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THE SIMONS CENTER

About The Simons Center

The Simons Center for Ethical Leadership and Interagency Cooperation, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas is a major program of the Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc. The Simons Center is committed to the development of ethical leaders with interagency operational skills and an interagency body of knowledge that facilitates broader and more effective cooperation and policy implementation. The Simons Center celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020.



Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc.

About the CGSC Foundation

The Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc., celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2020. The Foundation was established on December 28, 2005 as a tax-exempt, non-profit educational foundation that provides resources and support to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in the development of tomorrow's military leaders. The CGSC Foundation helps to advance the profession of military art and science by promoting the welfare and enhancing the prestigious educational programs of the CGSC. The CGSC Foundation supports the College's many areas of focus by providing financial and research support for major programs such as the Simons Center, symposia, conferences, and lectures, as well as funding and organizing community outreach activities that help connect the American public to their Army. All Simons Center works are published by the "CGSC Foundation Press."

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From the Editor-in-Chief

We are excited to be publishing our Spring edition of the *InterAgency Journal*, one that is filled with articles covering a breadth of topics spanning from the current conflict in Ukraine, to Iraq, to educating interagency leaders. Lt. Gen. Bob Caslen, Simons Center Senior Research Fellow, leads off this edition challenging us to address the tough question of whether our nation's extended involvement in Iraq was worth the investment.

Like the *Journal*, our other programs have addressed issues relevant to the security or the nation. Our Arter-Rowland National Security Forum continues to meet monthly in Kansas City with business and community leaders. Over the past several months the forum has featured presentations on cyber defense, the private sector and diplomacy, U.S. involvement in Iraq, and the safety of our food supply.

Our Simons Center Fellows program has likewise continued to grow. We've been honored to add Dr. Shannon French, the CGSC Foundation General Hugh Shelton Distinguished Visiting Professor of Ethics and Inamori Professor of Ethics, Case Western Reserve University as a Senior Research Fellow. This past April, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, in partnership with the Command and General Staff College Foundation, conducted its annual Military Ethics Symposium. Since 2009, the Symposium has provided an opportunity for academics and practitioners to come together to discuss ethics as they relate to the profession of arms, the practice of state-controlled violence, and national security. The theme of this year's symposium was "Revision or Revival? Examining Just War Theory in Context of the Ukraine-Russia War and its Implications for Organizational-level Leaders in 21st Century Large Scale Combat Operations." Dr. Shannon French delivered the keynote address. We are particularly pleased to include a paper based on a symposium presentation examining "Just War" in the context of the current war in Ukraine.

If you have expertise on a particular topic, please consider submitting it for publication with the Simons Center. Our flagship publication is our *InterAgency Journal* which is peer-reviewed and currently published semi-annually. We publish other essays, studies, and articles through our various publications. We also post opinion pieces on war and conflict on our "Thoughts on War and Conflict" page of our website. We'd love to add your contributions to the ever-expanding discourse on interagency cooperation and ethical leadership. – **RRU**

Contributors Wanted!

The Simons Center is looking for articles that involve contemporary interagency issues at both the conceptual and the application level.

The *InterAgency Journal* is a refereed national security studies journal providing a forum to inform a broad audience on matters pertaining to tactical and operational issues of cooperation, collaboration, and/or coordination among and between various governmental departments, agencies, and offices. Each issue contains a number of articles covering a variety of topics, including national security, counterterrorism, stabilization and reconstruction operations, and disaster preparation and response.

The *InterAgency Journal* has worldwide circulation and has received praise from various military, government, and non-government institutions, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.



We're also looking for book reviews!

**Submit a book review or suggest a book to review to
editor@TheSimonsCenter.org.**



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Is Iraq Worth the Investment?

by Robert L. Caslen

In contrast to the murderous vision of violent extremists, we are joining with allies and partners around the world to build their capacity to promote security, prosperity, and human dignity.

– President Barack Obama

The Financial and Human Costs

The United States' initial Operation Iraqi Freedom assault successfully dethroned Saddam Hussein and removed his regime, but it also triggered an 8½ year insurgency that was hugely expensive to the United States in terms of American and Allied lives and wealth. There are numerous sources recording U.S. killed and wounded, but according to the U.S. Department of Defense Casualty Status as of this writing, the U.S. lost 4,614 military lives in Operations Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve and sustained over 32,000 wounded.¹ In addition, according to the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs in Brown University, the United States lost 3,793 contractors.² Iraq losses are staggering and according to the Wikipedia Casualties of the Iraq War, losses range from as low as 110,000 to as high as 460,000.³ In terms of costs, or often expressed as our national treasure, the 8½ years of Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom cost American taxpayers over two trillion dollars. In light of these astonishing financial and human costs, it is fair to question whether the effort was worth the incredible sacrifice made by our service members, contractors, diplomats, coalition partners, and the American public.

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Robert L. Caslen, Jr., served in the U.S. Army for 43 years. His military career culminated in 2018 as the 59th superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Caslen served as the chief of the Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq and was the Commandant of the Army's Command and General Staff College and commanded the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, KS. Caslen holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Long Island University and a Master of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Kansas State University. Caslen currently serves as a Simons Center Senior Research Fellow.

Pre-Emption and Why We Went to War in Iraq

The United States went to war in Iraq to prevent the world's most dangerous people from threatening the United States and others with the world's most dangerous weapons. Specifically, the mission was to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and then threatening to use them against the United States and others.⁴

...for the first time in our history, we began a *pre-emptive* war to eliminate the threat, rather than a reactive war in response to an attack that had already occurred.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., the Bush Administration assessed further attacks on the Homeland as highly likely, not only by those who had already attacked us, but also by others who saw an opportunity to advance their interests at the expense of the United States. Topping the list of adversaries was Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi regime, who threatened the balance of power in the Middle East, as well as the safety and security of the U.S. allies and partners in their region. The threat from Saddam, real or perceived, forced the administration to change its strategy for dealing with Iraq, and for the first time in our history, we began a *pre-emptive* war to eliminate the threat, rather than a reactive war in response to an attack that had already occurred.

The new U.S. strategy came with some reputational costs—this precedence was not only pre-emptive, but “we shattered international assumptions about America’s own commitment to international law in overthrowing a UN member state government, regardless of how reprehensive it was.”⁵

Positive Outcomes

It is difficult for anyone to assess victory or defeat in Iraq, as complex as it is, but aside from the negative outcomes, there are some positive outcomes. The brutal dictator Saddam Hussein, mass murderer of over 500,000 of his own citizens, was dethroned and tried by an Iraqi tribunal in a manner consistent with international law. He was subsequently convicted and executed. The risk that a nuclear-armed totalitarian state would threaten Middle Eastern stability was drastically reduced. However imperfect, Iraq is the only predominately Arab nation to have a representative government. Iraq’s oil reserves are the world’s fifth-largest at 145 billion barrels and have been added to the global supply. Although they are only 8 percent of global reserves,⁶ they have the potential to service over 45 percent of the world’s petroleum demand.⁷ With the help of the United States and its allies, the radical ethnic and sectarian groups that attempted to seize power after the fall of the regime were contained and eventually defeated.

Incremental, Difficult, and Time-Consuming Progress

Perhaps most positive was Iraq’s transition to a democratic representative government, one that would resolve differences through dialog rather than through corruption and brutal authoritative means. With Iraq finding itself at the cusp of three critical ethnic and political divides—Sunni/Shi’a, Kurd/Arab, and radical Sunni/moderate Sunni—where grievances and differences are centuries old and generations apart, having impacted Iraq as well as the entire Middle East for centuries and generations, the potential of a democratic nation that could resolve these issues through dialogue and representation held enormous potential. Frankly, the United States may have opened a Pandora’s box with the removal of Saddam’s authoritative governance, but it also created one of the greatest opportunities in the history of the Middle East.

Key to its success would be Iraq's ability to see the potential and commit to its success.

However, not everyone was as optimistic with the prospect Iraq would resolve centuries of ethnic differences with this new democratic "experiment." Ambassador Jeffrey's assessment at the end of his time in Iraq was modest at best. "Thinking we could heal Iraq's ethnic/religious wounds or fix its collapsed economic and governance structures in a few years was not realistic."⁸ But those on the other end who would write Iraq off as a lost cause are both foolish and irresponsible.

The U.S. approach to South Korea serves as a noteworthy example of the benefits of strategic patience and long-term effort. It took decades of effort on the part of thirteen different administrations, but some sixty-nine years after the 1953 Armistice Agreement, South Korea is the tenth largest economy in the world run by a duly elected government and largely self-reliant in providing for its security. Germany, seventy-five years after the end of World War II, has the world's fourth-largest economy and is a key leader within the European Union. In both of these cases, progress was incremental, difficult, and time consuming; but, this long-term commitment on the part of the United States included military security and assistance and set the conditions for eventual success. Also, a part of these conditions was a security apparatus that protects against both internal and external threats and provides the security necessary for a fledgling democracy to build its institutional base. The difference in Iraq was that it did not have the security that both South Korea and West Germany had at war termination. Nor would it tolerate a continued U.S. presence given a middle east religious culture that abhors western presence.

So, the alternative was to maintain a diplomatic presence and to establish the Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq (OSC-I) whose mission was to train and equip the Iraq Security

Forces. Whether it takes another sixty or seventy years to build a secure and prosperous Iraq or not remains an issue. But if Germany and South Korea provide any indication of what it takes, then keeping Iraq secure and its government from falling back into a corrupt authoritative regime could prove to be a significant challenge.

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The Stakes are Enormous

The stakes are enormous for Iraq, the broader Middle East, and the United States.⁹ If ethnic groups in Iraq continue to feel disenfranchised as the Kurds and Sunni felt soon after the 2011 U.S. military withdrawal, then a moderate but disenfranchised Sunni sect could provide the safe haven for radical Sunni right wing groups to mobilize, recruit, plan, and execute continued attacks against the Iraq government and its Shi'a majority.

I served as the chief of OSC-I during and after all U.S. forces withdrew out of Iraq at the end of 2011, where I remained until the spring of 2013. During the time I was in this position, we saw the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) with the fall of the Sunni Iraqi cities of Fallujah, Ramadi, Hawija, and Mosul and the ISIS establishment of the self-proclaimed caliphate in northern Iraq. It took the Iraqi Maliki government to request and approve the return of U.S. military forces to ultimately defeat ISIS in Iraq, but Iraq knows for sure this radical ideology is still around and exists in cyberspace as much as it physically exists in northern Iraq.

The Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own country. When lines were drawn after World War II, the Kurds "drew the short straw" and ended up sharing their home across these

four nations as an ethnic population without a home. As a result, they desire their own country and are keen for independence. After my departure from Iraq in 2013, they did indeed claim their independence, but certainly read the wrong tea leaves, and the central government of Iraq squashed it quickly and hard. So, the Kurds have settled, for the time being, for their semi-autonomous government and “invisible nation.”¹⁰ That does not mean they are content with this arrangement. The existing drivers of instability between the Kurds and the Iraqi Arabs are significant, and if the opportunity exists, and the timing is correct, I am certain they will make another effort to establish their own nation and government. Given this, Iraq’s best deterrent is to keep their government representative, to embrace their grievances and issues, and through dialog, to work diligently to resolve them. Easier said than done, but the alternative is not healthy for a long-term unified Iraq.

The challenge for Iraq is to keep the government representative... and to address and resolve differences through dialogue.

The representative and transparent governance experiment

Historically, Iraq dealt with rival and disenfranchised groups through force and intimidation. Prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion, peaceful transitions of power were virtually non-existent in Iraq. Saddam effectively kept the ethnic groups in order, but he did so via significant human rights abuses, which resulted in over 500,000 Iraqi citizens losing their lives in one capacity or another. Prime Minister Maliki dealt with the disenfranchised Sunni and Kurdish populations in much the same way he attempted to consolidate power shortly after the U.S. military withdrew, although with considerably

less brutality and ruthlessness than Saddam. The challenge for Iraq is to keep the government representative, which limits the ability of any one individual or group to seize control of the country, to keep the lines of communication open, and to address and resolve differences through dialogue. Representative and transparent governance builds trust, which is currently absent and must be rebuilt if Iraq is to live up to its potential and succeed as a democratic nation.

A secure and reliable oil reserve infrastructure

The other enormous stake in creating a stable and unified Iraq is the ability to build a secure and reliable infrastructure for their enormous oil reserves. Which have the potential to meet the needs of 45 percent of the global demand. A significant secure and reliable petroleum reserve is a game changer for Iraq and its economy. But it requires an infrastructure that can successfully move oil from almost anywhere in the country to their respective transfer terminals. The southern oil fields near Basra, for example, pump their oil to the oil transfer tanker terminals some twenty miles out into the Persian Gulf off of the port city of Umm Qasr. I had the opportunity to sail out to Iraq’s oil pumping transfer facility that pumps oil directly into the oil tanker ships and it is an impressive operation. However, even with my naïve eyes, it was clear the transfer terminal was in desperate need of maintenance and repair. On the terminal I was visiting, which was built to simultaneously pump into four oil tankers, only two of the four transfer pumps were operational.

Although often inoperable, in the 1970s Iraq built The Iraq Strategic Pipeline that ran from Basra south to the Persian Gulf transfer terminals, as well as from the Kirkuk reserves north into Kurdistan, and then into Turkey to the Mediterranean. Today, 80 percent of Iraq crude oil goes south into the Persian Gulf and its northern transfer route is mostly inoperable. As a result, because much of Iraq’s oil goes

through the southern Persian Gulf route, any crisis, whether violence, mechanical, or natural disaster, could collapse Iraq's economy and significantly impact world-wide energy markets. Therefore, the key to Iraq's economy is to keep this infrastructure secure and operational. Iraq understands the level of criticality in preserving the Persian Gulf route and has contracted with oil companies world-wide. However, these efforts could take years of repair and expansion in order to meet Iraq's capacity and global demands. In addition, building distribution redundancy inherently creates a more secure infrastructure. During my time in OSC-I, Iraq was looking to repair the northern pipeline, and in January 2022, Iraq announced the construction of a pipeline to transfer Iraqi crude from Basra to Jordan's Awaba port in the Red Sea.¹¹

Nevertheless, Iraq still had lousy electrical service, and it has been challenging over the years for Iraqis to live and work while receiving only a few hours of dependable electricity each day. Oil is important for Iraq's economic development and is the source of its electrical power. Its unreliability, however, is simply an issue of infrastructure, management, and governance, which has been challenging for the Iraqis since my early involvement with Iraq. Not having a reliable electrical grid and infrastructure are examples of Iraq's failure to fully capitalize on the massive potential they have within their oil reserves.

Oil profit distribution across provinces

Iraq's oil wealth is not only important for its economy, but the distribution of its profits across the Iraqi provinces risks significant internal disputes and conflict. Iraq distributes its generated revenue across all the provinces based on their population percentage. The four Kurdish provinces are 17 percent of Iraq's overall population and would therefore expect to receive 17 percent of Iraq's generated revenue. The problem is that Kurdistan is also an oil

producer, and both the Iraqi Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government claim ownership of the Kurdish crude oil production and its profits. This issue was to have been resolved in a hydrocarbon law years ago, which still has not occurred, thus keeping this driver of instability front and center.

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U.S. and Iraq National Interests

Any assessment of whether Iraq was worth our investment certainly requires a look at our national interests and the interests of our allies and partner nations. And any policy framework that addresses our relationship with Iraq must certainly begin with an understanding and communication of our national interests.¹² President Obama articulated those interests in his February 2009 address to the Marines at Camp LeJeune. Both the Americans and Iraqis had an interest in an Iraq that was sovereign, stable, a self-reliant Iraqi government that was just, representative, and accountable and provided neither support nor safe haven to terrorists, and an Iraq that would contribute to peace and security of the Middle East region. The United States also had an interest in Iraq's ability to protect the rule of law, confront corruption, and deliver basic services. Likewise, it was in America's interest to "establish a new framework that advances not only Iraq's security but security across the Middle East region."¹³

Economic Prosperity

From an economic perspective, the United States had and continues to have an interest in

Iraq's prosperity. A thriving Iraq, where wealth is distributed systematically and to the benefit of all, contributes to internal stability, improved standards of living for Iraqi citizens, and stronger representative government. With 85 percent of its gross domestic product coming from the nation's vast oil reserves, an Iraq that contributes millions of barrels a day to the global oil supply benefits American citizens and businesses by helping to keep the price of oil down. Given Iraq's potential to service as much as 45 percent of the world's crude oil demand, instability in Iraq risks increased economic peril in the global economy.¹⁴

...building an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, unified, and politically and economically self-reliant can only happen if the Iraqis can counter the centrifugal forces that will pull it apart.

