an operational level of command and the expansion of the Army's understanding of tactics to include the operational art of Maneuver Theory.

### **The Dissonance of the Levels of War**

Since the middle of the twentieth century, historians and military theorists have argued that war can be conceptualized across three inter-related functions; strategy, operations (or campaigns) and tactics.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, most modern militaries fulfill these functions across an organizational paradigm that consists of a strategic, operational and tactical level of command. This has not always been the case, however. For the majority of the history of warfare, only strategy and tactics were recognized as related functions and the execution of both were often combined in one person.<sup>3</sup> The idea of an operational level of command grew out of a need to explain the function of commanders in armies that grew exponentially during the nineteenth century. The growth in complexity of the state system with regard to its domestic governance apparatus, and the distance from the seat of government that a state deployed its military forces, demanded the separation of the functions of strategy and tactics across the head of state, possibly a war minister and a field general. Naturally, each of the functions that had been held centrally by a single entity with a handful of advisors required additional advisors and support mechanisms for the new authorities. This separation of functions and the bureaucracy that entrenched them accelerated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as industrial and social revolutions altered the relationship of citizens and governments. In addition, the growing size of military forces gave rise to a need for multiple layers of military hierarchy between the civilian controlled war department and the military units undertaking actions in the field. According to some historians, the combination of the increased size of military forces and the separation of the functions between civilians and the military created a "grey zone" between the vision of strategy and the practice of tactics.<sup>4</sup> To comprehend the functions that occurred in this grey zone Anglo-French theorists coined the term "grand tactics," the Germans and Russians used the term "operativ" which settled into English-speaking doctrine as "operational."<sup>5</sup> In each case, these theorists were discussing the relative roles that logistics and movement played in the repertoire of a commanding general who was neither involved in national policy making nor truly involved in actual combat.<sup>6</sup> That this new function had been the traditional description of strategy was acknowledged, but left largely unexplored.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld, *The Evolution of Operational Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1985), 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Olsen and van Creveld, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Hew Strachan *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 212.

Traditionally, strategy was defined in relation to its military use as those actions of movement, supply, organization and intelligence undertaken to ensure “defeating the enemy in the most economical and expeditious manner” while tactics was the “the use of military, naval and air forces in actual contact with the enemy.”<sup>8</sup> When combined in the one person, the distinction between strategy and tactics was described in terms of cognitive purpose or planning on the one hand and physical action on the other, however, both involved an aspect of time, space, and resource calculation. Strategy was envisaged in months or years and included significant resources while tactics was seen as the province of hours and days and dealt with limited resources. In this paradigm, strategy was principally about the logistics and administration of war while tactics was almost exclusively about the tricks and techniques of fighting. The concept of campaigns, or operations was merely a means to summarize the objectives of strategy or related tactical actions in a convenient time or territorial (space) framework. The conduct of operations in no way implied a particular military level of command or responsibility. Historians, however, found the idea of an operational level of command a useful tool in describing the grey zone actions of commanding generals who coordinated the efforts of disparate elements of an army in the field, but may not have been present on a battlefield. The epitome of the grey area example became the Supreme Commander role invented by the allies in both World War I and World War II. In time, the operational level of command became synonymous with the control of large formations, however, it also found strong support in the professionalizing militaries of the late twentieth century.

The idea of a niche for professional militaries that theoretically separated them from the politicians played to an enduring concept of independent professionalism that was strongly debated in many militaries in the decades after the Vietnam War.<sup>9</sup> The emerging concepts of professional identity allowed the militaries of various nations to balance the idea of tactical officers—generally junior members of the profession—with strategic officers, or those who had reached the highest levels within the military bureaucracy, and operational officers who commanded at the highest levels in the field. To institutionalize the function of a separate level of command above tactics but below strategy, operational art was coined. Operational art is defined as the ability to skillfully employ “military force to attain strategic goals through the design, organization, sequencing and direction of operations.”<sup>10</sup> In many ways, operational art replaced the nineteenth century view of strategy and appealed to the understanding of the role of a general officer and their staff in the expanded armies of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Operational art quickly became associated with the operational level of command because the command of large formations was undertaken by general officers. It is in this context—the command of large formations—that the operational level becomes less relevant for the Australian Army.

Not until 1988, did the Australian military adopt both the operational level of war and the concept of operational art into its doctrine.<sup>12</sup> Although Army doctrine concedes that “due to the dynamic and interactive nature of war, its practice cannot be divided into discrete levels,”<sup>13</sup> it does agree that military organizations function at three distinct levels: the military strategic, the operational, and the tactical. This separation is based on the concept that the tactical level executes

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *Strategy and Compromise* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1958), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Strachan, *The Direction of War*, 213.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Army, *Operations*, Land Warfare Doctrine 3-0 (Canberra, Australia: Defence Publishing Service, December 2014), 3-1.

<sup>11</sup> Strachan, *The Direction of War*, 212.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Defence Force, *Joint Operations, Command and Control of Australian Defence Force Operations* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988), 2-4.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Army, *Fundamentals of Land Power*, 11.

military actions, the operational level plans and coordinates the tactical actions across time, and the strategic level designs and translates strategy across all levels and to the government.<sup>14</sup> This functional approach is similar to the original ideas behind the invention of the operational level, but the Australian Army version has taken on a slightly different nuance, developing a fourth tier such that the tactical, operational, and military strategic are supported by an unstated national strategic level. Presumably, the addition of a military strategic level is an unconscious blending of the hierarchical transitions of professional military officers from tactical to strategic leaders rather than a belief that strategy itself has become factionalized. Nevertheless, this confusing amalgam of ideas may be indicative of the fact that, in the case of the Australian Army, the concept of an operational level of command in war is less about the functions of independent commanding generals and more about the organizational realities of a military bureaucracy.

The Australian Army has defined the operational level as the command where military actions are “joint, often coalition, and invariably interagency in nature.”<sup>15</sup> It is assumed that this definition relates to levels of command where traditional single service headquarters, which would have controlled their service specific activity separately in the past, now have integrated components—what is commonly called joint headquarters. These joint headquarters could, however, under contemporary warfighting conditions, occur at any level of command. For example, the Australian Joint Task Force that governed military actions in the Middle East theatre of operations over the last decade was, by definition, an operational level headquarters, but so was the subordinate Combined Task Force in Afghanistan and the superior Joint Operational Command headquarters in Canberra. Each of these headquarters, amounting to over one thousand personnel, provided command and control for “tactical” forces that rarely exceeded two thousand personnel, but each of them was joint, often with embedded coalition partners and included interagency representatives. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the Australian Army’s definition of the operational level of command is less about the function of planning of operations and campaigns and more about providing a meaningful descriptor for the establishment and control of multiple layers of military bureaucracy. In many ways, the idea of the role of the general officer in the field represents the heart of the problem with the operational level for small militaries like the Australian Army.