But building an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, unified, and politically and economically self-reliant can only happen if the Iraqis can counter the centrifugal forces that will pull it apart. Ethnic populations like the Kurds, who are itching for independence, are one of these centrifugal forces. So are radical Sunni groups, like ISIS, who want a caliphate in the north. A divided Iraq can only create increased instability, which can create ungoverned safe havens where terrorist organizations reside and grow. These organizations not only threaten their host nation, but those with global capacity can (and have) threaten(ed) our own national interests, as well as other western nations.

Polarizing Adversaries

During my time in Iraq as the OSC-I Director, it was clear Iraq had significant work to accomplish. In the OSC-I assessment I published at the end of my first year as the OSC-I Director

in January 2013, I forwarded my observations and assessment of how the Iraqi government was functioning. In my letter I stated,

PM Maliki rules from his Shi'a base, although the Shi'a themselves remain fragmented. Leadership is through crisis and intimidation, and as a result sectarian and ethnic interests remain higher priorities than national identity and patriotism. Iraq's Parliament contributes only marginally and fails to take on the tough issues, and its judiciary is widely viewed as politicized. Although AQI [al Qaeda in Iraq] is Iraq's most existential threat, the most dangerous threat to Iraq's long-term democratic institutions is its inability to share power.¹⁵

Unfortunately, the actions of Iraqi government leaders, Kurdish leaders, various tribal and ethnic groups, the Iranian regime, and even the U.S. government have detracted from the pursuit of these interests. For example, as a result of Prime Minister Maliki's efforts to consolidate power when U.S. forces withdrew, he created a polarized Sunni sect that embraced the radical leadership released from Camp Bucca, which welcomed back the Sunni foot-soldiers who left Iraq during the Awakening and the Surge. Sure enough, they attacked key cities in the Sunni provinces, and under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, they established the first caliph of the Islamic State in northern Iraq with Mosul as its capital while Iraqi soldiers fled away for their own safety. This occurred in June 2014, a year after my departure, ultimately leading to a situation where Iraq requested the return of American firepower to defeat this existential threat. The United States responded and we did indeed defeat the threat that occurred in 2019—at least physically. This threat still exists, as we have not defeated their ideology, which is pervasive on-line, continues to radicalize Sunni extremists, and will be an on-going risk to a stable Iraq.

Building ISF Capacity

Nevertheless, in 2013 we at OSC-I saw this coming and knew that countering a resurgent Islamic State would become a significant national interest. As a result, Iraq would require significant counter terrorism and Iraqi Security Force (ISF) assistance. Thus, enter the OSC-I, which is by doctrine and by design perfectly equipped to help Iraq build the security apparatus necessary to counter this threat and others. The OSC-I's strategic objective was to build a stable, self-reliant, and regionally integrated Iraq through a U.S. military to Iraqi military (often referred to as "mil-to-mil") partnership as the cornerstone of our overall United States-Iraq relationship. And as Iraq's economy improves, so should its ability to fund their ISF deliveries, thus relieving the American taxpayers of the financial burden. Foreign military sales (FMS) have proven to be a very effective means for influencing behavior. It is a long-term program with a long-term focus that has significant potential to strengthen relationships with security officials.

Reducing OSC-I as ISIS Threats Increase

Unfortunately, our Department of State leadership felt OSC-I had to continue a glidepath to further reduce its manpower and capabilities in order to transition towards a state of post-war normalization, which is the configuration of any other security assistance organization in any other nation that is not at war. Even though we tried to make the case that Iraq was still at war, there were still existential threats Iraq would have to defend and defeat such as a resurgent ISIS. The Iraqi security forces were unable to do that on their own and our investment in Iraq to this point was significant. We needed the resources to help build a security force that could provide for the security Iraq needed; unfortunately the initiative fell on deaf ears and we went on the glidepath to reduce.

The reduction's impact would allow us

to continue to provide armament with limited operator and maintenance training, but less of it. Collective training as a combined arms team (i.e., armor training with artillery) would not occur, and we would cease leadership development, professional military education, and staff training. Although the ISF would continue to receive key equipment and arms, they would maintain only a limited capability against external threats because of deficiencies in collective training, maintenance and sustainment. They would sustain their capabilities with Counter Terrorism operations, but an ISIS/AQI resurgence will stress Iraq's elite counter-terrorism forces. Although this support is substantial, it was woefully deficient to deal with the threats Iraq was facing, specifically the resurgent ISIS, as we saw in 2014-19.

The OSC-I's strategic objective was to build a stable, self-reliant, and regionally integrated Iraq through a U.S. military to Iraqi military...partnership.

Independent Strategic Orientation in the Midst of Foreign Influence

Another key national interest was for Iraq to maintain an independent strategic orientation. As mentioned previously, Iraq is the epicenter of a number of Middle East regional fault lines (Sunni/Shi'a, Kurd/Arab, radical Sunni/moderate Sunni) that are drivers of instability, and many believe that how goes Iraq, goes the Middle East. In other words, if Iraq can rise above the noise, and build partnerships instead of polarizing each other, many believe the region will follow. But to do so, Iraq will have to maintain an independent focus and orientation.

An independent strategic orientation is critical to another key national interest, which is to counter China and Russia's influence in

Iraq. For example, China imports approximately 20% percent of Iraq's petroleum export and has invested over twenty billion dollars in Iraq's energy sector to develop power plants throughout Iraq.¹⁶ It is also important to counter Iranian regional influence. As a Shi'a majority democracy, where many of the Iraqi Shi'a political leaders (including Maliki) sought refuge in Iran during the Saddam years, Shi'a Iran has found a long-term and influential relationship with Iraq. Shi'a Iraqi politicians advocate their Arab identity over the Persians, but in reality, Iran has established influential leverage over the Shi'a Iraqi political base.

Other regional nations observe this Iraq-Iran relationship, and specifically, Iran's influence over Iraq. When I asked the Minister of Defense from the United Arab Emirates to consider a joint exercise with Iraq's army, he was adamantly in denial, calling Iraq a surrogate of Iran. Quite simply, a weak Iraq increases Iranian influence, thus decreasing Iraq's relationship with its regional partners.

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Iranian influence in Iraq also impacts U.S. national interests. We have other political, economic, and security partners in the Middle East, such as our energy producing partner Saudi Arabia and Israel, to whom we have pledged a commitment of security. Iran has not only attacked Saudi's oil infrastructure in 2019,¹⁷ but has also vowed to destroy Israel.¹⁸ And with their imminent acquisition of nuclear weapons, this could certainly affect Middle East stability.

But if Iraq is to remain solvent both with internal political rivals and regional rivals, it must continue to make political progress to support its democratic development. Elections

must be held on time and they must be genuine and credible. We do not direct or influence outcomes, but our comparative advantage is to ensure a legitimate and independent electoral process. The difficulties Iraq has encountered with numerous internal protests and boycotts during their 2021-2022 parliamentary elections was a sign that they still have significant progress to make. And the more reason the U.S. should remain engaged as well as encourage and support.

*Iraq National Security Advisor
Falih al-Fayyadh*

I was encouraged about the role the United States would play in Iraq's future from a meeting I attended with General Mattis and the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Falih al-Fayyadh. Reflecting about United States-Iraqi relationships, Fayyadh was complementary about the United States presence over the past nine years. He said what solidified Iraq's relationship with the United States was the fact that the United States did withdraw as they said they would. He said not many Iraqis believed the United States would leave, but when they did, the United States "won the respect of all Iraqis." He said that Iraq opposed the United States at first, but "you worked hard and earned our trust."¹⁹

Fayyad was also very complimentary of OSC-I. Maybe it was because General Mattis was my military boss, and he wanted to be sure Mattis knew OSC-I was doing well, but he was generous with his praises of the work we were doing in building Iraq's military and the training of its troops and leaders. "Ask General Caslen," he said, "early on, times were difficult, but as we tried to understand each other, we learned to trust him and all of OSC-I."

Trust is perhaps the most important ingredient in any relationship, and certainly necessary for effective leadership. Having spent a number of years living in Iraq working

with Iraqis, Iraq simply does not trust just for the sake of you being there. Trust is earned—and with trust, much can be accomplished. So, if the United States was to assist Iraq in its sovereign journey as a fledgling democratic nation in the middle of the Middle East, Iraq would have to trust that we had their interests at hand. Fayyad, as a senior Iraqi leader in their government, indicated that was the case, and his endorsement meant a lot with what the United States had accomplished over the last nine years and what OSC-I had accomplished as the U.S. DoD remnant over the past one year.

General Odierno and General Babiker Meeting

General Babiker was Iraq’s Chairman of their Joint Staff, and we were able to get him back to the United States a few months before my departure. One of the most insightful visits was his session with the Army’s Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno. Odierno saw the importance of Iraq as a stable factor inside the Middle East. Because the ethnic divides are so influential within the Middle East, and those same divides find themselves within Iraq, if Iraq could resolve their differences through dialog in a representative government, it brings great hope to the remaining Middle East that they, too, could live in respect and harmony among nations with ethnic differences. You can say, “so as goes Iraq, so goes the rest of the Middle East.”

Odierno was smart enough to know Iraq’s importance goes far beyond its ability to just resolve political differences. He discussed the fact that Iraq’s vast oil reserves, which are the fifth largest oil reserves in the world, put Iraq in a position to have the potential to stabilize the world’s energy market and economies. Given our investments in Iraq up to this point, we clearly need to assist them in developing their infrastructure to enable their production to become more stable and therefore more secure. But it is an investment that carries tremendous

world-wide potential.

Finally, Odierno recognized that if we were to guarantee greater security both within Iraq, and within the Middle East, we would have to find Iraqi politicians who would be more open and cooperative. He believed the greatest threat to Iraq was not the resurgence of the Islamic state, but their inability to share power.²⁰

[U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno] believed the greatest threat to Iraq was not the resurgence of the Islamic state, but their inability to share power.

General Dempsey, CJCS, Meeting on Return

On my return to the United States after twenty-two months in Iraq as the OSC-I Director through the U.S. forces withdrawal and beyond, I presented my out-brief throughout the Pentagon and the Department of State. One of the more insightful meetings was with General Marty Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the most senior military person in uniform. Dempsey asked for my assessment of Iraq’s governance, security, regional integration, and economy. What I told the Chairman about Iraq’s governance trends was that I observed the Prime Minister becoming more authoritative. The arrests of his opponents and Iraq’s challenges in putting a government together after an election were indications of the work we still had to do. Their Parliament’s effectiveness was also going in the wrong direction, as they were challenged gaining consensus on key issues. The consensus was that their Judiciary was politicized and President Talabani was a moderating influence, but his illness, which led to his removal was a loss.

Iraqi security was also becoming more politicized along sectarian and ethnic lines.

Replacing Sunni and Kurdish general officers and marginalizing the Sunni and Kurds only created mistrust within their security. There was also concern about the Kurdish brinkmanship breaking away to establish their own nation and the on-going insurgency in neighboring Syria could certainly have spillover into the Sunni-Shi'a divide in Iraq. Iranian influence continued.

Picture a Middle East where ethnic groups resolve differences through dialog, radical terrorist groups cannot find state sponsorship or safe-haven, and a region that contributes energy security to global economies.

What was encouraging in this area though was the Kurd-Arab divide. Maliki's agreement to continue the meetings, the Department of Defense to provide the personnel for Northern Affairs, and the State to finally approve their presence resulted in significant progress simply based on the quality conversation that addressed issues of difference.

Unfortunately, regional integration spread across Sunni and Shi'a ethnic lines while Sunni nations in the Middle East viewed Iraq as a subsidiary of Iran. Rather than the opportunity for Iraq to be a 'uniter,' moving across ethnic lines made them a 'divider.'

One attribute of Iraq's economy, predominantly influenced by their increase in oil production and international sales, was that it contributed to the increase in infrastructure improvements, which were in dire need of repair.

With such an investment in lives and money, I am sure General Dempsey was hoping for greater progress in their governance, in particular resolving differences between Sunni and Shi'a ethnicities. But certainly, neither Germany or South Korea made the progress everyone was hoping after their first year post-war. We

concluded it is way too early to "throw in the towel," but also acknowledged there was still work to do.

Living a Life Worthy of Their Sacrifice

This intense dialogue of national interests, risks, enormous stakes, and pros and cons leads to an answer to the question, "Is Iraq Worth the Investment?" I am sure that using any perspective to examine this problem set, you can come up with any answer you want. In his notes after his departure, Ambassador Jim Jeffrey felt that the end state strategic objectives were too ambitious, and suggested that the end state should have been better defined as, "Push and help the Iraqis to develop themselves the skills and plans to deal with their political and economic development, while the U.S. provides much needed security."²¹ I would agree that this is indeed a more realistic end state, but it is important to look at Iraq's potential, not only internally as a nation, but also in the region.

Indeed, a unified Iraq has the potential to impact one of the most wealthy but volatile and deadly regions in the world; a region that can directly impact the world's economy while simultaneously becoming a direct threat to our (and many other western nations') homeland security and national interests. The potential of having a unified Iraq that can resolve its differences through dialog in a legitimate representative government, is strong enough to counter transnational extremist groups, and can maintain oil production and exports to provide significant energy security to international economies is immense. But to accomplish this, Iraq requires international assistance. Building their security apparatus with the help of the U.S. OSC-I is but one way to ensure the efforts to achieve these enormous strategic goals. In other words, OSC-I has proven to be worth the investment.

The more potent idea is that whatever Iraq

can accomplish, could impact the entire Middle East. Picture a Middle East where ethnic groups resolve differences through dialog, radical terrorist groups cannot find state sponsorship or safe-haven, and a region that contributes energy security to global economies. That may be unrealistic, but if there is ever going to be progress towards this end state, we must begin with Iraq simply because it owns crude oil that meets up to 45 percent of global demand and owns the fault lines of numerous ethnic groups who have lived with generations of mistrust. But with support and inclusion, mistrust can be replaced with trust and the strategic opportunity of having a Middle East with this potential would certainly make Iraq worth the investment.

Finally, we owe it to the 4,614 American service members and numerous American diplomats and contractors who gave their lives for a democratic Iraq and for this vision and opportunity. Their sacrifice matters. It is incumbent on us, the living, to carry out the promises they gave their lives to achieve. We owe it to their sacrifice to continue to pursue these possibilities. **IAJ**

Notes

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Why Russia Failed So Far: The Impact of Civil-Military Relations

by Michael J. Forsyth

As early as 2014, scholars have expounded on the return of Great Power competition as Russia and China took a more assertive stance in international relations to reshape the world order. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2021 has confirmed this trajectory while also ushering in a new era in which states are once again using conventional military force as a tool to secure political objectives. In the early days of the invasion, many pundits, scholars, and military experts predicted that Russia would rapidly defeat Ukrainian forces and overrun the country imposing its will, securing the political objectives, and confirming the return of Russia to the status of a Great Power on the world stage. Yet, unexpectedly, Ukraine successfully stymied the Russian invasion forcing a stalemate and a war of attrition, much to the embarrassment of Russia and the pundits.