The function of commanding generals has always been to coordinate dispersed, but sympathetic military actions. Prior to the Napoleonic era it was difficult for commanding generals to coordinate dispersed forces so most armies fought in dense formations under the direct supervision of their generals. With introduction of the *corps d’armee* system under Napoleon I of France improved staff systems and technology meant commanding generals could control forces without having to physically view their activities.<sup>16</sup> The more forces they sought to control, however, the greater the number of “*corps d’armee*” they were obliged to create. During the twentieth century, the blurring of the levels and functions of the generals and staff across the various armies was reinforced by the ambiguity of the concept of troops “in battle” and those “out of battle”—the traditional distinction for tactics and strategy—that was caused by the eruption of counter-insurgency conflicts after World War II. Nevertheless, describing the functions of an officer in controlling dispersed military forces is ultimately the main idea behind the operational level of command.

The trend to dispersion has been occurring since firepower replaced muscle as the primary tool of combat, however, the accuracy and lethality of modern firepower is accelerating the necessity to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>16</sup> Olsen and van Crevelde, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 3.



transplant the mass militaries of the industrial age with smaller more capable units.<sup>17</sup> Each of these small units must be capable of high levels of independent activity, similar to the *corps d'armee* of Napoleon, given the need to remain dispersed yet integrated into a modern communications network. The key to this independence is the ability of the small force to employ diverse assets to achieve an asymmetric effect on threats within complex military and civil environments—the traditional combined arms concept. This combined arms concept requires advanced communications, experienced leadership and a broad understanding of the nature of the problem. The Australian Army has not been immune to this trend but its understanding of modern combined arms in an inter-agency environment has no doctrinal basis. Arguably, during World War II, the Army rarely dispersed to conduct combined arms activities below the division level given the scarcity of assets, a rudimentary communications network that demanded the centralization of control and a non-commissioned officer corps that, for the most part, was as inexperienced as its enlisted men until the last years of the war. During this war, inter-agency activity was an unheard of concept and only understood in reference to activities in the occupied areas at the war's end. In this environment, the operational level would have been at army or corps command which aligned neatly with the symbology of the Napoleonic battlefield. In Vietnam, where the entire Army focused principally on battalion sized deployments within a brigade administrative setting, the company became the predominant military combined arms orchestrator because of greater dispersion enabled by improved communications and a solid non-commissioned officer corps that had experience ranging from World War II through to Korea and Malaya. Inter-agency activity was conducted during the war, but only at the task force level for specialist functions like intelligence or refugee management advice. Nevertheless, the operational level arguably devolved to the brigade command level for this conflict when the enemy refused to mass on a battlefield at the levels seen in World War II.

Functionally, the platoon is the current combined arms fighting unit of the Australian Army. Platoon commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan have had access to indirect fires, intelligence, logistics, and mobility support not normally associated with this level of combat. They have had independent command post responsibilities, ongoing discrete area of operations, reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities along with logistic issues for patrol bases and supported coalition forces. Just like in Vietnam, the army was faced by a threat that refused to congregate and that had blended itself with the governance structures of the country. Commanders found themselves sharing leadership tasks with a professional non-commissioned officer corps but they also had civilian counterparts working on inter-agency tasks alongside their military missions. These civilians had unprecedented access to their parent organizations and responsible ministers of state back in Australia. The political interface to battle that had been held at three and four star general officer rank during World War II was present in everyday actions of platoon commanders in Afghanistan. In the contemporary environment of Afghanistan, political effects were part of the immediate framework of military action at the lowest level. The operational level headquarters had again devolved, this time to the battalion level, but these headquarters were considered tactical headquarters rather than the focus of functional campaign planning. In this contemporary paradigm, the planning in an inter-agency environment was undertaken in conjunction with the political elites in the national capital rather than devolved to a commanding general in the field. Ultimately, the demands being placed on the “tactical” level of command represent those that would have been familiar to general officers commanding at the “operational” level in previous centuries, yet the Australian Army has persisted with interposing an operational level of command. Although the contemporary experience appears

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<sup>17</sup> Australian Army, *Adaptive Campaigning 2009: Army's Future Land Operating Concept* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service, September 2009), 17.

unique because of its association with counter-insurgency, it would be hard to argue that the Australian Army or the nation will step-back from this level of strategic and tactical interface. This is not to say that generals no longer have a place as leaders on the battlefield. It merely suggests that headquarters should be established for the efficiency of tactical or strategic effect rather than for the purpose of planning operations. The operational level of command is superfluous in an army that only deploys small military units and denies the tactical level of command full access to the strategic level. This access is a key component of Maneuver Theory and enables a small force to most effectively utilize its limited resources for the greatest strategic outcome. Dispersion should enable the Australian Army to organize and think in terms of a flatter structure for the execution of military operations if it also enhances its understanding of the functions of the tactical level its conception in Maneuver Theory.

### Tactics and Risk

Maneuver Theory initially grew out of the debates surrounding the military conduct of the Great War. Contemporary authors, such as B.H. Liddell Hart and J.F.C Fuller, criticized the tactical approach of the Allied commanders in that war and began to write about how military forces—armies in particular—could be better educated and prepared for future conflict.<sup>18</sup> Their writings were principally concerned with developing ideas around the use of the emerging technologies of aircraft and tanks but they came to represent a view that “the old idea of warfare based on destruction would be replaced by a new military ideal, the imposition of will at the least possible general loss.”<sup>19</sup> A significant, but largely unintended outcome of the debate was the subsequent representation of attrition as the epitome of World War I folly, and of maneuver as the minimal casualty path to victory. Although military theorists understood that the destruction of an enemy force was often the most effective means of lowering a state’s will to resist, the polarization of attrition and maneuver caused by the emotive links with the carnage of World War I provided a convenient and popular method of explaining poor generalship.<sup>20</sup> After the Korean and Vietnam wars, a new generation of military theorists used the binary discussion of attrition and maneuver to explain failure in those wars then expounded the possibilities of maneuver with the enhanced command and control skills that had developed in professionalized militaries.<sup>21</sup> By the 1980s, most modern armies professed a conceptual preference for “maneuver warfare” which was viewed as a systematization of historical best-practice in warfighting that would allow an outnumbered force to overcome a more numerous enemy.<sup>22</sup> This was considered particularly relevant for the NATO forces in Europe during the Cold War but found equal resonance with middle power militaries that, by necessity, had to protect their limited resources in any conflict.

Modern Maneuver Theory regards attrition as only one way of applying military force to the attainment of a politico-economic aim. It contends that true success in war lies in pre-emption or in achieving decisive advantage by surprise rather than material destruction alone.<sup>23</sup> Growing, as it did, out of a desire to maximize the benefits of mobility on the battlefield it was mostly associated with the process of mechanization in armies, however, its use of the word maneuver came to represent

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<sup>18</sup> Brian Holden Reid, “J.F.C. Fuller and B. H. Liddell Hart: A Comparison,” *Military Review* LXX, no. 5 (May 1990): 65.

<sup>19</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *The Reformation of War* (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1923), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Bevin Alexander, *How Great Generals Win* (New York: Avon Books, 1993), 30.

<sup>21</sup> John Kiszely, “The British Army and Approaches to Warfare since 1945,” in *Military Power: Land Warfare in Theory and Practice* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co. 1997), 192.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Tuck, “Land Warfare,” in *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 98.

<sup>23</sup> Simpkin, *Race to the Swift*, 23.

agility of thought and action rather than simply mobility. In its mature state, it came to be associated with concepts for rapid, unexpected, and simultaneous actions in both cognitive (usually associated with command and control systems) and physical domains.

Although maneuver theorists have claimed successful examples of Maneuver Theory in action, such as the German *Blitzkrieg* campaigns of World War II, the concept relies on a systemic collapse of the enemy command and control as the key to the protection of vulnerable exploitation forces. If the enemy does not collapse quickly, the exploitation forces can be exposed to the full effect of coordinated enemy action or firepower.<sup>24</sup> History remains replete with examples of military forces that refused to disintegrate in the face of surprise and that had to be dealt with in an attritional manner. Balancing this “risk proposition” has always been the difference between great generals and average commanders. Like many other nations, however, the Australian experience of World War I and II established a strong desire to ensure attritional confrontations favored its forces by a methodical approach to the planning and execution of combat. Arguably, this approach relied heavily on machines (artillery, tanks and planes) rather than manpower because of the continuing resonance of the disastrous casualties of the world wars.<sup>25</sup> This approach also favored doctrine that supported a mechanistic approach to battle which stressed the importance of drills and procedures for the synchronization of firepower.

This “methodical battle” approach to doctrine has combined with the Australian Army’s small unit experience and its employment inside coalition campaigns as key drivers behind its culture.<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, the conservative culture is almost completely counter to the bold risk taking culture demanded by Maneuver Theory. Clearly, the consequences of risk are fundamentally different at the various echelons of military command. The downside of risk for a platoon commander can be judged on the consequences for the lives of the soldiers within their immediate vicinity. Army commanders often judge risk in terms of lost material and resources because of their distance from individual lives. However, every officer must judge risk in terms of its benefit to mission accomplishment. How a military commander appreciates the risks they face will, therefore, determine their propensity to apply Maneuver Theory. If the consequences of the risk outweigh the benefits to the objective, then an alternate option will most likely be chosen that better balances the risk. In this regard, the understanding of risk and the education of military officers in the parameters of its acceptance is crucial to their ability to weigh the costs of action in war. This judgment of risk can be understood in a number of ways, however, it is most appropriately viewed through the lens of tactics.

Tactics, the Australian Defense Glossary confirms, is the “ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other and the enemy in order to utilize their full potentialities.”<sup>27</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the United States Marine Corps’ definition of tactics which is “the art and science of winning engagements and battles.”<sup>28</sup> The Australian approach is reflective of a mechanistic or methodical approach that was commonplace before the adoption of Maneuver Theory. Clausewitz wrote about tactics only in relation to their use in “the engagement.”<sup>29</sup> Much later, B.H. Liddell Hart also wrote of tactics as “the dispositions for and control of” actual fighting.<sup>30</sup> In this sense both

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hart, “Montgomery, Morale, Casualty Conservation and 'Colossal Cracks': 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group's Operational Technique in North-West Europe, 1944-45,” in *Military Power: Land Warfare in Theory and Practice* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co. 1997), 135.

<sup>26</sup> Australian Army, *Fundamentals of Land Power*, 18-19.

<sup>27</sup> *Australian Defense Glossary Home Page*, <http://defence.gov.au>.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Warfighting*, MCDP1 (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps, June 1997), 30.

<sup>29</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

<sup>30</sup> Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy* 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers 1967), 321.

theorists reflected the contemporary understanding of tactics as the drills, procedures or regulations used by military organizations to mitigate enemy advantages in battle or improve their own. This was perfectly coherent with a view of strategy as the “use of engagements for the purposes of war.”<sup>31</sup> The distinction between tactics and strategy under this framework was that drill and regulation were necessary for the conduct of war and were most evidenced in tactics, but that they should not “preclude freedom of choice” in how they were applied in changing circumstances.<sup>32</sup> This freedom-of-choice was a way of describing the practices of risk management that are inherent in any tactics decision-making on the battlefield. Despite the growing trend of dispersion and the combined arms responsibilities of junior offers, the understanding of tactics in Australian doctrine does not accord with the idea of this risk management choice.

From the end of World War II tactics instruction in Australia consisted of doctrine—the institutionalized drills, procedures and regulations—for the defense, withdrawal, advance, and attack phases of war in both open and close country settings.<sup>33</sup> The information contained in the doctrine was based on the lessons learned in both world wars and closely followed the paradigms of lines, zones and firepower control that had been the central features of overcoming the stalemate of land battles in World War I. The standardized practices of infantry battle that dominated World War I became even more important in World War II as the control of firepower across the multiple weapon systems of an industrialized battlefield became a major concern given the increasing lethality, yet lack of precision, of munitions. The continuity of this paradigm is strongly reflected in the Army’s current land warfare doctrine for operations which still categorizes tactics into an offensive, defensive, and stability framework.<sup>34</sup> Rather than emphasizing the freedom of choice between categories as one would expect with a Maneuver Theory philosophy, however, each aspect of this framework is almost rigidly associated with procedures or drills that are applicable, generally, at the small unit level for the control of movement and firepower. Arguably, this framework reflects the decline of an understanding of tactics as the application of an artistic discipline and the rise of an understanding of tactics as drills that must be mastered for greater efficiency.

Like sports, the military has a fascination with team drills and for good reason. Drills induce speed, group awareness, and anticipation to ensure the team operates as a single entity. The drills of close combat have been vividly described by Sebastian Junger as:

A series of quick decisions and rather precise actions carried out in concert with ten or twelve other men. In that sense it's much more like football than say, a gang fight. The unit that choreographs their actions best usually wins. That choreography is so powerful that it can overcome enormous tactical deficits.<sup>35</sup>

The Australian Army has a strong track record and preference for Junger's tactical choreography. Team drills allow, in theory, complex activities to be aggregated in larger units. In that sense, the section attack procedure is assumed to have a similar form to the battalion, brigade, or even divisional attack procedure. If excellence at tactical choreography wins at the lowest level, then, logic suggests, it must have equal applicability at all levels of an organization. Clearly, an understanding of the drills associated with combat are a precursor to understanding force protection, and achieving high levels of individual and group skills in close combat improves the chances of survival, but a doubt remains over drills as a substitute for tactical thought. In 1929 B.H. Liddell Hart asserted that:

<sup>31</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>33</sup> *The Royal Military College of Australia Handbook* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service, January 1977), 33.