Observers have offered several explanations for Russia's failure to include the poor state of Russia's forces, logistics issues, and the determination of Ukrainian forces, all of which are valid points. However, this article argues there is another issue that has contributed to the chaotic outcome of the Russian invasion, and it starts with the civil-military relations at the highest levels of the Russian state. The nature of civil-military relations within Russia, characterized by groupthink among the advisers surrounding Vladimir Putin, led to strategic miscalculation and a failure to align ends, ways, and means. To support this argument, this essay examines the state of Russian civil-military relations, reviews what scholars and theorists have identified as conditions for healthy and unhealthy civil-military relations and strategic assessment, and concludes with a discussion of the implications of civil-military relations as it concerns the United States.

In his timeless book *On War*, military theorist Carl von Clausewitz states that the first step

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of strategic assessment among political and military leaders is to make a full evaluation of the environment in order to determine the type of war upon which the state is about to embark. Specifically, he stated:

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.¹

Determining the type of war a state is entering into requires sound strategic assessment, which includes strategic deliberations the leaders of a state must make a thorough examination of the type of war, the resources available to prosecute the conflict, and the most suitable ways to approach the issue. This facilitates formulation of political objectives and the development of the strategy to secure the objectives. To do so in an effective manner, a key requirement is the need for the state that is

When the Soviet Union disintegrated the military leadership was directionless and without purpose. The civilian leadership seemed to have abandoned the military...

considering war to have healthy civil-military relations because the tenor of the discourse has a direct effect on the outcome of strategic deliberations.² From these deliberations the state sets its political objectives and works to align the ends, ways, and means of the strategy to secure the established political objectives. Russia clearly failed in its strategic deliberations for two reasons. First, Russian leaders misread the type of war they were embarking upon. Second, the deliberations resulted in a poor assessment of the

available means and suitable ways to achieve the ends. One significant reason for this failure of strategic deliberations is the dysfunctional nature of Russian civil-military relations.

Perhaps the best way to characterize Russian civil-military relations is to note the central aspect of these relations revolves around the authoritarian leadership of Vladimir Putin. The state of Russian civil-military relations is a result of the aftermath of the Soviet Union collapse in 1991. During the existence of the USSR, the military was firmly under the control of the civilian authority. The leaders of the Soviet Union achieved this through the installation of political commissars in every unit to ensure the loyalty of the officers and to prevent them from engaging in unacceptable political activity.³ As a result, the Soviet officer corps was committed to the preservation of the state under communist leadership, and this became manifest by the officers taking an oath of allegiance to the USSR. When the Soviet Union disintegrated the military leadership was directionless and without purpose. The civilian leadership seemed to have abandoned the military leaving the force destitute economically and military leaders blamed the breakdown of the state that they were sworn to defend on feckless civilian political leaders.⁴ Thus, during the 1990s the Russian military engaged in self-preservation and was highly resistant to civil control because military leaders believed the political class betrayed them when the USSR broke apart.

With the ascendance of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000 the dynamics of civil-military relations began to change in a different direction. As noted, the military during the Soviet era devoted itself to the state under the auspices of the communist party. Then, after 1991, military leaders became politically active in advancing their own interests for the next decade. But Mr. Putin began reshaping this dynamic in a cunning way. When he came to power in 2000, Putin started “bringing the military back under

‘civilian’ control,” which is a euphemism meaning back under Putin’s personal control.⁵ Putin did this by satiating the military’s grievances. Whereby, the military suffered mightily during the 1990s due to shrinking budgets, a lack of respect from the people and civilian leaders, and a lack of purpose, Putin sought to address each of these issues. He did this by, first, increasing the military budget and, critically, ensuring the military was paid on time.⁶ Second, Putin restored the prestige of the military by putting it on display as during Soviet times. He did this with lavish parades and public displays of respect, all the while encouraging the public to embrace its military.⁷ Third, Putin gave the military a sense of purpose. Russia and the Soviet Union always viewed itself as a Great Power and expansion of the state was a natural extension of that vision. Upon ascendance to power, Putin put this shared vision into action finally ending the difficult Chechen conflict in a satisfactory manner—albeit having devastated the Chechen capital, Grozny.

Then, Putin invaded Georgia successfully in 2008 claiming South Ossetia and Abkhazia for Russia. Though the Russian military experienced some friction employing its combat power, the operation generated confidence that the military was regaining relevance as a Russian institution. Further, Russia intervened on behalf of Bashar al-Assad in Syria to protect Russia’s interests in the Middle East. This gave Russians and the military specifically, a sense that Russia was once again a powerful nation with great influence on the world stage. Finally, Putin annexed Crimea and moved into the Donbas in 2014 to ensure its ‘near abroad’ maintained a common Russian outlook.⁸ All of these actions won Putin the dedicated personal loyalty of the military forces.

Because of this affinity, Putin was then able to populate the Ministry of Defense and senior ranks of the military with like-minded colleagues. These individuals shared Putin’s

vision of a resurgent Russia as a Great Power and its need to expand in both power and influence regionally and around the world. Therefore, Russia began to rebuild its military retooling it to achieve a strong, influential Russia that the West must respect on the world stage. After cleaning up the Chechen mess, Putin embarked upon his first adventure in Georgia. At the time, Putin’s closest advisers, including General Nikolai Makarov and Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyokov, counseled against conflict with Georgia, but Putin ignored this advice. With success in Georgia, it emboldened Putin and silenced any future contradictory advice. The astonishing, near bloodless victory in the annexation of Crimea solidified Putin’s grip on the military. The victory also validated his place as a great strategist and leader of Russia in the eyes of the military and public.⁹

...as his power expanded, Putin’s advisers became infected by his hubris, leading them to become sycophants susceptible to groupthink.

With every success that Putin achieved between his ascension to power and 2018, the more he solidified his power base within the military and among his closest advisers. Most of these advisers were hand-picked former KGB associates of Putin who have little to no military experience. Thus, they vested their loyalty in Putin, which was mutually beneficial.¹⁰ Consequently, as his power expanded, Putin’s advisers became infected by his hubris, leading them to become sycophants susceptible to groupthink.¹¹ The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic made his coterie of advisers even more insular. Putin isolated himself for a considerable time from the political scene in Moscow with only a small, tight knit group of like-minded advisers at a presidential retreat at Lake Valdai

far from the Kremlin. Here, Putin promulgated his Ukraine policy surrounded by only those who would validate his thoughts on the Ukraine question.¹² Few senior military leaders were involved in the planning and one scholar notes “that even senior members of the Russian General Staff were kept in the dark about the invasion plans until shortly before it started.”¹³ In other words, the civil-military relations within the inner circle surrounding Putin became not a sounding board for his ideas, but more of a rubber stamp endorsement of them. This means that strategic deliberations lacked debate about options and realistic assessments of risk and possibilities. Herein lay the seeds of disaster in Ukraine.

Healthy civil-military relations are an essential element in a state’s ability to examine issues, articulate policy, and formulate strategy.

The ability to conduct unbiased, clear strategic assessment is critical for any state when considering whether or not to embark upon war and options in conducting war. Critically, sound strategic assessment is essential for aligning ends, ways, and means of strategy. This becomes problematic when the discourse of civil-military relations is dominated by an outsized personality. This limits the possibility of having a debate about contending strategic options. In Risa Brooks’ study titled *Shaping Strategy*, she theorizes that the ability of a state’s national security apparatus to make sound strategic assessment depends on several variables. These include the level of dominance of the civilian or military leaders and the scale of preference divergence among the actors during deliberations. The level of political dominance indicates the ability of the military leaders to exert influence and speak openly with candor about strategic options. The scale of preference divergence is a gauge

of the range of ideas under considerations by the actors in civil-military relations. When the civilian leaders dominate the relationship and the military leaders have little influence, it can have a chilling effect on the ability to conduct a debate regarding options. Further, when the divergence of ideas in deliberations is narrow, few options are considered in discussions of policy and strategy.¹⁴

In Russia’s case, in which Vladimir Putin is clearly the dominant and driving force in the civil-military relationship, few advisers openly contest the opinions of the leader. This is especially true after the string of successes prior to the invasion of Ukraine. When strategic deliberations regarding Ukraine took place, there was little preference divergence among Putin’s close advisers. Their opinions appeared to fully align with Putin’s rather than offering alternative options or dissent.¹⁵ This is a recipe for poor strategic assessment and potential for disaster in war because little to no discussion regarding strategic risk, possibilities, or consequences can take place. Thus, Russia entered into a war in Ukraine in which it failed to understand the nature of the conflict. The resultant strategy did not align ways and means with the broadly articulated end to incorporate Ukraine into a Greater Russia.

Healthy civil-military relations are an essential element in a state’s ability to examine issues, articulate policy, and formulate strategy. In Russia it appears such relations are fatally flawed and led the country into a quagmire. This had enormous detrimental effects on the state in terms of its morale among the troops and populace, the economy, and the international political arena. Even after the initial setbacks in the spring of 2022 and later disasters in the summer and fall, Russia continues to blunder along, and civil-military relations are a key factor. The *Wall Street Journal* and other news organizations note that Putin does not accept assessments that are contrary to his conceptions

of how the war in Ukraine is progressing. One article notes that Putin’s war “information is carefully calibrated to emphasize successes and play down setbacks.”¹⁶ At one meeting last summer where there was little positive news to provide, Putin’s handlers shielded him from issues noting “Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] doesn’t need to be upset right now.”¹⁷ Other outlets observed that military leaders withhold information from Putin or deliberately provide misleading information because they fear giving him bad news about the war.¹⁸ This is a symptom of dysfunctional civil-military relations and only exacerbates the poor state of strategic assessment.

As alluded to previously, the essence of strategy is about aligning ends, ways, and means that link to political objectives. As Harry Yarger notes, “strategy provides a coherent blueprint to bridge the gap between the realities of today and a desired future.”¹⁹ It boils down to determining how to use the tools of national power to shape the future in a direction advantageous to the state. Strategic assessment is central to setting this direction. However, when the civil-military relationship skews in a negative manner, the process of making strategic assessments will fail, as in the case of Russia.

A state should establish political objectives that are achievable so these can be translated into a workable strategy. The ends of strategy (what the state wants accomplished) must be within the power of the state to secure them with the means available and ways that are politically acceptable. Thus, the state must consider its resource capacity to sustain the effort. Further, the state must review the concepts to ensure they are acceptable based on the geopolitical environment. When ends are too broad, based on the resources available, the state must either narrow the ends or increase the resources, if it can do so. If the geopolitical environment limits the concepts (ways) of securing the ends, the state must again, refine the ends, or bring the

concepts within the bounds of the environment.²⁰ This all sounds simple enough since planners and decision-makers can surely see the gaps in strategy during strategic deliberations and the actors can then make the necessary adjustments to align ends (what), ways (how), and means (resources). Yet it is not easy when the conversation is characterized by acrimony, tensions, and obstinance. Conversely, it is also difficult when there is lockstep agreement among the military advisers and political leaders as a result of groupthink. Such unhealthy civil-military relationships often produce flawed policy and strategy.²¹ Russia’s strategic deliberations about war with Ukraine to secure its political objectives is a case in point.

...Putin and his advisers only focused on execution rather than considering possibilities and risk. This is an unhealthy example of civil-military relations...

As noted earlier, Putin and his advisers did not engage in a vigorous debate about the kind of war the Ukrainian venture might become. Such a debate must include whether Russia should go to war or not, and whether Russia could win with the ways and means available. Success seemed pre-ordained and strategic deliberations appear to have only engaged in discussions of timing, shaping the narrative, and assembling the force and resources. Thus, Putin and his advisers only focused on execution rather than considering possibilities and risk. This is an unhealthy example of civil-military relations and it directly contributed to the strategic difficulties Russia finds itself mired in as 2023 begins. Healthy civil-military relations have radically different characteristics from that which we find in Russia today. Eliot Cohen observed that successful wars were characterized by tumultuous civil-military relations. In his excellent book

Supreme Command, Cohen uses four historical case studies to demonstrate that sound policy and effective strategy derive from bruising debate and “even conflictual collaborative relationship[s].”²² Political and military leaders should neither be in lockstep nor have an adversarial relationship when deliberating on war policy and strategy. Rather, the actors must engage in an open dialogue considering a range of options in conflict and whether a state should even become involved in a war. Dynamics such as groupthink, obstinance, or stove piping of responsibilities in strategic deliberations results in ill-considered policy, ineffective strategy, and ultimately, losing a war.²³ This is why it is so critical for political leaders to not only allow, but invite many perspectives and opinions during deliberations. Russia, and more specifically, Vladimir Putin, has not done this, much to the detriment of Russia and now finds itself bogged down in an intractable war.

... when civil and military leaders have difficulties in their relations, it has a detrimental effect on the ability to conduct sound strategic assessment....

The civil-military relations of Russia are certainly unhealthy and have had a direct impact on the poor performance of its forces in Ukraine. Why is it important to understand this correlation between civil-military relations and policy and strategy outcomes? Though the Russian and American political systems are different, there are implications for U.S. leaders to consider. War is a social phenomenon in which humans interact in a variety of ways. Civil-military relations are central to this phenomenon since, as we have seen, they have a direct impact on the development of policy and strategy. In the past decade a host of scholars such as Don Snider, Richard Kohn, Peter Feaver, and most recently,

Mara Karlin, have discussed the problem or “gap” existing in American civil-military relations.²⁴ This gap stems from a lack of trust among the actors due to cultural differences exacerbating tensions, differing formative experiences of political and military leaders, and a lack of emotional intelligence in interactions between the leaders, to name just three causal factors. All of this has led to deep-seated tensions and a situation in which U.S. political leaders and their military advisers talk past each other in civil-military relations. As discussed, when civil and military leaders have difficulties in their relations, it has a detrimental effect on the ability to conduct sound strategic assessment. In turn, poor strategic assessment can lead to articulation of unobtainable policy and ineffective strategy that fails to secure political objectives. This is why American political decision-makers and their senior military advisers should pay attention to how Russian civil-military relations affect that state’s policy and strategy.

Arguably, wars are won and lost by the civil and military leaders during strategic deliberations as they consider critical questions within the halls of government. With the return of Great Power competition and the threat of high intensity conventional conflict with a peer competitor, it is incumbent upon U.S. political and military leaders to consider the criticality of healthy civil-military relations. Healthy civil-military relations are the foundation for sound strategic assessment. Russia’s dysfunctional civil-military relations led to a poor strategic assessment. This resulted in unrealistic policy and a misalignment of ends, ways, and means of strategy. Though Russia seemingly has tremendous advantages over Ukraine, the inability to assess the strategic environment in an objective manner ensured that Putin and his advisers would make egregious miscalculations in their strategic assessments. While civil-military relations in the United States are not the same as that of Russia, Americans should not

discount the importance of healthy civil-military relations. These directly affect strategic assessment and the formulation of achievable policy and effective strategy to secure political objectives. Thus, U.S. leaders must make a concerted effort to develop and sustain a healthy civil-military relationship. Failure to do so could lead the U.S. down a dangerous path in a complex, challenging international security environment. **IAJ**

Notes

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- 13 Dara Massicot, “What Russia Got Wrong: Can Moscow Learn From its Failures in Ukraine?”, *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2023).
- 14 Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Chapter 2 of this book lays out Brooks’ theory in detail covering all the relevant factors and variables that affect a state’s ability to conduct sound strategic assessment. Of note, her hypothesis #1 (p.45) states that “When political leaders are dominant and preference divergence is low . . . strategic assessment is good.” This is predicated on a free flow of factual information among the participants in strategic deliberations. In the case of Russia level of groupthink is an anomaly that has had negative effects since the political leader, Putin, only receives the information he wants to hear resulting in no preference divergence at all. This negates the ability to carry out a sound strategic assessment.
- 15 See Gershkovich, Grove, Hinshaw, and Parkinson, “Putin Leans on Hard-line Advisers,” A1 and A10. Also see Shamiev, “Civil-Military Relations and Russia’s Post-Soviet Military Culture,” and Lennon, “Civil-Military Relations in Russia,” for a full discussion of civil-military relations discourse within Putin’s inner circle.
- 16 Gershkovich, Grove, Hinshaw, and Parkinson, “Putin Leans on Hard-line Advisers,” A10.
- 17 *Ibid.* It should be noted from this quote that Vladimirovich is a patronymic taken from Putin’s father’s name and is not Vladimir Putin’s middle name.
- 18 Several articles report about the lack of information or misleading information reaching President Putin. These include articles from *Newsweek*, the *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Business Insider*. See Steve Holland and Andrea Shalal, “Putin Misled by ‘yes men’ in Military Afraid to Tell Him the Truth,” *Reuters* (March 30, 2022) and Dara Massicot, “What Russia Got Wrong: Can Moscow Learn From its Failures in Ukraine?”, *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2023) for a representative example.
- 19 Harry R. Yarger, *Strategic Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006) 5.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 52-53 and 55-56.
- 21 Forsyth, “The Perfect Storm,” 22-29.
- 22 Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*, (New York: Free Press, 2002) 12.
- 23 Forsyth, “The Perfect Storm,” 24-29.
- 24 See Mara E. Karlin, *The Inheritance: America’s Military After Two Decades of War*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2022) for an incisive diagnosis of the issues with U.S. civil-military relations.