<sup>34</sup> Australian Army, *Operations*, 4.4.

<sup>35</sup> Sebastian Junger, *War* (London: Fourth Estate, 2010), 120.

The training of armies is primarily devoted to developing efficiency in the detailed execution of the attack. This concentration on tactical technique tends to obscure the psychological element. It fosters a cult of soundness, rather than of surprise. It breeds commanders who are so intent not to do anything wrong, according to 'the book', that they forget the necessity of making the enemy do something wrong. The result is that their plans have no result. For, in war, it is by compelling mistakes that the scales are most often turned.<sup>36</sup>

In this assessment, Liddell Hart was taking umbrage at the absence of balance between drills and tactics in training, yet the same can be said of the training of officers today. A significant amount of a junior officer's training time in the Australian Army is spent rehearsing drills during field exercises. Similarly, the standard Tactical Exercise without Troops, or map exercise, conducted across the Army is less of a chance to show tactical flair than a laborious exercise in staff duties associated with battle drills. Although staff duties are important as a drill in themselves, the style demanded by the Army bears a striking resemblance to the staff duties of World War II. If, as William Lind has suggested, the process that is tactics includes "the art of selecting from among your techniques those which create that unique approach for the enemy,"<sup>37</sup> then current Army doctrine and instruction is preparing officers in the Australian Army to fight with the same intellectual approach as their grandfathers. This is not to say that the lessons of World War II are wrong, just that they may not be the most effective basis on which to implement Maneuver Theory in the twenty-first century. Ultimately, the Army's understanding of tactics must rest on a framework of the tenets of Maneuver Theory if it is to move beyond its nineteenth century paradigm of movement and fire control.<sup>38</sup> Tactics should be understood as a choice in risk management where drills and procedures are merely the means that must be applied in creative ways to achieve the most positive battlefield effect. In this sense, tactics should be understood more in line with the definition of operational art which involves the orchestration of tactical actions<sup>39</sup> and the older understanding of strategy as defeating the enemy in the most economical and expeditious manner. This enhanced understanding will enable the adoption of a risk-based approach to seizing the opportunities demanded by Maneuver Theory.

### **Broad Cultural Change**

Despite its adoption of Maneuver Theory, the Australian Army has failed to alter its tactics doctrine and its conservative culture to embrace the type of risk-taking culture demanded by Maneuver Theory. The Army's understanding of combat as a series of firepower and force protection drills is very much in line with a conservative resource protection focus that inhibits an officer's assessment of risk and therefore limits their ability to apply Maneuver Theory to complex situations. The Australian Army's "All Corps Officer Employment Specifications" indicate that the "intellectual component of professional mastery requires that officers correctly interpret the commander's intent and adopt a maneuverist approach in accurately applying that intent to the tactical situation."<sup>40</sup> In order to achieve this, cultural change will have to take place within the Army. To engender change in an organization requires a number of actions that, taken together, reinforce the chances of successful

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<sup>36</sup> Hart, *Strategy*, 349-350

<sup>37</sup> William S Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 12.

<sup>38</sup> In Australian doctrine these are: center of gravity focused; initiative; surprise; main effort; reconnaissance pull; tempo; combined arms teams; and orchestration.

<sup>39</sup> Australian Army, *Adaptive Campaigning 2009*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> Australian Army, *All Corps Officer Employment Specifications* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service, 2010), 12.

cultural adaptation to the change. To paraphrase key aspects of John Kotter's change process,<sup>41</sup> the sense of urgency and advocacy for Maneuver Theory has been replaced by the complacency of a "job well done" in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Australian land warfare doctrine no longer communicates a change vision by discussing the meaning of Maneuver Theory or its tenets, and no structural change has been associated with the idea of a maneuverist mindset within the Army's organization. But Kotter also indicates that culture derives its power from three sources: the selection and indoctrination of individuals, the daily actions of members of the organization that reinforce the cultural norms, and the unconscious acceptance of the above by everyone in the organization.<sup>42</sup> The Royal Military College of Australia is both the selection and initial indoctrination point for the Army and it is here that the Australian Army has its greatest opportunity to re-start the change process. The first step will be to get ahead of the codification of new doctrine by changing the indoctrination and instruction of new officers from the current conservative tactical approach to a deeper understanding of the tenets of maneuver as the art of tactics rather than the current belief in the sufficiency of the drills of battle. This may need to be followed by a cultural discussion across the Army about the role of the officer and non-commissioned officer in the field, particularly given the increased responsibilities junior officers have as the executive agents for combined arms operations. Potentially, non-commissioned officers may need to assume more responsibility for the drills and procedures of battle while the officers assume more responsibility for the planning and support functions. Finally, doctrine and the practice of decision-making in combat will need to be changed to better represent the realities of the modern battlefield with its high level of civilian oversight and non-combatant participation. These are aspects of warfare that rarely intruded in the tactical decision-making of previous generations but that are now commonplace for battlefield officers of all ranks.

## Conclusion

Military doctrines are important because they reflect the judgments of military officers, and to a lesser but important extent civilian leaders, about what is and is not militarily possible.<sup>43</sup> The adoption of a preferred doctrine for the application of combat power in war has consequences that can be measured both cognitively and physically. On the physical side, the most obvious signs of a particular style of fighting can be seen in the armaments and organization of military forces. The preference for offensive mobile warfare can be seen in the purchase of tanks and aircraft while the preference for a defensive doctrine can be seen in the purchase of missiles and mines. The effect of a particular doctrine on the intellectual agility of the organization is much harder to detect but can be seen in its application in training and simulations. If a dissonance exists between how a military thinks about its actions in war and how it is organized and equipped it can have far reaching consequences for the success or failure of a nation's application of military power. Although equipment and organizations can change rapidly, the intellectual foundations of a military are difficult to alter as they are heavily tied to past successes and cultural dependencies.

In sum, two significant obstacles prevent the Australian Army from fully adopting the doctrine of Maneuver Theory. The first is the concept of an operational level of command vice the function of the planning of operations. The operational level of command is a distortion of the planning function of commanding generals that has somehow made its way into Australian military doctrine without contest. It is used interchangeably with the idea of operational art, however the two are distinctly

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<sup>41</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 23.

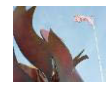
<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>43</sup> Barry B. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France Britain and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 14.

different. At best the operational level of command distorts an open dialogue between the strategic and tactical levels, at worst it denies this association. While the operational level of command may have been appropriate for the large industrialized forces of World War II, it is no longer appropriate for the small, highly professional forces of the twenty-first century. The Australian Army must return to a classical understanding of the functions of strategy and tactics so that the strategic to tactical dialogue is strengthened and Maneuver Theory can be exercised more effectively by the forces most responsible for achieving strategic success.

Closely linked is the obstacle of the Army's understanding of tactics. The culture and intellectual approach of the Australian Army is the direct result of an overwhelming experience in World War I and II. Arguably, however, its understanding of tactics as drills and regulations removed from the idea of operational art, consigns it to an attritional approach to conflict that is no longer appropriate to small militaries. Without the ability to understand the tenets of maneuver as the basis of tactical art, each successive generation of officers will approach problems not as a contest of surprise and speed, but as an exercise in destruction and control. Ultimately, tactics should be understood as a choice in risk management where drills and procedures are merely the means that must be applied in creative ways to achieve the most positive battlefield effect for strategic outcomes.

Change the culture and intellectual approach of the Army will not be a small undertaking. A cultural change will need to start at the point of entry for all officers to ensure the widest level of acceptance of the new paradigm. The Army's understanding of the purpose of command levels in war must be reset and its understanding of tactics expanded to embrace the cognitive and planning aspects of operational art. Only by implementing such changes will the concept of Maneuver Theory be fully incorporated into intellectual doctrine. Once both of these incongruities are solved, the Australian Army will be in a much better position to prepare future commanders for the near term complex battlespace and the demands placed upon it by the national leadership.



# Did the United States Lose China Again?

David Christopher Menser

The big question after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, was "how did the U.S. lose China?" Although the situation was certainly beyond U.S. control, cooperating with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rather than the Nationalists once the tide turned fostered a post-World War II order in which mainland China, one of Roosevelt's four policemen, could have helped ensure peace and stability in the Asia Pacific. Fortunately for those who perceived a lost opportunity, the U.S. got a second chance and since 1979 has been backing the "the other side:" the CCP.<sup>1</sup>

The rationale to back China in the 1980s was well grounded in both geopolitical reality and U.S. strategic culture. The U.S. needed another ally to counter the Soviet Union<sup>2</sup> and believed that China, once exposed to the West, would continue to liberalize both economically and politically. As such, the U.S. based its China strategy on three fundamental assumptions:

1. Benefits from the current system would induce Beijing's "buy in" and promote responsible behavior;
2. The U.S. could substantially shape China's rise through engagement and inclusion<sup>3</sup> and;
3. A strong and prosperous China would constitute a net good for the U.S. and the world.<sup>4</sup>

These assumptions have not changed in decades raising two questions: (1) Do they still make geopolitical sense? And (2) how has Beijing viewed the whole process?

China, a country with a long, proud history and interests of its own, was not enamored with Washington's vision for its rise, but welcomed U.S. help in facilitating it. Recognizing that its primary strategic adversary was changing from the crumbling Soviet Union back to the United States, China modified its strategy to achieve new desired ends: rejuvenation, primacy in the Asia Pacific, and a

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. officially recognized the government of PRC on 1 January 1979.

<sup>2</sup> China's contributions in countering the Soviet Union were reaffirmed as early as 1981 when a Joint Chiefs of Staff study praised China for causing Russia to reallocate forces along its border with China from Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy* (New York: Norton, 2011), 83.

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Friedberg traces the most recent iteration of "full engagement" to 1994 when then President Clinton decided to increase engagement to facilitate trade and China's stake in the global order from Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy*, 92. Although a case could also be made that the first two assumptions existed during the Reagan administrations, the dynamic of the relationship changed tremendously after the end of the Cold War. As such, the first two assumptions have been fairly continuous for at least 22 years.

<sup>4</sup> Although the reason for China's rise being a net good for the world has changed post-Cold War, it has been continuous since President Nixon.



multi-polar world more reflective of China's interests.<sup>5</sup> In preparation for a time when Washington's support either no longer exists or is no longer needed, Beijing's foreign policy strategy is to simultaneously work within the international system to maintain U.S. strategic acquiescence while shifting the balance of power in its favor. Beijing seeks to enhance its position by engaging the U.S. in peacetime conflict, using all levers of national power short of kinetic warfare to target U.S. vulnerabilities, reduce U.S. war potential and erode the U.S. led security architecture in Asia. By endorsing China's rise, the U.S. functionally validates both components of the strategy while unleashing a challenge the system is not equipped to manage: a China that is able to maximize the benefits of inclusion while simultaneously spearheading system transformation. Washington needs to acknowledge this dilemma, revise its assumptions, and either change its strategy or accept an international order more accommodating to China's rise.

### How Did We Get Here—*Shi* [勢]?

*Shi* [勢]<sup>6</sup>—strategic advantage, tendency, momentum and potential resulting from alternation points<sup>7</sup>—is ingrained in China's strategic culture and serves as a window into China's conceptual framework for assessing the contemporary and potential future environment.<sup>8</sup> China's current geopolitical *shi* [勢] paradigm revolves around the trend lines created by two alternation points: the establishment of the PRC—the point that ended China's century plus downfall and began its rise, and the end of the Cold War when U.S. power was culminating in a brief unipolar moment, eventually resulting in decline. China has used these trend lines to set and measure progress on achieving its objectives, recalibrating its grand strategy, and ultimately deciding to engage in long-term, peacetime conflict with the U.S.

Given the philosophy inherent to *shi* [勢], China's rejuvenation and vision for the Asia Pacific are only possible if current trend lines continue and China is able to harmonize with them, otherwise Beijing will be forced to reevaluate its objectives. From Beijing's perspective, for example, China's reclamation of Hong Kong in 1997, its accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and, the 2007 financial crisis have all reinforced the primary trend lines. On the other hand, the primary trend lines have been challenged by the first Gulf War and a combination of the rebalance, Trans Pacific Partnership, and third offset strategy.

Although *shi* [勢] may sound like a mystical concept, inappropriately painting China as an exotic other<sup>9</sup> and oversimplifying a complex global environment, two important summary points should not be lost. First, regardless of the label applied, China's oft-complemented multi-decade strategic outlook is based on an assessment of long term strategic trends and potential futures that conform to existing tendencies. Second, Washington's continued acquiescence has Beijing searching for U.S.