Moral Friction: Harm and Incongruence in Hierarchical Structures

by Ken Schall

"Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it." Y'know, uh, "We got body count!" "We have body count!" So it starts working on your head. So you know in your heart it's wrong, but at the time, here's your superiors telling you that it was okay. So, I mean, that's okay then, right? This is part of war. Y'know? Gung-HO! Y'know? "AirBORNE! AirBORNE! Let's go!"¹

Many common discussions surrounding ethics and morality are based on establishing proper moral foundations. Typically, this takes the form of authors arguing that one tradition (be it deontology, consequentialism, virtue ethics, care ethics, etc.) is more appropriate in general or for understanding some specific issue. Discussions that approach morality as a system of thought may miss the mechanistic aspects of social relations that may affect moral expression. This paper is an attempt to examine such mechanisms.

The world we live in is one that is characterized by numerous hierarchies wherein authority is exercised from a top-down model. Leaders and followers, managers and subordinates, officers and common soldiers, whatever the domain may be, the size and complexity of modern organizations requires the interplay of many people in different roles to achieve a common objective. While all people may be predisposed implicitly to one particular moral perspective² or consciously choose to follow a particular school of thought, it is important to recognize that all perspectives are not held universally. Different people will consider the ethical implications of an action differently, they will find different factors for reaching these conclusions than others. These divergences will occur frequently in systems of hierarchy based on the simple fact that more people means more potential points of moral divergence.

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It is the point of moral divergence that inspires the topic for this paper. Moral friction is proposed to describe the phenomenon of harm arising from competing moral perspectives in a hierarchy. Specifically, this can be seen in a person with authority passing an order to a subordinate when the order is rationalized using a moral position that is not shared between the two. For example, the person in a leadership position justifies the required action on the basis that it is for the greater good of the involved parties (a basically consequentialist view), yet the action in some way violates a deeply held principle of the subordinate (a basically deontological view). The person who carries out the order in this scenario does not rationalize the moral dimensions of the action with the same logic that is expressed to them. This creates a point of friction in the hierarchy between the decision-makers and those who carry out the decisions. This conflict cannot be easily solved thanks to their need to fulfil their role as a member of an organization and as a moral agent. These are perceived as two non-negotiable moral requirements. This is a moral dilemma and will be explored in more detail later in this article.

The military is an appropriate domain to examine moral friction because the consequences of it are the most clear and dire...

The portrayal of moral friction thus far may make it seem mundane or unalarming. Make no mistake, for this phenomenon is the starting point for extreme personal harm. Specifically, friction has the potential to create moral injury in intense situations. Moral injury is defined by Dr. Jonathan Shay as a betrayal of what is right by someone with legitimate authority in times of great importance.³ To illustrate the importance of this topic, most of the discussion will be focused on military contexts. The military is an appropriate domain to examine moral friction

because the consequences of it are the most clear and dire: increased suicide rates following moral injury.⁴

First, a baseline by which most people operate when it comes to moral perspectives will be established. This will include an examination of how hierarchical positioning can alter an individual's perspective and contribute to organizational friction. Second, examples of moral injury in military contexts will be given to illustrate the role incongruent moral justifications play in those moments. Finally, an account of competing moral responsibility and identity will be offered to learn how, if at all, mechanisms contributing to leader-follower incongruence may be addressed.

The goal of examining moral friction as a phenomenon is to understand how moral injury may occur through the system of relations people inhabit. By being able to identify how injury occurs, people that have authority may be able to alter their approach with subordinates to ensure the best possible outcomes for all involved. This is of interest to any group working on issues at a tactical or organizational level for it may open the door to more popular and well-functioning operations. The optics of caring for the well-being of soldiers, officers, or agents of any kind is beneficial.

The Implicit Consequentialism of Leadership⁵

Our characters are rich and complicated, and are best understood as neither virtuous nor vicious. Rather, a deep tension has shown up once again. When it comes to hurting people, we have a frightening capacity to sometimes hurt, injure, and even kill innocent people. Side by side with this, we also have an impressive capacity to sometimes be gentle, calm, and controlled.⁶

It is not controversial to state that many people outside the discourse of academic

philosophy and ethics do not spend significant amounts of time dwelling on what their specific moral perspectives are. By no means are most people amoral. Plenty of individuals have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, and humans have a remarkable propensity to avoid cruelty.⁷ The Milgram experiments have shown repeatedly, however, that a person can be led to commit acts of violence and cruelty before the presence of an authority figure with some power to reward or punish a moral agent's actions.⁸ While it would be dubious to say this has wide ranging implications about human nature, it does leave us with a baseline propensity with which to work.

Soldiers, ignoring instances of crimes and atrocities, do not kill because they feel like it. They kill because they are trained to, required to, and ordered to. They ideally follow the rules of engagement set for them when it comes time to fight. All these things require the oversight and approval of some sort of authority. This is the role of the chain of command—to provide oversight, planning, and direction so that political objectives can be achieved in conflicts.

A citizen seeking to become a soldier can hold any number of moral perspectives. They may find it necessary to enlist and fight out of duty, for the betterment of the country, to cultivate a stronger identity, to live a good life, or any number of reasons. It is important to recognize something peculiar that occurs as people rise through the ranks of leadership. More and more they will exhibit consequentialist patterns of thought, regardless of what they may have been most close to before. There is a likely chance that the individual would have a distaste for consequentialism, or at least the label. Ordinary people tend to find the label unideal or less moral than other positions.⁹ What causes this shift?

Several factors are at play that contribute toward consequentialist thinking. First, large hierarchical organizations are more collectivist

in outlook than they are individualistic. Officers and lower-rank soldiers alike are trained and conditioned to be less their own individual self so that they can become greater through group membership. One of the effects of basic training is the creation of an identity tied to the military through shared group experience. Collective group culture shapes how a person understands and approaches the world. This group-oriented participation has a general trend of focusing less on justice or justness of an action.¹⁰ Secondly, the behavior of those in lower leadership positions are greatly influenced by higher position authority figures. Being in a position of control rationally requires a greater degree of respect for the chain of command in and of itself. Thus, the word of superiors would carry more weight.¹¹

One of the effects of basic training is the creation of an identity tied to the military through shared group experience.

The cumulative effect of this on a moral agent's moral outlook is that they can have a greater degree of considerations and individuals that they are responsible for as they get higher in rank. They shift thinking away from individual persons to units and groups. What is right by an individual shifts to what is right by the group, what is right by the mission. Moral pluralism will still be a factor, it is just that the propensity toward consequentialist thinking is emphasized by the pressures of leadership positions. The first order objective of command is to get a job done. Alon writes,

The key issues a commander and his staff face when planning operations are decisions regarding definition of the operation and definition of the method to execute it. To make these decisions, the command must understand the intention and goals of the upper echelon regarding the specific

operation. While there are concomitant secondary processes, the core of the planning and its major outcomes lies in defining the task and the way to accomplish it.¹²

This emphasizes the consequentialist propensity in leadership. It accounts for the influence of higher authorities when it comes to pursuing a route of action. None of this is to say that they will do things that are immoral, but that the sort of moral considerations become more narrow.

Leadership naturally will gravitate toward consequentialist thinking, yet consequentialism is largely unpopular with average persons.

This is where moral friction will begin to occur in the hierarchy. Leadership naturally will gravitate toward consequentialist thinking, yet consequentialism is largely unpopular with average persons.¹³ It is assumed that this is just as applicable for military hierarchy as it is for the general population, for lower-rank soldiers have not been subjected to the same degree of socialization as officers. They follow the orders as their position requires them to, but they may not buy into the reasoning as easily because they could still maintain strong deontological or virtue based perspectives. Consequentialism sometime require intentional harms for the greater good¹⁴ in a way that would be wholly impermissible for a deontologist.

This is where the danger of moral friction arises. Subordinates are expected to follow the moral reasoning of their leader, even though it may be a reasoning they find abhorrent. A damaging moral dilemma between what is right to the person and what is right to the Soldier is now created. In the next section, moral injury and dilemmas will be explored in relation to

moral friction.

Moral Friction and Moral Injury: Value Clashes During Conflict

The moral power of an army is so great that it can motivate men to get up out of a trench and step into enemy machine-gun fire. When a leader destroys the legitimacy of the army's moral order by betraying "what's right," he inflicts manifold injuries on his men.¹⁵

A person is raised to know right from wrong. They treat everyone morally to the best of their ability, living by the golden rule: treat people the way you want to be treated. One day, they enlist in the military to try and serve their country with honor and distinction. Day in and day out, they knowingly live in a situation where they risk death or grievous bodily harm as a possibility. They feel proud to be a warrior, they feel proud to serve their country. One day, an order comes through that tells the soldier that there is a target in a house in a village. As per the order, they help send artillery on the target. In the process of killing the target, they also kill their spouse and small child. For doing what needed to be done when told so, they receive minor praise from their commanding officer.

It is here where moral injury occurs—the betrayal of what is right through unnecessary civilian casualties. This betrayal came from those with legitimate authority, as it was an order from their commanding officer. All in a high stakes situation: a time of conflict where tension is constantly high. All the criteria for moral injury using Shay's definition are met. It should be noted going forward that the effects of moral injury are similar to PTSD, albeit not one-to-one. While both are experienced in the course of war, we know that PTSD does not necessarily need to come from war fighting. It is simply where it was first observed and was most prevalent at the time.¹⁶ Perhaps the same

thing will happen with moral injury, but for now it remains to be seen. A significant portion of the literature that exists to explore moral injury is related to the military and war. This does not itself preclude that moral injury may occur in other areas and circumstances. More research will need to be done to say with certainty.

The manifestations of moral injury are numerous. It can manifest as an increase in aggression, a disregard of civilians and protected people, disgust,¹⁷ cynicism, a turn toward criminality, disloyalty, and self-destructive behavior, among others.¹⁸ Where PTSD is psychological trauma and pathology, moral injury is more rooted in self-concept and existential concepts of right and wrong. If PTSD represents a destruction of mental stability, moral injury is a destruction of who a person is in their own eyes and a shattering of the world as they understand it to work. Within the self are conceptions of right and wrong, one's place in the world, deeply held personal beliefs and behaviors. The prevalence of moral injury in a conflict can be shown at both the micro and macro levels. By micro, it refers to the behaviors and characteristics of an individual soldier at a given time. Macro refers to larger trends seen in the armed forces. We have seen some examples of how it appears in individuals and the beginning of this section served as a hypothetical scenario, so let us now expand it to larger organizations.

Gillcrist and Lloyd performed one such macro examination in "Moral Injury, Mission-Drift, and Limited War."¹⁹ In it, they look at the varying justifications for war and the consequence of the harm caused by the shifting justifications for fighting:

Mission-drift is problematic in all forms, as it leads to a questioning of purpose and, thus, of the importance of the task; it is morally problematic when it leads to questioning the justification of a morally grave task, because questionable justification for morally grave

actions leads to moral injury. Limited wars have a propensity to incur mission-drift. Thus, limited wars have a propensity to cause massive amounts of moral injury. This being the case, one cost of limited wars is large veteran suicide rates.²⁰

[Moral injury] can manifest as an increase in aggression, a disregard of civilians and protected people, disgust, cynicism, a turn toward criminality, disloyalty, and self-destructive behavior...

Mission-drift, in this context, is the changing of mission parameters over the course of a conflict. A classic example of this is the Vietnam War. In the beginning, it was a police action to train the South Vietnamese Army against the North. However, as time passed, the United States became more and more involved in open fighting. It became a war in everything but name. Moral injury occurs because the stated purpose and goal became supplemented by more direct fighting. There was confusion of why it was just, if it was at all. People viewed it as being made killers for no good purpose; and, this drift in purpose being a strong mechanism for causing moral injury. In this way, it is no coincidence that Vietnam was where the first major studies on PTSD and moral injury came from.²¹

Not only were suicide rates and ideation higher during Vietnam, other symptoms presented themselves, such as large-scale cynicism and rage. This is a contributing factor to events such as the My Lai massacre. Moral injury is not just felt individually, but also systematically, as the attitude and outlook of the organization becomes infected. This is a direct result of widespread moral friction. The military leadership was doing what was seen as necessary to fulfill the political objectives of the country.

They perceived that the betterment of all was through an escalation of the conflict. It is poor rationalization, but rationalization nonetheless.

There is a correlation between ethical leadership and moral behavior in subordinates.²² When good is done by those in positions of authority, those below will take after these moral traits and actions. However, the correlation rationally must have an inverse. The subordinates, in this case lower-rank soldiers, perceive the military as acting immorally. As a result, immoral actions flourish. Damaged individuals become so great in number that the structure of the military and their mission becomes damaged.

There is a correlation between ethical leadership and moral behavior in subordinates.

Moral friction is experienced on a level-to-level basis. Typically, this is through a leader interacting with a subordinate. It happens every time someone is given an order they do not agree with. Damage that results from it accumulates until it becomes a much larger issue. Still, the moral friction itself will only occur as an event on a smaller individual basis. When the commander says to drop a bomb, to take the shot, to sink the vessel—the authority of the leader and the requirements of the mission will run counter to the subordinate’s moral beliefs.

It is important to also recognize that these situations affect leadership as well. It is, in effect, a competition between moral dilemmas that is decided by institutional authority. That is a heavy responsibility to bear that can lead a person to question what the proper course of action is. The act of being in leadership can color how a person understands the issues at hand, which will be explored in the next section.

Becoming What You Are: Identity and Moral Responsibility

*I made the typical mistake of believing I could do more . . . if I stayed in than if I got out. I am now going to my grave with that lapse of moral courage on my back.*²³

The quote above is from General Harold Keith Johnson, Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army during Vietnam. He expresses regret for not resigning when he felt not enough was being done by the political branches of government to provide manpower to fight in the Vietnam War. He had the chance to resign and make the issue known to the country, but ultimately did not.

We can learn two key details from this situation—that roles in organizations affect identity and that those in authority positions face moral dilemmas like their subordinates.

General Johnson likely truly believed in doing the right thing for his people and for his country. Still, the decision to not protest the war effort is a source of regret for him. What this shows us is that a position of authority comes with a change in self-perception. The role you take becomes a part of your identity. “Soldiers don’t do that” is a maxim that is repeated to bind a person’s moral behavior to their status as an extension of the armed forces. This same principle applies to those in authority positions. They have served for so long and so well to obtain their rank. Participation in this hierarchy is an integral part of their self-identity. This is tied with the consequentialist leaning that this particular standpoint leads to. General Johnson thinking he could do more from within and then choosing to stay is a consequentialist line of thought. The logic of the position leads to its own perpetuation. It seems rational to conclude that more good can be done in the position than by an alternative like public resignation, regardless of if there is evidence to the contrary. It is rationalized that it is better to maintain the

leader identity than it is to reject it.