<sup>5</sup> President Xi has been making speeches on the China Dream which includes national rejuvenation and China regaining its rightful place in Asia since November 2012. For one example, see his September 28, 2015 speech to the United Nations, [https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/70/70\\_ZH\\_en.pdf](https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/70/70_ZH_en.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Francois Jullien's book, *The Propensity of Things*, serves as the foundation for many western authors attempting to qualify the significance of *shi* [勢] in geopolitical Chinese thinking; Henry Kissinger discusses the importance of *shi* [勢] in the singularity of China in Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011), 5-32; Michael Pillsbury's discusses China's use of *shi* [勢] throughout Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon* (New York: Holt, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> For more on alternation points, see Francois Jullien, *The Propensity of Things* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 194. Jullien states "every tendency, once born, is naturally inclined to grow; on the other hand, any tendency carried to its ultimate limit becomes exhausted and cries out for reversal"; reversal occurs at an alternation point.

<sup>8</sup> *Shi* [勢] includes concepts from The Dao, The Book of Changes and The Art of War all in one conceptual framework.

<sup>9</sup> In *Orientalism*, Edward Said critiques the West for over-mysticizing Eastern cultures often in a patronizing way.

redlines through action. Consequently, China may create a small scale opportunity crisis<sup>10</sup> to enhance either of the two primary trend lines, leading to rapid escalation and increased likelihood of conflict.

## The State and the International Order

*Shi* [勢] provides one piece of the conceptual framework for China's strategy, other pieces appear through examination of China as a nation-state and its conception of international order. Because CCP rule is opaque, differentiation of internal and external issues is often difficult. U.S. policy makers must realize that Beijing's foreign policy is not guided solely by domestic considerations, but rather by a coherent strategy to achieve a specific end-state.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the U.S. must attend to three aspects of CCP rule that most influence its foreign policy: application of power, quest for legitimacy, and inherent distrust of foreign powers.

The CCP is powerful beyond measure, allowing China to easily mobilize the nation in support of peacetime conflict with the United States. The magnitude of CCP control of the state is such that were the U.S. system comparable, U.S. strategic planners would set guidance and oversee appointments of:

the U.S. cabinet, state governors and their deputies, the mayors of major cities, the heads of all regulatory agencies, the chief executives of GE, ExxonMobil, Wal-Mart and about fifty of the remaining largest U.S. companies, the justices on the Supreme Court, the editors of the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post, the bosses of the TV networks and cable stations, the Presidents of Yale and Harvard and other big universities, and the heads of think-tanks like the Brookings Institution and the Heritage Foundation.<sup>12</sup>

With no transparency, explanation, or oversight, such a system facilitates mobilization of resources while effectively eliminating dissent.

Undergirding this self-sustaining, self-supporting system is a never-ending quest for legitimacy that underwrites nearly everything the CCP does from political and military maneuvers to the promotion of cultural practices and ideology.<sup>13</sup> The CCP's efforts at self-promotion can be deceptive. Thus the U.S. must see China for what it is rather than for what it appears to be.

In redefining itself to encompass all that is good for China, the CCP is not only rewriting the past, but shaping the future to enhance Chinese nationalism and position China in continuous opposition to the United States. By courting Washington's continued support of its rise while simultaneously casting the U.S. as a containment driven hegemon bent on global dominance,<sup>14</sup> Beijing positions the U.S. as both a spatial/positional threat to the PRC and an ideological one as

<sup>10</sup> An opportunity crisis emerges out of a deliberate calculated initiative. The understanding of the gain and absence of surprise creates a lower stress level in the aggressor than experienced by the target nation. Michael D Swaine, Zhang Tuosheng, and Danielle F.S. Cohen, *Managing Sino-American Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 115.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Sutter offers a different perspective in which he points out that China has serious domestic problems which limit foreign policy options and as a result Beijing has had a hard time coming up with a coherent foreign policy strategy from Robert G. Sutter, *Foreign Relations of the PRC* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 3-22. Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross also emphasize the domestic to the point where they state "China's foreign policy dilemmas will shape and be shaped by its domestic political conflicts" from Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and The Empty Fortress* (New York: Norton, 1997), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Richard McGregor, *The Party* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 72.

<sup>13</sup> For example, starting from the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement in 1919 and continuing through the establishment of the PRC, Confucius was often the poster child for backward thinking and had numerous government sponsored movements targeted explicitly at his fundamental assumptions. Today his statue is larger than life in front of China's Museum of National History in Beijing and China's foreign propaganda centers, Confucius Institutes, bear his name.

<sup>14</sup> *China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, May 2015), <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/>.

well. A 2013 CCP Central Committee General Office internal memo explains that CCP rule is threatened by seven false ideological trends, five of which—democracy, universal values, civil society, neoliberalism, and free press—emanate from the United States.<sup>15</sup>

China's reliance on historical interpretation of its past, particularly the Warring States era (circa 481-221 B.C.E.), may undergird an enduring belief that a unipolar global hierarchy is the only stable end-state. If so, this grounding tends to bolster support for China's aspirations to replace the U.S. as the sole superpower.<sup>16</sup> Seeking global Chinese dominance, however, does not reconcile with the current environment, nor global trend lines, *shi* [勢]. China's desired global end state, therefore, is more likely to be multi-polarity through removal of the current hegemon: the United States.

### United States Plan of Action

The U.S., however, is well equipped to respond and will not relinquish power easily. To this point, U.S. acquiescence has helped harmonize the two existing trends creating a “strategic window of opportunity” for China.<sup>17</sup> As Otto Von Bismarck stated, a “sentimental policy knows no reciprocity,” the time has come to close this window.<sup>18</sup> First, the United States must stop contributing to strategic acquiescence and tacit endorsement of China's rise.

- Benefits from the current system will not induce China's “buy in,” no matter how much the U.S. works toward that desired end. As Lieberthal and Jisi have noted, “America's democracy promotion agenda is understood in China as designed to sabotage the Communist Party's leadership. The leadership therefore actively promotes efforts to guard against the influence of American ideology and U.S. thinking about democracy, human rights and related issues.”<sup>19</sup>
- The U.S. cannot substantially shape China's interests through engagement and inclusion. Although reasonably effective in Europe at the end of the Cold War, that game plan has merely provided China with increased access to the very system it is trying to change. Beijing's apparent commitment to working with Washington does not include a willingness to redefine its national interests or substantially alter its policy.
- China's pursuit of its national interest is not a result of successful U.S. shaping or of China's contribution to global security challenges.

Second, the U.S. must recognize peacetime conflict for what it is: “merely war fought at times with armed means and at other times with non-violent forms that are not necessarily unarmed.”<sup>20</sup> Third, the U.S. must push to put everything on the table and reevaluate. All U.S.-China bilateral agreements should be reassessed through the current lens, not through the era of false assumptions in which they were conceived. Fourth, the U.S. must create a unified public policy that includes information, exchanges, broadcasting, counter-propaganda, political action, psychological strategy, political warfare, and ideological warfare.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Chris Buckley, “China Takes Aim at Western Ideas,” *The New York Times Online*, August 19, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html?_r=0); “Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation,” ChinaFile Online, November 8, 2013, <http://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>.

<sup>16</sup> For excellent books which contend that China seeks its place at the top of a global hierarchy, see Christopher Ford's *The Mind of Empire* and Michael Pillsbury's *The Hundred-Year Marathon*.

<sup>17</sup> China assessed it was in a Strategic Window of Opportunity which would allow it to focus domestically on its economy, while increasing its comprehensive national power in a relatively benign Asia-Pacific because the U.S. was involved in two wars and seemingly distracted.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 76.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi, *Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust*, John L. Thornton China Center Monograph Series, no. 4 (Washington, DC: Brookings, March 2012): viii, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/03/30-us-china-lieberthal>.

<sup>20</sup> Jajko, *Military Strategy*, 50.

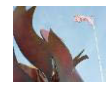
<sup>21</sup> John Lenczowski, *Full Spectrum Diplomacy and Grand Strategy* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 18.

## Conclusion

The China that the U.S. has lost in what is something of a second opportunity, lies with the loss of a supposed global security partner with shared interests. That view became the myth of U.S.-China co-creation and should have died in the 1990s. Instead, China perpetuated the myth playing to U.S. vanity, operant assumptions, and strategic culture while quietly identifying the U.S. as its primary strategic adversary and advancing a two-pronged strategy to expedite U.S. decline. China's conceptual framework, notions of international order and fear of the U.S. have guided its judgments while the communist application of power has facilitated a nationwide mobilization that would not be possible in a democracy short of a large-scale kinetic war. Washington's sincere desire to keep the myth alive has led to strategic acquiescence of China's attempt to attain primacy in the Asia Pacific and increased the chance of miscalculation while not alleviating China's fear the U.S. is trying to contain it—a lose-lose in Chinese terms.

Beijing's decision to engage in peacetime conflict with the U.S. has called into question the assumption that a strong and prosperous China will be a net benefit for the global order. The challenge for the U.S. is to mobilize in response to this threat and reset the relationship baseline. Managing escalation will be impossible without a fundamental change in the relationship's tone and the supporting narrative. Such a change may not seem helpful in the short term, but will ultimately create a safer international environment. The current philosophy of preventing negative aspects from defining the relationship has been tantamount to writing a blank check for China to cash while increasing U.S. frustration—a very dangerous combination, indeed. Stopping U.S. material and public support of China's rise and changing U.S. assumptions is essential.

The U.S. must seek to convince China to redefine the terms of its rejuvenation, not alter its national interests. The world may be heading towards multi-polarity, but the kind of primacy China seeks in the Asia Pacific must not be part of this new international order. If the U.S. responds with a better understanding of who and what China is, it can change China's read on U.S. decline and acquiescence and thereby force Beijing to get in line with the new strategic trend-lines or fight against them to its own peril.



# The Rebirth of Japan's Amphibious Forces

Jaren Keith Price

Japan is developing a Marine Corps in everything but name. In December 2013 the Ministry of Defense of Japan published two documents, the “National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and Beyond” and the “Medium Term Defense Program (FY2014-FY2018).” These documents reiterated the longstanding mission of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) to “intercept and defeat any invasion” of the homeland while expanding this mission to include “remote islands.” Significantly, the new mission states: “should any remote islands be invaded, Japan will recapture them.”<sup>1</sup> These documents also charged the JSDF with developing rapid deployment and amphibious capabilities sufficient to pursue this mission.<sup>2</sup>

Although Japan has focused its military power on countering possible invasion forces since the 1970s,<sup>3</sup> its capability to rapidly deploy forces for remote island defense or conduct amphibious operations is nascent at best.<sup>4</sup> This essay explores the implications of Japan's fully developing these capabilities by examining where they are most likely to be used, the impacts to security relations in Northeast Asia, and implications for the Japanese-U.S. security alliance.

## Possible Scenarios for Japan's Amphibious Capability

Japan has consistently declared that its military capability is for defense only. Even with the recent reinterpretation of its constitution and passage of new security laws, Japanese leaders have emphasized commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes and the defensive nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Japan, *Medium Term Defense Program (FY2014-FY2018)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense of Japan, December 17, 2013), 14, [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/Defense\\_Program.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/Defense_Program.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Government of Japan, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and Beyond* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense of Japan, December 17, 2013), 19, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/national.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/national.html).

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer M. Lind, “Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy,” *International Security* 29, no.1 (Summer 2004): 111-112, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137548>.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Kallender-Umezū, “Japan's Amphib Capabilities Struggle with Rivalries, Budgets,” *DefenseNews*, October 11, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/marines/2015/10/07/japans-amphib-capabilities-struggle-rivalries-budgets/73482062/>.

JSDF.<sup>5</sup> Retaking “remote islands” is a controversial issue, however, as many military capabilities can be used in offensive or defensive roles as well as for stability, peacekeeping, or humanitarian assistance.

Strategically, retaking a “remote island” may be viewed as a defensive act, but at the operational and tactical level it is functionally an offensive operation. The dual nature of Japan’s rapid deployment and amphibious capabilities is worrisome to Japan’s neighbors—especially those with territorial disputes involving “remote islands.” Japan’s new security laws and the perception of Japan’s moved toward increased militarism are viewed as particularly concerning.<sup>6</sup>

Japan, however, is determined to move forward. With the implementation of its new security legislation, retaking remote islands is now an operational issue.<sup>7</sup> The JSDF must now fully develop its capabilities and the policies to support them. In view of Japan’s continued tensions with China, Japan’s Southwest Islands—including the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands—represent the most likely location where these capabilities would be put to the test.

### Northern Territories/Kuril Islands and Takashima/Dokdo

Since the end of World War II, Japan has claimed parts of the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands now occupied by Russia and Takashima/Dokdo controlled by the Republic of Korea (ROK). While these locations fall into the category of “remote islands,” Japan is unlikely to use its future rapid deployment and amphibious capabilities in these locations for several reasons.

1. Russia and the ROK occupy the disputed islands—Russia with both civilian and military personnel<sup>8</sup> and the ROK with a coast guard unit.<sup>9</sup> Japan would not simply be securing uninhabited islands, but would have to forcibly seize them, an unlikely scenario.
2. Any attack by Japan would be seen at home and abroad as an act of war which would violate Japan’s constitution and international law. Even the most recently revised interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution and new security laws prohibit Japan from using military power for reasons other than defense or peacekeeping. Japanese leaders have shown the country’s continued commitment to these principles.<sup>10</sup>
3. Japan desires to peacefully resolve the island disputes which have hindered both political and economic relations with Russia and the ROK. Although Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed the issue in September 2015, dialogue between the two countries remains strained.<sup>11</sup> Japan and the ROK face a common enemy in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea that has recently

<sup>5</sup> Shinzo Abe, *Towards an Alliance of Hope: Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress* (Washington, DC: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan April 29, 2015), [http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e\\_000241.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_000241.html).