Still, this represents a moral dilemma in its own right. A moral dilemma is defined by Lisa Tessman as the clash between several non-negotiable moral requirements, which manifests as a choice wherein there is no easy, painless answer.²⁴ When applied to authority positions, it almost begins to resemble Walzer's dirty hands concept. He explains it like this:

When rules are overridden, we do not talk or act as if they had been set aside, canceled, or annulled. They still stand and have this much effect at least: that we know we have done something wrong even if what we have done was also the best thing to do on the whole in the circumstances. Or at least we feel that way, and this feeling is itself a crucial feature of our moral life.²⁵

This is a return of the issue identified earlier in this essay, where there is a clash between what is right by the person and what is right by the organization. General Johnson experiences competing responsibilities. The influence of identity and institutional conditioning win out, yet he still feels regret for having to make that decision in the first place.

Moral injury arises from these sorts of dilemmas in subordinates, but this shows us the fact that some degree of injury may be experienced by officers and leaders as well. They also have authorities higher than themselves, just like rank and file soldiers do. It may not be nearly as traumatic or as common as the lower rank soldiers, but it is still important to recognize this fact. Moral friction arises from imposed moral dilemmas. Imposed in the sense that it revolves around acts that would ordinarily never be considered but now are required due to the responsibilities of a person's position. This does not require a person to be at the end of a command chain, just that they have to enforce or follow moral judgements that are not their own. While harm may be greater for people at the end

of the chain, it does not preclude friction from occurring at higher levels.

A moral dilemma is...the clash between several non-negotiable moral requirements, which manifests as a choice wherein there is no easy, painless answer.

Moral friction can now be understood as a situation that occurs when a hierarchical organization is making a moral act and as an epistemic issue. The epistemic dimension comes from the relation between how people intuitively perceive what is a moral course of action and how their position conditions them toward specific ethical perspectives. This is quite possibly the trickiest aspect of this phenomenon. It is not enough for a person to act ethically. It is assumed that all people will attempt to in a good faith basis. The issue then comes to being ethical in the right way. The defining issue in moral friction is the basis of moral decision making. Is a person acting morally right as an individual or as a part of the hierarchy? The identity of the person is of the utmost importance. A subordinate is more likely to be predisposed toward their individual moral outlook, whereas the officer is more ingrained into the hierarchy and thus will look at the issue through a more collectivist perspective. Unless they are willing to accept some sort of sanction, the subordinate will always experience some base amount of harm when moral friction occurs.

What Can Be Done?

Needless to say, there are problems. As with most such projects, the problems start with poor (generally no) philosophical foundation.²⁶

Moral injury is a harm incurred, one that

can manifest as a destruction of self or suicidal ideation. Moral friction is a state of tension that is created by incongruent judgements in leader-subordinate relationships which serves as a prerequisite for moral injury. With the core issue identified, thought must be given to address it. Like all issues, one can seek to prevent it, to lessen its impact, or to fix the damage it causes.

A leader that acts less like an authority figure and more like a role model or moral exemplar is shown to have a positive effect on the moral identity of subordinates.

Due to the subjective nature of moral friction and injury, it is difficult if not impossible to find a perfect solution to prevent either from occurring. Jonathan Shay claims that moral leadership can prevent moral injury.²⁷ This makes sense rationally, though one must be careful not to view the issue at hand reductively. Morality in active implementation is fluid and reflexive. It cannot be reduced to a set codes or laws *carte blanche*. They may formally prevent liability or criminality as a formal status incurred, but they fail to encompass what is permissible or can be stomached by a moral agent. As such, moral leadership has to be seen as not a simple checklist of characteristics, but as an active and engaged ideal that those with authority over others pursue. It may not prevent moral injury wholesale, yet the act of consistent reflection by agents can mitigate it. Reducing moral issues to what is and is not acceptable to the hierarchical structure alone is not good enough. Leaders and planners must be reflexive to the issues at hand and to their subordinates. How something is done is critical to approaching what must be done.

Leadership style is an important component of the issue. An effective leader can lessen the

moral incongruence perceived by the agents that carry out an order or follow a given set of procedures. A leader that acts less like an authority figure and more like a role model or moral exemplar is shown to have a positive effect on the moral identity of subordinates.²⁸ If that extra step is taken to act as a virtuous leader, the apprehensions felt by subordinates may be softened. This, in turn, may lessen moral friction from occurring, either in prevalence or severity. Further, there is the necessary expectation that senior leadership take friction and the injury that stems from it seriously. James Dubik proposes the principle of war legitimacy, where the public weighs in on if the war is completable, legitimate, and worth the costs incurred.²⁹ If the conflict goes too far, it needs to be terminated. Leadership may be informed by this principle to act reflexively and to have a dialogue with subordinates to ensure that the rational they are given is productive for doing what needs to be done. Why people are told to do what they do may not make that great of a difference in the grand scheme of an operation, but it can make all the difference to those that carry out that operation and to those observing it from the outside.

Experiencing moral injury is not a forgone conclusion, nor is it something that is untreatable. Recent work suggests that moral injury can be treated through a variety of factors and found through new and novel screening techniques. Further, reducing stigma, creating safe environments to express personal experiences, and a variety of therapies are all shown to provide relief.³⁰ That which is broken may also be repaired with due care and a measured approach. Still, it is optimal to approach the issue in a way where there is nothing to fix in the first place. For this reason, it is in the best interest for any leader, planner, or decision-making structure to understand moral friction as a point of tension in an operation. By recognizing this point of friction, not only can the well-being of

the agents carrying out an act be protected from potential harm, it also ensures the effectiveness and cohesion of the operation. Minimizing moral friction then serves to legitimize what is done in the of agents and in the eyes of those that are informed by the words, deeds, and state of those agents. **IAJ**

Notes

- 1 Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (Scribner, 1994), 4.
- 2 G. James Lemoine, Chad A. Hartnell, and Hannes Leroy, "Taking Stock of Moral Approaches to Leadership: An Integrative Review of Ethical, Authentic, and Servant Leadership," *Academy of Management Annals* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 148–87, <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0121>, 176.
- 3 Jonathan Shay, "Casualties," *Daedalus* 140, no. 3 (2011): 179-88.
- 4 This relationship is identified by Gillcrist and Lloyd, whose findings will be examined in greater detail later in the article.
- 5 Several of the studies and research articles that will be cited in this section come from the study of business. However, their focus on leadership and hierarchical organization makes them well applicable to the topic at hand.
- 6 Christian B. Miller, *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 99.
- 7 Miller, 97.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 9 For a study showing a generalized distaste for consequentialists, see Jim A.C. Everett et al., "The Costs of Being Consequentialist: Social Inference from Instrumental Harm and Impartial Beneficence," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 79(November 2018): 200–216, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.07.004>.
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- 11 Linda Klebe Trevino, "Ethical Decision Making in Organizations: A Person-Situation Interactionist Model," *The Academy of Management Review* 11, no. 3 (1986): 601–617, <https://doi.org/10.2307/258313>.
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- 16 Wilbur J. Scott, "PTSD in DSM-III: A Case in the Politics of Diagnosis and Disease," *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (1990): 294-310, <https://doi.org/10.2307/800744>.

- 17 Disgust is an interesting symptom due to the perceived moral value it seems to hold. To feel disgust is to feel morally repulsed is a view that some share. However, that is not inherently the case. While it may have some moral sentiment, it is not the full end of the feeling. See Ditte Marie Munch-Jurisc, "Perpetrator Disgust: A Morally Destructive Emotion," in *Emotions and Mass Atrocity: Philosophical and Theoretical Explorations*, ed. Johannes Lang and Thomas Brudholm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 142-161., <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316563281.008>
- 18 Jonathan Shay, "Moral Leadership Prevents Moral Injury," in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, ed. Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 301–306.
- 19 James Gillcrist and Nick Lloyd, "Moral Injury, Mission-Drift and Limited War," in *Force Short of War in Modern Conflict*, ed. Jai Galliot, Jus Ad Vim (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 238–261, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvggx3k3.16>.
- 20 James Gillcrist and Nick Lloyd, 244.
- 21 Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam* was created in response to work he had done with Vietnam veterans. It was in this work where moral injury was first coined. In this sense, there would be no study of moral injury if it wasn't for the Vietnam War as a catalyst.
- 22 Yajun Zhang, Fangfang Zhou, and Jianghua Mao, "Ethical Leadership and Follower Moral Actions: Investigating an Emotional Linkage," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018), 9, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01881>
- 23 James M. Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 98-99.
- 24 Lisa Tessman, *Moral Failure: On the Impossible Demands of Morality* (Oxford University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199396146.001.0001>, 44.
- 25 Walzer, 171.
- 26 Richard Maltz, "The Epistemology of Strategy," 2009, 16.
- 27 Shay, 301–306.
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- 29 Dubik, 155
- 30 Jonathan Jin et al., "Moral Injury and Recovery in Uniformed Professionals: Lessons From Conversations Among International Students and Experts," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 13 (June 14, 2022): 7-8, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.880442>.

The Just War Tradition in a Modern LSCO Environment: A Maneuverist Perspective of the Russia-Ukraine War

by Stephen Echols and Austin Schwartz

To beg the question of whether or not the Just War tradition, along with its many principles and criteria, continues to be a viable military ethical construct is an exercise in the study of global military history itself. Philosophers, theologians, and military strategists, including Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, Hugo Grotius, Paul Ramsey, and Michael Walzer among many others, have debated the merits of the Just War tradition's *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* principles (as well as the addition of *jus post bellum*) for centuries. Acknowledging the long-standing tradition of Just War-oriented debate and the scale and scope of concepts engaged by Just War thinkers, for the purposes of this paper we are dramatically narrowing our scope.

Our intent is to continue the Just War conversation from a tactical-level maneuverist perspective, highlighting the relationship between the law of armed conflict (LOAC) principles¹ and *jus in bello* Just War principles. Using the tactical maneuverist perspective and the LOAC/*jus in bello* relationship, we will engage the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine War as a means to determine the continued significance of LOAC and Just War principles in a modern large scale combat operations (LSCO) environment. Addressing a modern LSCO environment represents a shift in focus from the last 20+ years of U.S. military conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq. Such a shift provides all of us the opportunity and encouragement to think more deeply of how we might ethically plan for the future fight.

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A Common Language

On a cold, rainy training day at Fort Lewis, Washington, I listened to soldiers talk who had just completed a prisoner of war exercise. One held that the enemy troops should be marched through an area saturated with persistent nerve gas. Another stated that the claymore mine presented the most cost-effective and energy-efficient method of disposing of POWs. His buddy claimed that they were both being wasteful and that POWs could best be used for minefield clearing and reconnaissance for nuclear- and chemical-contaminated areas.²

Stories abound of the field artillery observer sharing the fact that white phosphorous cannot be used against personnel, but materiel in vicinity of said personnel are “fair game,” or that during a raid or ambush a unit on patrol could not reasonably be expected to take POWs (*said euphemistically*).³ Even on a much larger scale, the likes of Winston Churchill argued, “it would be a mistake to cast aside our original thought... that the severe, ruthless bombing of Germany on an ever-increasing scale will not only cripple her war effort...but will create conditions intolerable to the mass of the German population.”⁴ From the suggested mistreatment of POWs to the advocated inducement of population-wide terror bombing by a Prime Minister, the need for a common ethical and moral language, and subsequent legal language, has persisted. While Grossman frames the beginning of his chapter, quoted above, as “The Dark Power of Atrocity,” there is validity in attempting to shape the rules of war to the extent of how war is conducted justly, even if it is a means to mitigate atrocity and war crimes.

As a member of the world community, the U.S. is rightly an advocate of the just conduct of war, as captured in the *jus in bello* principles of the Just War tradition as well as

the principles of the LOAC. Without delving into the vast history of the Just War tradition, it is important to note that a shift in focus on the *jus in bello* conduct of war began with the Spanish Dominican philosopher Francisco de Vitoria (c.1492-1546).⁵ Vitoria’s significance to the Just War conversation cannot be overstated, as he was one of the first philosophers to ask questions of the legitimacy of the killing of innocents in war. Acknowledging the inherent messiness of war, Vitoria noted that it is never lawful to intentionally kill innocents, but that the incidental killing of the innocent may be permitted in certain circumstances.⁶ Vitoria’s question of the killing of innocents has directly informed the two primary *jus in bello* principles of discrimination and proportionality as well as the LOAC principles of military necessity, humanity, proportionality, distinction, and honor. Vitoria further touches on a secondary *jus in bello* principle sometimes referred to as “no means *mala in se*,” or evil means of war should be avoided as well as the evil effects of war should not outweigh the possible benefits.⁷

Drawing on the philosophical and theological development of *jus in bello* within the Just War tradition, broadly understood, discrimination refers to the necessity of a warfighter to differentiate between combatants and non-combatants or civilians and proportionality refers to the means of warfighting is proportionate to the ends.⁸ Anthony Hartle further notes that discrimination is the concept of combatants not specifically targeting noncombatants and proportionality refers to “the amount of force applied must be proportional to the specific objective sought.”⁹ The slight differences in how discrimination and proportionality are defined are informative, as they point to the ways in which Just War thinkers have addressed the practical application of these principles. At the tactical level, it is the moral responsibility of every military leader to conduct themselves and to lead their warfighters by these two core

jus in bello principles in order to “mitigate the nastiness of war” as well as to limit risk to the innocent.¹⁰

Where *jus in bello* philosophical concepts “grow some teeth” and develop real world warfighting implications is through the *DOD Law of War Manual* and more specifically for Soldiers and Marines through FM 6-27/MCTP 11-10C – *The Commander’s Handbook on the Law of Land Warfare*. In setting forth the general background and principles of LOAC, FM 6-27 notes, “*Jus in bello* is that part of international law relating to the conduct of hostilities and the protection of war victims, from combatants who are wounded and out of combat, to prisoners of war and civilians.”¹¹ In linking *jus in bello* principles to international law,¹² and not just philosophical principles and theory, Army and Marine Corps doctrine recognizes LOAC principles as legal ethical constructs and guides for the conduct of hostilities between belligerents (that is, not just State vs. State hostilities). Doctrinal writers helpfully identify the fundamental rationale of LOAC as:

- Protecting combatants, noncombatants, and civilians from unnecessary suffering;
- Providing certain fundamental protections for persons who fall into the hands of the enemy, particularly prisoners of war, military wounded and sick, and civilians;
- Facilitating the restoration of peace;
- Assisting the commander in ensuring the disciplined, ethical, and effective use of military force;
- Preserving the professionalism and humanity of combatants; and
- Preventing the degeneration of warfare into savagery or brutality.¹³

These essential aims or purposes provide the direction and motivation for the interdependent

principles of LOAC, which are military necessity, humanity, honor, distinction, and proportionality. The LOAC principles are captured in a highly concise and usable table (Table 1-1) in FM 6-27 (page 38), which provides a helpful summary of each principle, reference paragraphs within the FM, as well as any alternative names or terms linked to the principles.¹⁴

Any number of highly problematic decisions have been made on the battlefield justifying certain actions as militarily necessary.

LOAC doctrine begins with the principle of military necessity, which is, subjectively speaking, the most abused of all LOAC principles. Any number of highly problematic decisions have been made on the battlefield justifying certain actions as militarily necessary. In looking to the English philosopher Henry Sidgwick, Michael Walzer notes the difficulty of condemning soldiers for trying to win the battle or war they are involved in if they are convinced their actions are necessary for the positive outcome of said battle or war. Thus, “we must grant that soldiers are entitled to try and win the wars they are entitled to fight,” doing whatever they deem necessary to winning.¹⁵ This thought process is tempered by the doctrinal definition’s caveat that what is deemed necessary must not be prohibited by the law of armed conflict. What this means is that “military necessity dictates discrimination, proportionality and the economy of force: that is, don’t attack targets that are not absolutely central to the military objective... and certainly do not gratuitously lay waste to the countryside or kill those not directly implicated in the fighting.”¹⁶ What ethicist George Lucas is driving at in his understanding of military necessity is intended to aid his readers in seeing the dynamic link between all of the principles

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Alternate Names</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Summary</i>
Military Necessity		1-23 to 1-27	Justifies the use of all measures required to defeat the enemy as quickly and efficiently as possible that are prohibited by the law of armed conflict.
Humanity	Humanitarian Principle; Unnecessary Suffering; Superfluous Injury	1-28 to 1-30	Basis of protection for civilians; forbids inflicting suffering, injury, damage, or destruction unnecessary to accomplish a legitimate military purpose.
Honor	Chivalry	1-31 to 1-33	Demands a certain amount of fairness and a certain mutual respect between opposing forces.
Distinction	Discrimination	1-34 to 1-43	Distinguishing between combatants and military objectives on the one hand and civilians and civilian objects on the other in offense and defense.
Proportionality		1-44 to 1-48	Requires commanders to refrain from attacks in which the expected loss or injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects incidental to such attacks would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage expected to be gained. It also underlies the requirement to take feasible precautions to reduce the risk of harm to civilians, other protected persons and civilian objects.