<sup>6</sup> “Abe Takes a Real Step Forward to Remilitarize Japan,” *Global Times*, September 18, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/943148.shtml>; “China Warns Japan Over Expanding Military Role Abroad,” *BBC News*, September 19, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34301456>; Gil Yun-Hyung, “Japan Passes Bills Allowing It to Wage War for the First Time in 70 Years,” *The Hankyoreh*, September 19, 2015, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/709586.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/709586.html).

<sup>7</sup> Ayako Mia, “Security Laws Usher in a New Era for Pacifist Japan,” *The Japan Times*, March 29, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/29/national/politics-diplomacy/japans-contentious-new-security-laws-take-effect-paving-way-collective-self-defense/>.

<sup>8</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, “How Russia Tries to Intimidate Japan,” *The Diplomat*, July 25, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/how-russia-tries-to-intimidate-japan/>.

<sup>9</sup> “Profile: Dokdo/Takeshima Islands,” *BBC News*, August 10, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19207086>.

<sup>10</sup> Shinzo Abe, *Towards an Alliance of Hope*.

<sup>11</sup> “Moscow Says if Japan Wants Peace Deal, it Must ‘Recognize’ Postwar ‘Historic Realities,’” *The Japan Times*, September 22, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/22/national/politics-diplomacy/lavrov-tokyo-japan-wants-peace-deal-must-recognize-postwar-historic-realities/#.VgmRZjZdHIV>.

pushed them closer together. Improved security ties have been encouraged by the United States as beneficial to both countries.

4. Japan and the ROK are principal U.S. allies with substantial US forces stationed in both countries—a key factor in the Takashima/Dokdo dispute that is not present with other disputed island areas. The U.S. would likely exert pressure to discourage open hostilities between its allies.

### Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands

The most likely place for Japan to use its emerging rapid deployment and amphibious capabilities is in the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands over which both China and Taiwan have territorial disputes with Japan.

1. The Japanese government has claimed these islands since the 1880s and in 2012 purchased the islands from a private Japanese owner. Because Japanese government actually owns and administers the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, it views these islands as part of Japan and maintains the position that its claims are supported by international law.<sup>12</sup>
2. Defending these islands with ground forces or retaking them if necessary could be justified within Japan's laws and constitution and is likely to be politically supported at home. Japan would also be justified under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and supported internationally if Japan successfully argued that it was defending its territory rather than engaging in unwarranted aggression.<sup>13</sup>
3. Japan has already shown its willingness to confront China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Seeing China as a growing threat, Japan has taken action against Chinese fishing boats that have encroached in these waters as well as closely monitoring Chinese ships and aircraft in the area.<sup>14</sup> The islands are also valuable to Japan as a means of controlling critical sea lanes necessary for import and export.<sup>15</sup>
4. The United States has historically supported the Japanese right to self-defense and has affirmed that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands fall under the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty.<sup>16</sup>

### Strategic Impacts

Based on Japanese defense budgets and procurement plans it will take Japan several years to fully build its rapid deployment and amphibious operations capability. While Japan has made initial purchases of MV-22 tiltrotor aircraft and AAV-7 Assault Amphibious Vehicles, they and other critical equipment will not be completely fielded until at least 2021.<sup>17</sup> These new military capabilities are

<sup>12</sup> June Teufel Dreyer, "Sino-Japanese Territorial and Maritime Disputes," in *Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia*, ed. Bruce A. Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, and Clive Schofield (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2013), 84; Reinhard Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands: Between 'Shelving' and 'Dispute Escalation,'" *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 12, no. 3 (July 28, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> *Charter of the United Nations* (San Francisco, CA: United Nations, June 26, 1945), Chap VII, Art 51, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>. Government of Japan, *National Security Strategy* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, December 17, 2013), 12-16,

[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/18/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/18/NSS.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Government of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2014* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2014), 41, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/2014.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2014.html).

<sup>15</sup> Ryoko Nakano, "The Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute and Threat Perception in Power Transition," *The Pacific Review*, 2015, 2.).

<sup>16</sup> John Kerry, "Press Availability with Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, and Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani," public speech, New York, April 27, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/04/241162.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "News Release: Japan – V-22B Block C Osprey Aircraft," May 5, 2015, <http://www.dscs.mil/major-arms-sales/japan-v-22b-block-c-osprey-aircraft>; Megan Eckstein, "Japan Finalizes Purchase of 5 MV-22s in First International Osprey Sale," *United States Naval Institute News*, July 14, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/07/14/japan-finalizes-purchase-of-5-mv-22s-in-first-international-osprey-sale>; Tim Kelly and

unlikely to have a major impact on Japan's relations with Russia and the ROK as these countries actually control and occupy the disputed islands. Japan seems unwilling to reject its constitution, disregard over 70 years of domestic support for pacifism, and potentially experience worldwide condemnation should these disputes be settled by force.

An increase in military capabilities is likely to attract the most attention from China. By defining remote island defense as a priority, stating that Japan must be prepared to retake any seized islands, and then developing the capability to do so, Japan has drawn a definite line with regard to Chinese actions in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Japan has forced China to carefully weigh any actions it takes and anticipate the likely Japanese response. What Japan is willing to tolerate with regard to Chinese action in its claimed territorial waters and airspace remains to be seen.

The development of a credible remote island defense and amphibious operations capability in the JSDF would be a boon to the United States. Currently, the U.S. Marine Corps represents the primary force within the alliance that can retake Japanese remote islands should they be seized by an aggressor. Fielding an amphibious force with the structure of the JSDF would allow Japan to take the lead in an island dispute and allow the U.S. to focus on support functions. These recent changes to JSDF missions and structure are likely to strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance, with U.S. viewing Japan as a more willing and able partner. Japan may allow the U.S. to reexamine the number and type of forces stationed on Okinawa and possibly improve relations with the local Japanese government and people.

The development of rapid deployment, "remote island" defense and amphibious operations capabilities would be a significant enhancement to the JSDF's ability to defend all of Japan's territory. It would also give the JSDF the undeniable, but limited means to conduct offensive operations that did not previously exist. Japan's Southwest Islands stand out as a potential source of international conflict. Japan's new security documents and upgrades to the JSDF signal that Japan takes its claims on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands seriously. Whether these developments will deter China from advancing its claims or merely escalate a sensitive and already tense situation remains to be seen.

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