Table 1. Application of basic LOAC principles

Source: FM 6-27, The Commander’s Handbook on the Law of Land Warfare, August 2019, page 1-6.

of LOAC. In striving for ethical, effective, and efficient means toward a militarily necessary goal during hostilities, warfighters are expected to seek those means avoiding indiscriminate and disproportionate methods; methods that could lead to the unwarranted death and destruction of civilians and civilian infrastructure and culturally significant sites. Additionally, Lucas’s description of military necessity links the principles of humanity and honor, with the understanding that *humanity* leads forces to avoid unnecessary suffering and superfluous injury. The mutual respect and fairness of the principle of *honor* “requires adherence to LOAC regardless of the enemy’s level of compliance” as well as “forbids resorting to means, expedients, or conduct that would constitute a breach of trust”¹⁷ (or in Lucas’s words, “laying waste to the countryside”). To the degree of relative subjectivity in the application of the principles

of LOAC that exists, honor and humanity operate as the compelling principles that lead to “maintaining the moral high ground.”

A great deal more time, effort, and spilt “ink to page” could be offered in dissecting the philosophical and doctrinal perspectives on LOAC principles, as many Just War thinkers, ethicists, and military leaders have already done. Suffice it to say that Chapter 1 of FM 6-27 does admirable work in assisting Army and Marine Corps leaders in understanding the expectations tied to LOAC principles. The task at hand, however, is to continue the conversation of the relevance of *jus in bello* Just War principles (and subsequently, LOAC principles) in a modern LSCO environment. A basic LOAC framework provides ample ethical background information to address a few of the many complexities within LSCO.

A Maneuverist Perspective

Continuing with our theme of grounding our discussion in a common lexicon, if we intend on discussing the Just War tradition through the lens of a tactical-level maneuverist, we must first define what is considered the tactical-level and what a maneuverist role is in warfare. Through this method, we will be able to discuss the precise complications, difficulties, advantages, and disadvantages that present themselves when conducting warfare at this echelon. Through these discussions, we will better understand how we, as Army leaders, can aid the maneuverist community at large.

The recently published FM 3-0 *Operations* describes four levels of warfare—the national strategic level, the theater strategic level, the operational level, and, finally the lowest echelon, the tactical level. The four levels link tactical actions to the achievement of national objectives. Further breaking it down, the tactical level itself consists of three tiers: battles, which are typically conducted at the corps and division level and last over the course of days or months; engagements, which are typically conducted at the brigade and below and are executed in minutes or hours; and finally, small unit actions, which are the building blocks of maneuver warfare.¹⁸ These concepts are easily visualized through the lens of World War II. As the United States entered the war, at the national strategic level the objective was clear, defeat the Axis Powers. The theater strategic level decisions focused on individual campaigns and how they would be prioritized. In this case, we will drill down on the Normandy Campaign. Operationally, the U.S. took part in Operation Overlord, which itself consisted of multiple operations and battles within. At the tactical level we can break it down further into the Battle of Omaha Beach, the engagements at Pointe du Hoc, and the small unit actions of scaling cliffs and neutralizing enemy artillery positions. Through this lens we can see each

level of warfare defined by Army doctrine, from the planning and execution of the Normandy Campaign all the way down to the scaling of cliffs.¹⁹

Defining a maneuverist is a bit more complicated. The Maneuver Center of Excellence houses the Armor and Infantry Schools, which could lead one to believe that maneuverists consist solely of soldiers from those two branches. However, ADP 3-0 defines the Movement and Maneuver Warfighting Function as the related tasks and systems that

...the maneuverist is anyone whose primary function at any given time is to close with and destroy the enemy.

move and employ forces to achieve a position of relative advantage over the enemy and other threats. It lists the warfighting functions tasks as the following: move (excluding administrative movements), maneuver, employment of direct fires, occupation of an area, conduct of mobility and countermobility, conduct of reconnaissance and surveillance, and employment of battlefield obscuration.²⁰ When we dissect this, we see that the term maneuverist includes more than the oft thought of infantryman, tanker, and marine, but also the aviator, engineer, scout, and forward observer. In short, the maneuverist is anyone whose primary function at any given time is to close with and destroy the enemy. Adding to the complexity is that at the tactical level this includes the rifleman charging into the trench, all the way up to the corps commander maneuvering brigades and synchronizing effects on the battlefield.

With our scope now narrowed, we may begin to see how the tactical maneuverist and the Just War Tradition intersect and interact. The typical tactical maneuverists wish to live in the realm of *jus in bello*, seeking the just conduct

of war, and trusting that their presence on the battlefield indicates that *just ad bellum* principles have been properly applied by the leaders of their nation. Maneuver leaders on the other hand, must understand their nation's justification for going to war (*jus ad bellum*), for it will have a direct impact on how their soldiers view their role in the war and their overall morale. Major Robert J. Rielly wrote of five factors that motivate soldiers to fight: group cohesion, unit allegiance and pride, ideology and patriotism, lack of alternatives, and self-preservation and leadership.²¹ Tactical-level leaders whose nations have put them in the position of fighting a morally bankrupt war (i.e., lacking *jus ad bellum* justification) will struggle to motivate their troopers through ideology and patriotism and be forced to leverage the other factors heavily. We can see clear examples of this today in the Kremlin's use of "barrier troops." Russian troops claim that their military leaders have deployed troops to their rear with the explicit purpose of executing anyone who attempted to retreat.²² This

...it is *jus in bello* where the tactical maneuverist truly meets the crucible.

exemplifies the use of self-preservation and lack of alternatives in lieu of patriotism, ideology, and unit allegiance. Not only does this misuse critical manpower that could have been used to bolster the unit's operations, but it critically undermines the lower leadership's ability to maintain morale and a fighting spirit. These methods may seem wicked and counterproductive, but it highlights the lengths military commanders can be pushed to for their own self-preservation if their nation fails to adhere to Just War principles.

However, it is *jus in bello* where the tactical maneuverist truly meets the crucible. The tactical maneuverists will be the ones who actively discriminate between enemy combatants and civilians on the battlefield. They will determine

if the enemy is still fighting or if they should honor his/her surrender, and they will be the ones to take the prisoners of war. When they make contact from a machine gun nest in a building, they will decide if it is of military necessity and proportional to level the building with a barrage of tank rounds or risk sending an infantry squad in to do the same. In LSCO, they will make all these decisions without the benefit of time and with an abundance of emotion. Fear, hate, love, and loss will play heavily on junior leaders as they fight their way forward to their objective. Major Rielly states that, of the five factors that motivate soldiers to fight, unit cohesion, or phrased alternatively as fraternal love, is the strongest driving force. It is the fraternal love between soldiers that will often weigh heaviest on the mind of maneuver leaders.²³ In operations clouded in ambiguity, that level of loyalty may shape the decision between ensuring that their troopers are safe by shelling a building which may or may not contain civilians or allowing the squad on the ground to enter a potential ambush. These decisions are difficult to make when you have years of experience, are surrounded by legal and ethical advisors, and have a team of intel analysts updating you. Yet, we must trust our junior leaders on the ground to be the ones to make them without any of those benefits, sleep deprived, and when the emotions of the situation are that much more visceral. In line with Rielly, Dubik further notes that the conducting of war, at every echelon, inherently involves the very lives of the soldiers Rielly is talking about. Through a *jus in bello* framework, respecting the moral value of these soldiers is of vital importance in the conduct of war, particularly in the morally relevant relationship they maintain with the local population, one another, their immediate military leadership, and senior military leaders.²⁴

The Army has institutionalized a mission command philosophy, and more specifically the use of a commander's intent. ADP 6-0 *Mission Command: Command and Control*

of *Army Forces* specifically spells out that a commander's intent includes civil considerations, and that the commander WILL write this himself.²⁵ This is the Army's way of stressing the importance of *jus in bello* and LOAC principles in every mission order that is produced from the company level up. It shows a dedication to *jus in bello* during the heart of the battle, and good commanders will use this to establish the groundwork for *jus post bellum* (justice after war) throughout their operations. By institutionalizing civil considerations into commander's intent, commanders at all echelons are forced to consider how they will integrate the fundamentals of LOAC throughout their operations and help ensure a smooth transition of power back to the rightful government of an area of operation. Of course, the commander's intent only has power if those executing understand that intent, and for the sake of our topic, the Just War tradition through LOAC and the rules of engagement (ROE) as well. Mission command aims to power decision making down to the lowest level and empower subordinates to use disciplined initiative. This lends further credence to the potential of junior leaders making ethical decisions with wide ramifications. As such, tactical maneuverists must understand the importance of continued ethics training and development down to the lowest level and the need to constantly revise and update ROE to fit the ever-changing landscape of war.

The Russian Way of War

For a little over a year now the global community has watched as Russia's invasion and subsequent war with Ukraine has persisted, to the surprise of some (namely Russia) and the confirmation of many.²⁶ As Russia's invasion and occupation of Ukraine persists, a consistent string of reports noting some 65,000+ war crimes committed by Russian forces continues to make international headlines. Andriy Kostin, Ukraine's Prosecutor General, has registered the 65,000+

war crimes and atrocities that have occurred in Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol, Izium, Kherson, Kharkiv and elsewhere. Of note, Kostin highlights Russia's indiscriminate shelling and rocketing of civilians and civilian structures, the specific targeting of civilians, torture, looting, mass forced civilian displacement, the weaponization of sexual violence, and even the weaponization of winter by destroying key Ukrainian power sources.²⁷ In earlier news reports, Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, told the Associated Press, "Ukraine is a crime scene," in reference to the killings, kidnappings, indiscriminate bombings and sexual assault carried out by Russian forces.²⁸ At this point, a reasonable person might ask why these claimed war crimes and atrocities are happening in the first place, particularly in light of Russia's claim to adherence of international law during war.²⁹

Russian military leaders value officers who are capable of operating in the grey area between the letter of Russian and international law and what they deem necessary during military conflicts.

To understand the "why" of Russian force's current conduct in war, it is informative to begin to understand the Russian way of war and their approach to ethics. In *The Russian Way of War*, Lester Grau and Charles Bartles note that Russian military leadership place substantially greater value on an army of the "best and brightest," demonstrating far less concern with the "ethically challenged."³⁰ Ultimately, Russian military leaders value officers who are capable of operating in the grey area between the letter of Russian and international law and what they deem necessary during military conflicts.³¹ The embrace of this ethical grey area results in a fundamentally different perspective on what is

morally and legally right to most Russians. As opposed to the differentiation between morality and legality in the West, most Russians consider decisions that are “morally right” as “legally right” as well.³² Such a mentality is all the more apparent when one begins to understand the moral framework for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In a kind of “handbook” given to deploying Russian soldiers and conscripts, the moral justification for the invasion of Ukraine is founded upon the idea that the Russia-Ukraine War is a continuation of the Great Patriotic War (i.e., World War II).³³

In a kind of “handbook” given to deploying Russian soldiers and conscripts, the moral justification for the invasion of Ukraine is founded upon the idea that the Russia-Ukraine War is a continuation of the Great Patriotic War (i.e., World War II).

I Live, I Fight, I Win! identifies the West (as well as Japan) as nations propping up the “Ukrainian regime” against Russia in an attempt to take revenge on Russia for their purported “great victory” during the Great Patriotic War. The moral argument is further made that the West (specifically identified as the USA, Great Britain, and Israel) are using the Ukrainians to fight Russia, when, as the handbook claims, Ukrainians are really Russians that have become Russophobes since their independence from Russia.³⁴ The remainder of these “rules of life in war” deal with practical means by which to survive military conflict, but moral justification for Russia’s war with Ukraine is abundantly clear. This conflict is Russia’s Great Patriotic War 2.0, in which they are fighting the Western ideological influence that has infected Ukraine, and Russia’s goal is to purge this influence (hence Russia’s claims of de-Nazification,

among other things). How this purging and reintegration of Ukraine into Russia takes place is not of particular concern to the Kremlin.

Numerous Just War experts and political theorists have identified both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* issues with Russia’s justification for war with Ukraine as well as how they have conducted themselves in the midst of fighting. The overtly intentional targeting of civilians and civilian structures (e.g., apartment complexes) as opposed to the shielding of these protected parties, the indiscriminate bombing and shelling of civilian population centers, threats of nuclear strikes, and reliable stories of sexual assault and rape are highlighted by analysts as key violations of the principles of *jus in bello* and LOAC.³⁵

As noted earlier, military leaders can make any number of justifications for targeting particular people or locations under the guise of military necessity, but that necessity must not violate the other principles of LOAC. It is a sobering reminder that *jus in bello* and LOAC establishes warring States or belligerents as ethical equals. Each action taken by either side of a conflict can, in theory, be assessed on *jus in bello* and LOAC grounds for their ethicality, or justness in the conduct of war. That said, Russia’s actions in their war with Ukraine are a clear violation of distinction (discrimination), humanity, honor, and proportionality, in direct relation to military necessity. The indiscriminate nature of Russia’s bombing and shelling campaigns have already been noted, as has the specific targeting of civilian populations with rocket and missile strikes in clear violation of the principle of proportionality in the excessive damage caused by these strikes. Ukrainian General Prosecutor Kostin claims that some 75,000 buildings, to include homes, apartments, schools, and hospitals have been destroyed.³⁶ LOAC provides enlightening information with regards to distinction and proportionality, observing that there are times when civilians can be militarily engaged as combatants and the

destruction of civilian structures may be both militarily necessary and proportional, but the specific targeting of civilians is unwarranted and unlawful.

Branching out from the classic *jus in bello* principles of discrimination (distinction) and proportionality, the concept of not utilizing means *mala in se* (evil means) in relation to LOAC principles further addresses some of Russia's purported war crimes. Jensen and Childs notes concerning *mala in se*, "Soldiers may not use weapons or methods that are inherently evil. These include mass rape campaigns, genocide or ethnic cleansing, using poison or treachery..., and using weapons whose effects cannot be controlled such as biological or other chemical weapons."³⁷ Though Jensen and Childs link no means *mala in se* to the LOAC principle of honor, of which there is a clear connection, no means *mala in se* is inherently connected to humanity, distinction, and proportionality as well. Leaning on the concept of fairness between belligerents, honor seeks to root ethical decisions to core values (such as the Army Values) and requires adherence to LOAC regardless of the enemy's compliance.³⁸ However, the principles of distinction and humanity requires warfighters to avoid targeting civilians and noncombatants and forbids causing unnecessary suffering, injury, or destruction.³⁹ The targeting of civilian power plants during winter months, the kidnapping, sexual assault and rape of civilians, and the intentional targeting of civilian homes is in clear violation of LOAC, but there exists the subjectively evil nature of these actions in freezing civilians during the Ukrainian winter or violating their personal agency through rape and sexual assault.

Owning Our Ethical Failures

In recent military history, U.S. forces have not been in short supply of our own *jus in bello* and LOAC complications, if not blatant violations. From the My Lai massacre and

coverup during the Vietnam War, to prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, to the "Kandahar Massacre" wherein Staff Sergeant Robert Bales murdered 17 Afghan villagers in their sleep,⁴⁰ U.S. forces simply cannot assume they are always arguing from the right ethical standpoint, at least not without holding ourselves accountable. One need only mention Jim Frederick's *Black Hearts* and a fair number of Army officers should be able to call to mind the heartbreaking story of the murder and rape of an Iraqi family perpetrated by Soldiers during the Iraq War,⁴¹ as well as the litany of leader professional development sessions conducted at the unit level on how to lead and care for one's soldiers in an effort to prevent another *Black Hearts* situation. Every single one of these instances of ethical and moral failure should point U.S. military and political leaders, as well as warfighters themselves, to better understand the ethical principles of war we subscribe to. However, each one of the above-mentioned situations are pretty clearly moral failures and violations of LOAC as well as *jus in bello* Just War principles.

In recent military history, U.S. forces have not been in short supply of our own *jus in bello* and LOAC complications...

What if we chose to wrestle with a more ethically complex conflict, such as World War II? Most military historians, ethicists, etc., have no issue with arguing that the U.S. involvement in World War II met the requisite *jus ad bellum* principles of justifying going to war, in both Pacific and European theaters. However, the indiscriminate nature of Allied bombing campaigns has been called into question by a number of ethicists in recent years. Daniel Maguire notes regarding British campaigns, particularly Dresden, "Churchill, in belated scruple, worried as the war moved on if

bombing civilian centers ‘simply for the sake of increasing terror’ was something that should be ‘reviewed.’”⁴² Of greater concern than that of Churchill’s reflective afterthoughts concerning the indiscriminate bombing of German city centers was the U.S. Army Air Corps justification for the fire-bombing of Tokyo, as well as many other Japanese civilian populations.

...“We’d better damn well win this thing or we’re both going to end up tried and executed as war criminals.”

Napalm is, by its very nature and design, indiscriminate. In his highly accessible look at U.S. bombing strategy during World War II, Malcolm Gladwell offers some insight into the early development of napalm. Gladwell notes that napalm was essentially designed for the destruction of Japanese buildings. Looking to an essay published in *Harper’s Bizarre*, Gladwell points to the authors’ use of Osaka as a test case in how best to retaliate against Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The authors highlight that fire would work best in destroying Japanese structures, as Osaka’s streets were narrow, buildings were built of wooden beams, and ceilings were made from heavy paper soaked in fish oil. The people slept on straw mats. Japanese cities, they argue, were tinderboxes.⁴³ The U.S. Air Corps Tactical School did not take much convincing with regards to the utility of napalm in the Pacific theater, as their War Plan entailed crushing the entire morale of the people via heavy and sustained bombing of cities.⁴⁴ The strategic foundations had been established for the firebombing of Tokyo and other Japanese cities. Gladwell notes, “After the war, the United States Strategic Bombing Survey concluded the following: ‘Probably more persons lost their lives by fire at Tokyo in a six-hour period than at any time in the history of man.’”⁴⁵ The estimation of civilian lives lost that night was

close to 400,000, with upwards of 900,000 civilian deaths in more than 60 Japanese cities and over two million homes destroyed by Allied airpower.⁴⁶

The decision to conduct firebombing operations was ultimately made at the strategic level and by Army Air Corps command, not by the “boots on the ground” military leaders conducting island-hopping operations throughout the Pacific. It was, however, the tactical level leadership doing the island-hopping that provided reports and loss assessments to higher echelons that eventually led President Harry Truman to make the decision to use nuclear weapons. Rupert Smith highlights the fact that retreating Japanese forces fought with greater grit and diligence than that of retreating German forces in Europe, with the number of kamikaze attacks increasing daily.⁴⁷ Smith notes, “Every island, every inch of land, had to be paid for with American blood, and the American public was beginning to grow tired of the stream of casualty reports.”⁴⁸ With the assessments provided by ground force commanders and the strategic planners assuming the loss of American troops to be in the hundreds of thousands in looking to invade mainland Japan, Truman opted to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to force Japan to capitulate.⁴⁹ We acknowledge how ethically complex and problematic the use of nuclear weapons on the people of Japan were (and still are), but in this instance the mission was not planned in a vacuum. Tactical level leadership provided information, sometimes in the form of staggering casualty reports, that directly affected the ethical calculus used in determining the use of nuclear force.

Toward the end of his life U.S. Air Force General Curtis LeMay, the individual responsible for the firebombing of much of Japan, was noted to have confided in his then assistant secretary, Robert McNamara, regarding the firebombing of Tokyo, “We’d better damn well win this thing or we’re both going to end up tried and executed

as war criminals.”⁵⁰ LeMay never seemed particularly bothered by the utilitarian calculus he employed in deciding to indiscriminately target Japanese civilians, even going as far as saying to a group of Air Force Academy cadets, “All war is immoral, and if you let it bother you, you’re not a good soldier.”⁵¹ McNamara himself begged the “what makes it immoral if you lose and not immoral if you win?” in offering commanders an ethical dilemma with which to wrestle.⁵²

We highlight the firebombing of Tokyo and the rationale underpinning its strategic construct precisely because LOAC and the principles of *jus in bello* are easily employed for dialogue and debate. In every instance of ethical failure mentioned in this section, U.S. forces failed to maintain the moral high ground that forms the core of Army leadership doctrine as well as the DoD Law of War Manual and the principles of LOAC. We additionally highlight the dropping of the atomic bombs to point out that tactical-level decisions by leaders can and do have operational and strategic-level ethical effects. Wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan were highly complex and generally not perceived as solely LSCO conflicts, whereas World War II embodied the LSCO paradigm. McNamara’s question is a haunting one: Did the Allied forces fight a moral and ethical war precisely because they won? The firebombing of Tokyo, as well as Allied forces indiscriminately bombing in both the Pacific and European theatres of war call into question not the morality of the war itself, but the morality of actions taken in the conduct of war (*jus in bello*). While neither author would venture to hold as equals the Allied forces of World War II and the Russian forces of the current Russia-Ukraine War, the principles of *jus in bello* Just War theory and the principles of LOAC are equally applicable to the actions taken by both forces in the conduct of war. The question that then must be asked is how Russia’s LOAC-violating actions in Ukraine ethically

inform the conduct of LSCO by U.S. Army maneuverists.

... the modern military experience is characterized by the need to quickly make sound decisions in often autonomous situations.

Conclusion

The concept of the “strategic corporal” provides us with the ideal example of the lowest ranking tactical-level leadership where *jus in bello* and LOAC principles are of overwhelming importance. Rye Barcott rightly notes that the modern military experience is characterized by the need to quickly make sound decisions in often autonomous situations.⁵³ The connections between autonomous quick decision making at the smallest tactical level and Mission Command philosophy are fairly clear, but the outcomes of the decisions made can be remarkable, for better or worse. Barcott points out the kind of questions that can have strategic level effects by a tactical-level leader, such as: “What do you say to the Afghani reporter thrusting a camera in your face and asking you, ‘Why are you here?’”⁵⁴ The corporal’s answer to this question has numerous second and third order effects depending upon his/her response. The same goes for decisions made not in a COIN, but in a LSCO environment, as is seen in the unethical decision making of Russian ground force commanders in Ukraine.

Through the lens of the tactical maneuverist, we are convinced that the principles within *jus in bello* Just War tradition and LOAC provide a bedrock with which to develop a common ethical lexicon for all soldiers down to the lowest echelons. As such, not only might we share a common ethical language across the force, but we might truly embrace the Mission Command

philosophy from an ethical training and development standpoint. Embracing this approach to the importance of the *jus in bello* and LOAC principles (as well as ROE) shapes the total force in an ethically preventative manner, theoretically aiding decision-makers at every echelon, from the “strategic corporal” up to our senior military leaders, in the conduct of war. The prevention of war crimes should ultimately be a positive side effect or outcome of shaping decision makers, at echelon, in the importance and immediate relevance of the principles of the Just War tradition and LOAC. **IAJ**

Notes

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- 2 Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Revised Ed. (New York: Back Bay Books, 2009), 205.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 206.
- 4 Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Fifth Ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 260.
- 5 Alex J. Bellamy, “Francisco de Vitoria (1492-1546),” in *Just War Thinkers: From Cicero to the 21st Century*, ed. Daniel R. Brunstetter and Cian O’Driscoll (New York: Routledge, 2018), 84.
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- 7 *Ibid.*, 85. Also, Wollom A. Jensen and James M. Childs, Jr., *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), 27.
- 8 Jensen and Childs, *Moral Warriors*, 27.
- 9 Anthony E. Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making*, 2nd Ed., Revised (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 97. Hartle’s definitions of discrimination and proportionality are similar but not the same as Jensen and Child’s. This fact is representative of thinkers within the Just War tradition.
- 10 James M. Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 49-50.
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- 12 Office of the General Counsel, Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Law of War Manual*, 2.1.1.
- 13 Department of the Army, FM 6-27 - *The Commander’s Handbook on the Law of Land Warfare*, 1-7.
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- 15 Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 129.
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- 18 Headquarters Department of the Army, *Operations*, FM 3-0 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2022), 1-54.
- 19 Framework developed by Major Patrick K. O'Keefe, MCoE MCCC Team Chief, for the Multi Domain Operations lesson.
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- 21 Robert J. Rielly, "Confronting the Tiger: Small Unit Cohesion in Battle," *Military Review* (November-December, 2000), 61.
- 22 Pjotr Sauer, "Russian Soldiers Say Commanders Used 'Barrier Troops' to Stop Them Retreating," *The Guardian*, last modified March 27, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/27/russian-soldiers-commanders-used-barrier-troops-stop-retreating>.
- 23 Rielly, "Confronting the Tiger," 61.
- 24 Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered*, 50-53.
- 25 Headquarters Department of the Army, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, ADP 6-0 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 1-48, 1-49.
- 26 Jim Garamone, "Ukraine's Success Was a Surprise Only to the Russians," U.S. Department of Defense, last modified September 13, 2022, <https://www.defense.org/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3157239/ukraines-success-was-a-surprise-only-to-the-russians/>. Also of note is Rajan Menon's article highlighting that though there have been many surprises throughout the yearlong Russia-Ukraine War, morale and leadership, and lack thereof, have proven decisive qualities for both the Ukrainians and Russians; Rajan Menon, "The war of surprises in Ukraine," *Responsible Statecraft*, last modified March 30, 2023, <https://responsiblestatecraft/2023/03/30/the-war-of-surprises-in-ukraine/>.
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A Whole of Nation Approach During Large Scale Combat Operations:

The Department of Labor and the American Workforce

by Patrick W. Naughton Jr.

As the American military shifts its focus to prepare for possible large-scale combat operations (LSCO) against possible peer-competitors, much attention has been paid to the martial aspect of this effort. However, what many overlook is that LSCOs of the future, as they have in the past, will involve a whole of government and indeed a whole of nation approach if the United States and its allies are to emerge victorious. This will require the synchronization and support of numerous interagency entities, federal agencies, and multinational partners, as well as all the industrial might that the country possesses. This effort will require numerous agencies that national security professionals do not normally associate with warfighting. One example to explore this further can be accomplished by examining the often-overlooked Department of Labor (DOL).

As the federal agency who oversees the overall wellbeing of the nation’s workforce, the DOL will have a large role in marshalling energies behind the conflict. After all, total war efforts will be sustained by the hardworking men and women who are employed in economic activity concerned with the processing of raw materials and the manufacturing of goods. An examination of the performance of the DOL during past LSCOs in the modern era—World War I (WWI), World War II (WWII), the Korean Conflict, and the Persian Gulf War—will help educate strategic leaders on how federal agencies can support a whole of nation approach in a future conflict against a peer-competitor.

The Department of Labor and World War I

The DOL was established on March 4, 1913 and tasked with the same purpose that it still executes today. In the Act that created the DOL, the Secretary of Labor was granted the power to “act as mediator and to appoint commissioners of conciliation in labor disputes whenever in his

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judgement the interests of industrial peace may require it to be done.”¹ It was this stipulation that put the DOL on a path to support the U.S. war effort in WWI four years later. In the DOL’s annual report of 1917, the Secretary of Labor William Wilson noted that “the number of labor disputes calling for Government mediation increased suddenly and enormously with the beginning of the war.”²

President Woodrow Wilson, in his annual speech to Congress in 1918, credited the DOL with helping win the war.

It was due to numerous challenges, the sheer workload, and the desire to streamline efforts across its various departments that the DOL—upon a request by President Woodrow Wilson to ensure a stable supply of labor to war industries—created the War Labor Board.³ This entity operated within the boundaries of an established set of principles that set precedence for all future conflicts. These principles included: no strikes or walkouts during the war, though Unions were not abolished; the maintenance of already established working conditions; equal pay for women; support of the eight-hour work day; discouragement of war profiteering; the creation of a national list of specially skilled workers to leverage during times of war; no changes to standards and customs set at the local level; and finally, all workers had a right to a living wage to support their families in reasonable comfort.⁴ As Secretary Wilson noted, as this balanced U.S. national security needs and employer concerns while maintaining the hard-fought-for and guaranteed rights of American workers, these principles were unlike any seen in history.

Though not perfect or devoid of issues, it was primarily through the War Labor Board that the DOL supported the considerable industrial

needs of the nation during the First World War. President Woodrow Wilson, in his annual speech to Congress in 1918, credited the DOL with helping win the war. He also singled out the American worker for supplying the tools and materiel needed for victory and placed their service on par with those on the front lines. He lauded their patriotism, unselfishness, and devotion “that marked their toilsome labors, day after day, month after month” and how it “made them fit mates and comrades of the men in the trenches and on the sea.”⁵

The expenditure of effort and materiel required by the U.S. to support its allies and military overseas was colossal. This would not have been possible without the DOL’s effort in mediating disputes between American workers and employers. It resulted in limited stoppages due to labor differences for key sustainment commodities and in manufacturing. Had a draconian approach been taken by the U.S. government to force its population into the factories and fields, Bolshevik movements such as that which occurred in Russia would easily have gained a stronger foothold and changed the face of America. A fair and balanced approach by the U.S. government which considered the needs of the war effort, employers, and employees, enabled a steady and uninterrupted stream of war materiel, vital to success in the Great War.

The Department of Labor and World War II

The feeling of patriotism and cooperation quickly eroded with the end of WWI. As the DOL noted, “following the signing of the armistice and the beginning of demobilization the existing good relations between employers and wage earners were very much disturbed.”⁶ Much occurred in the interwar years regarding labor. Leading the Department through this time was the first ever woman to be appointed to a Cabinet position, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins.⁷ It was under her leadership that the

DOL would again find itself supporting a whole of nation approach during the prolonged LSCOs of WWII.

By 1941, the U.S. understood that hostilities were imminent. As such, it began to prepare its industrial might to support the war effort. In the DOL's annual report of 1941, issued one month before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Perkins understood that "national security depends not only on military defense, but upon the health, safety, and efficiency, and general intelligence and well-being of our people."⁸ She began to prepare the agency to support the upcoming conflict; "the workers of the United States will, at all times, discharge their full duty in the trying days that lie ahead," concluded the report with her conviction that "theirs is the job of bringing us more and more of the guns, the planes, the tanks, and the ships that are so vital to all that we as Americans hold dear."⁹

With the entry of the U.S. into the war, President Franklin Roosevelt, through the War Power Acts, ordered the resurrection of the War Labor Board as "national interest demands that there shall be no interruption of any work which contributes to the effective prosecution of the war."¹⁰ This time, the DOL was not the administrative lead for the Board; rather, they were a main contributor that supported its mission. Perkins, pointing to lessons learned and precedence set from the last war, focused the Department's efforts on achieving maximum productivity by resolving industrial disputes, enforcing workplace safety and adequate physical conditions to reduce accidents, and administering reasonable work-rest cycles. She stressed that the way to avoid wasted effort and increase and maintain efficiency within industry was not through longer hours and unsafe standards aimed at cutting costs; rather, it was to eliminate wasteful practices and to grow the "understanding of the desirability of maintaining a steady flow of production with reasonably short working hours."¹¹

Immediately after the war, the new Secretary of Labor Lewis Schwellenbach concluded, "During a global war in which final victory rested so largely upon the productive capacity of this Nation, it is not surprising to find... [that] the Labor Department contributed directly to the war effort."¹² He further wrote, "Like the free institutions which we fought to preserve, good labor standards helped to create a moral climate that inspired hard, sustained toil throughout the war years." Schwellenbach believed that the labor force—augmented by a flux of new employees hired due to the restrictions on massive overtime being forced on existing personnel—established and strengthened a common resolve across the nation to defend it and secure victory.¹³

...“national interest demands that there shall be no interruption of any work which contributes to the effective prosecution of the war.”

President Harry Truman, in his speech following Japan's surrender, declared that the war "is a victory of more than arms alone." He explained that from manufacturing efforts, "rolled the tanks and planes which blasted their way to the heart of our enemies; from our shipyards sprang the ships which bridged all the oceans of the world for our weapons and supplies." Truman similarly noted the contributions in the production of commodities, "from our farms came the food and fiber for our armies and navies and for our Allies in all the corners of the earth; from our mines and factories came the raw materials and the finished products which gave us the equipment to overcome our enemies." The President also included the workforce in his final message of victory: "Our thoughts go out to the millions of American workers and businessmen, to our farmers and miners—to all those who have built

up this country's fighting strength, and who have shipped to our Allies the means to resist and overcome the enemy."¹⁴

As Secretary Schwollenbach noted, similar to WWI (though for a much longer period), "the country's manpower resources, facilities

... improper treatment of the labor force during the conflict could be exploited in the information environment by the enemy and thus weaken the war effort.

for production, and economic life in general had been mobilized and subjected to public controls for purpose of winning the war."¹⁵ From the support for the War Labor Board in resolving labor disputes to ensure uninterrupted productivity, to the laws and regulations enforced for proper working conditions, the DOL efforts resulted in the full industrial might of the nation being harnessed while avoiding extreme war weariness, excess waste, and a depletion of manpower and resources that would be sorely needed for recovery. Had this not occurred, the U.S. would have emerged on the other side of war in the same manner as much of Europe: drained of the necessities needed to bolster a robust and healthy economy. Due to the regulation and supervision provided over America's materiel and labor resources, the nation was now poised to become the dominant superpower.

The Department of Labor and the Korean Conflict

By 1950, as the conflict in Korea escalated into LSCOs, the economy in the U.S. continued to grow, with its gross national product at its highest in the nation's history.¹⁶ The DOL again found itself preparing to support a whole of nation effort. Unlike the two previous World Wars, the agency was on the front lines of the communist ideological struggle that lay behind

the conflict. According to the Secretary of Labor Maurice Tobin, since communism targeted the working class, the Labor Department, with assistance from trade-union movements, had been battling this ideology for years.¹⁷ He believed that the conflict was a global, "contest for the minds as well as the bodies of men, and it will be won through our strength of will and purpose. Our military and economic strength are the tools and the symbols of our efforts to make men free and ensure them better lives."¹⁸ Tobin understood that improper treatment of the labor force during the conflict could be exploited in the information environment by the enemy and thus weaken the war effort.

According to Tobin, the workforce was the "most important resource in building national strength"; he believed that it must be developed and utilized "in such a manner as to assure that it will make the maximum contribution to the mobilization effort."¹⁹ These were statements that the U.S. government agreed with. Rather than reestablish the War Labor Board, Public Law 774, known as the Defense Production Act, was passed. Its purpose was to ensure that civilian industry was prepared "to promote the national defense, by meeting, promptly and effectively, the requirements of military programs in support of our national security and foreign policy objectives."²⁰ To manage and oversee the provisions set forth in the Act, Truman created the Office of Defense Mobilization. The Office required the DOL to oversee the manpower policies that it directed.

To manage the nation's human capital, the DOL created the Defense Manpower Administration, which generated a set of nine policies for it to enforce. Similar to the efforts undertaken during past periods of national mobilization, the DOL personnel policies were established to "ensure the best use and greatest productivity of the labor force" all the while continuing to plan "for the contingency of a greater defense effort."²¹ The Department also

embraced its role in the battle against the spread of communist ideology. After the conflict, it devoted much of its 1954 annual report to advocating for the benefits of living and working in a free and democratic society, claiming that labor forces across the globe were of strategic importance in halting communism. The report stated, “when the self-expression, the liberty and the prosperity of the working people are assured, it follows that the broader objective—the well-being, strength, and greatness of our country and of all its people—is also assured.”²²

As in WWI and II, the DOL contributed directly to a whole of nation approach by ensuring the nation’s industry and production areas were adequately staffed without depleting resources. The Department played a key role in again ensuring that the American workforce was not overburdened or unfairly exploited, which ensured constant and sustainable productivity during the war. Unlike the previous conflicts, events in Korea required the DOL to play a much larger role in the whole of nation approach by combatting the spread of ideology that could be leveraged by adversaries in the informational environment. Lastly, with the creation and continued existence of the Defense Production Act, precedence was established that still exists today and will guide actions during future possible LSCOs scenarios.

The Department of Labor and the Persian Gulf War

U.S. military efforts between Korea and the start of the Persian Gulf War were dominated by Vietnam. While both North and South Vietnam easily reached the scale of total war, it was classified as a Counterinsurgency Operation for American forces and did not require the total mobilization of national resources. It was not until the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War that America would again find itself fully mobilizing to face Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and the fourth largest army in the world. Lessons on a whole

of nation approach are harder to recognize, since much of the cost was offset by financial contributions from allies and did not require the total prolonged mobilization of industry. The Gulf War does, however, offer one lesson that is applicable to today: the utilization of reserve forces.

During the earlier Yom Kippur War in 1973, the U.S. observed how Israel managed and integrated their reserve elements as a true force multiplier. As the U.S. built combat power in theater, it quickly realized that sustainment activities had become critically stressed and could only be alleviated by combat support and combat service support units from the reserves.²³ Taking lessons from Israel, the Gulf War marked the first major call-up of reserve forces since Korea and the first time that they were used as an operational force rather than a strategic one.²⁴ This massive call up had an unintended effect, as noted by U.S. Army Europe commander Crosbie Saint, “The early decision to call up the reserves, while probably motivated by necessity, turned out to be a major catalyst in consolidating American public opinion behind our strategy in the Gulf.”²⁵

Taking lessons from Israel, the Gulf War marked the first major call-up of reserve forces since Korea...

By the end of the war, a total of 35,158 Army Reservist and 37,692 National Guardsmen were deployed to the region, while numerous others served stateside as backfills for critical shortages.²⁶ Their seamless integration and importance to the total force was demonstrated by the 14th Quartermaster Detachment, an Army Reserve unit who suffered the greatest combat loss in the war: 13 dead and 43 wounded from an Iraqi missile attack.²⁷ During possible LSCOs the Joint force will, just as in the Gulf War, rely heavily on the reserves for all sustainment

activities. From a whole of nation perspective, this becomes a critical point to grasp, as those reservists leave behind civilian careers which can be affected by their service. As the DOL noted after the demobilization of over 225,000 reservists, “Since the end of the Persian Gulf Conflict there has been an increase in Veterans’ Reemployment Rights activity, mainly concerning complaints by veterans regarding reinstatement to their jobs.”²⁸

America cannot conduct a prolonged LSCO without the full backing of its industrial might behind it.

As the Persian Gulf War demonstrated and as holds true today, the total Joint Force will be unable to sustain prolonged LSCOs without the nation’s reserves. The DOL plays a crucial role in this as the administrator of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), which manages issues from individuals and employers who are dealing with service connected problems.²⁹ If the nation cannot guarantee a reservist’s employment upon their return to civilian life, it will impact recruitment and retention, which in turn will affect the ability to sustain the force during LSCOs. Lastly, reserve forces, via their deep-rooted presence in communities across the country, will assist with gaining and maintaining support from the population for the war effort.

The Department of Labor’s role in Future Possible LSCOs

The Defense Production Act, first enacted during the Korean War, has been reauthorized over 50 times and was recently used to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Since its inception as an Act to primarily ensure that domestic industry could support requirements in times of total war, it has been expanded to cover a wide

range of potential events. Currently, the Defense Production Act allows the federal government to look past military preparedness and extend its efforts to support a wide range of perceived national emergencies under the holistic term of national defense.

The President of the United States has delegated the authorities bestowed from the Act to several department and agency heads via Executive Order (EO) 13603, *National Defense Resources Preparedness*.³⁰ This EO delegates the Presidential authorities of the Act to the Secretaries of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services, Transportation, Defense, and Commerce. Though the DOL is not one of the six core supporting agencies, the EO does include the Secretary of Labor as a Defense Production Act Committee member and devotes an entire section specifically to labor requirements.

As directed in the EO, as a committee member the DOL has five main tasks to support national defense efforts: conduct a continuous appraisal of the nation’s workforce; assist with the development of deferment policies during times of conscription; consult with the six core agencies on any proposed action and the effect it will have on labor; formulate plans, policies, and estimate training needs to meet labor requirements; and lastly, develop and implement effective labor-management relations policies as needed. Illustrative of the importance of the DOL, the EO directs that “All agencies shall cooperate with the Secretary of Labor.”³¹

Under the Defense Production Act, the U.S. government still recognizes the importance of balancing the needs of the nation against the wellbeing of a healthy workforce. From a holistic national perspective, DOLs policies continue to support the Act and identify issues in the workforce that are counterproductive to efficiency. In the event of possible future LSCOs, the DOL can again ensure that maximum productivity will be achieved while not exhausting one of the nation’s most valuable

commodities that is needed during times of conflict as well as for recovery efforts—the labor force.

Conclusion

America cannot conduct a prolonged LSCO without the full backing of its industrial might behind it. “Our problem is to achieve adequate military strength within the limits of endurable strain upon our economy,” noted President Dwight Eisenhower during the Korean War; “to amass military power without regard to our economic capacity would be to defend ourselves against one kind of disaster by inviting another.”³²

Many strategic leaders understand that industry must be harnessed to wage total war; however, they often overlook the workforce that makes this possible. All the steel and raw commodities in the world mean nothing if you have a war-weary, disgruntled, or depleted labor force. As one contemporary warned during the Great War regarding this balance, “It would be an evil day for America if we threw overboard liberty to make room for efficiency.”³³ Leaders must understand what a whole of nation approach to conflict consists of if the U.S. is to be able to engage in possible prolonged LSCOs against a peer-competitor.

A country’s civilian workforce is one of several not readily recognizable matters of national security. However, historical naval blockades to provoke starvation and unrestricted bombing campaigns on civilian population centers were aimed at that center of gravity. By examining LSCOs in the nation’s history, it becomes apparent how the labor force contributed to the colossal industrial efforts undertaken to support and recover from total war events. The DOL established a set of principles in WWI that created a foundation that served it well as it continued to support national defense policies.

From mediating labor disputes, improving working conditions, establishing the eight-hour workday, and managing critical civilian skill sets to battling ideology that could be leveraged in the information environment, the DOL led the way in ensuring that American labor was not wasted or misused, and was still capable enough to drive recovery efforts. Lastly, past conflicts demonstrate how critical the nation’s reserve forces have become, and how this may affect public opinion, the economy, and the labor force. The DOL did not singlehandedly ensure victory during past LSCOs; however, it did play a major part in the interagency efforts that occurred in supporting a whole of nation approach during those conflicts.

Labor is one underappreciated crucial piece of the federal agency puzzle that will be needed to wage total war. Examining this enables strategic leaders to expand their understanding of the interagency environment and deeply consider the whole of government approach that other federal agencies will have in supporting long term LSCOs. From the projection of power via the Departments of Transportation and Commerce, promoting sustainably food production through the Department of Agriculture, to a truly countless host of other non-military entities, the nation will not emerge victorious without understanding how a whole of nation approach and how inter-agencies contribute to the overall war effort during LSCOs. **IAJ**

Notes

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Creating a Learning Environment for the *Development of Interagency Leaders*

by **William J. Davis, Jr.**

It became clear to me that at the age of 58 I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political soldier and will have to put my training in rapping out orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills.

— **General George C. Marshall**

As the above quote alludes, it is generally accepted that leading the interagency requires skills that are not often taught in a singular organizational or professional culture. People have referred to it as the PhD level of leadership. That is precisely why so many leaders who have significant reputations within their area of expertise have often failed when they try to transfer those skills to the interagency without adaptation. But this dynamic occurs in all disciplines. Businesspeople, politicians, coaches, and military officers are a few of those who, in recent history, have tried to lead in unfamiliar environments and have struggled to succeed. Most national security professionals have learned how to lead within the explicit contextual confines of their organizations. For example, military members mostly rely on direct leadership principles exercised in an authoritarian construct, diplomats on a consensus-driven collaborative approach, teachers on a knowledge-seeking Socratic approach, and law enforcement officers on a law or principle-based approach. However, the problem with using one approach—no matter how adept the person—is that context and culture are intricate determinants of the success of any given approach. For example, while most military personnel succeed at leading in a military environment, they quit

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the teaching profession at the same rate as non-military teachers and for the mostly the same reason: frustration with failure to manage the classroom.² Two significant examples of this phenomena are former President Donald Trump's administration and Donald Rumsfeld's reign as Secretary of Defense. Both had a stated aim to bring business thinking and leadership to public policymaking. The results they experienced are exemplary of the angst an organization manifests when an approach from a particular cultural background is applied to a different one. Both are examples of failing to recognize that context matters. Unfortunately, most leadership models often give the impression that they are universal and will apply regardless of the context.

Developing Leaders

Because it is well documented that the environment of the interagency is unique, it follows that leading in the interagency will require the development of unique skills.³ These skills are developed throughout one's life, and most leadership development models agree that leader development occurs in three environments—the crucible of experience, the academic environment of a shared classroom, and self-study. While it is often argued that experience is the most valuable aspect of leader development, it is offered here that, although experience may be the best teacher, it is the classroom that provides the greatest opportunity for experimentation and growth at minimal risk. When a leader is on the job and the organization is looking for results, tremendous pressure will often keep a leader from using different techniques that never have been tried before. As was mentioned in the introduction, a singular culture will have a preferred way to lead and straying from that entails risk. That is why so many leaders, even ones as revered as George Marshall, have difficulty when the cultural context of their environment changes. On the other hand, the classroom offers an environment

where experience, self-study, and academic intrigue can be brought together to develop new skills.

...although experience may be the best teacher, it is the classroom that provides the greatest opportunity for experimentation and growth at minimal risk.

However, a classroom learning environment that supports experimentation and leader development does not just happen, it must be created. Ron Heifetz, a leadership expert from Harvard University, has developed a teaching style that purports to do such a thing. It is called case-in-point teaching and is detailed in chapter two of the book *Leadership Can Be Taught* by Sharon Parks.⁴ This article is not meant to be a review of case-in-point teaching and only is mentioned here to provide the reader with the theory upon which the rest of the article is based and to provide a venue for further study on this teaching style if desired.

Epistemological Philosophy

When a professional is working in an interagency environment to solve a problem, it is a good bet that the situation is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). However, top performance in a VUCA environment usually does not occur naturally—much education and preparation are required. That education and preparation needs to be done in an environment that reflects the VUCA environment. This paper presents ways that a faculty member of any institution can replicate VUCA in the classroom and better prepare students for success in the mostly unregulated terrain of the interagency. Unfortunately, oftentimes in education, teaching the objective process is the focus of the curriculum rather than the more difficult

task of teaching adaptive problem solving. A key to success in teaching the type of adaptive leadership required for interagency success is to have an epistemological philosophy that most knowledge is constructed and not objective.

...success is measured by what the student takes away, not how good someone feels about his or her lecture.

One example of this is the approach taken when educating doctors. While it is important for doctors to know the 206 bones that make up the human body, that is not the purpose of medical school. I use this example because in a position I once held at a college, a school administrator who wanted more objective multiple-choice tests in the curriculum argued that every profession had knowledge that was important. I agreed that what he said was true, but that a higher-level school should not concern itself with measuring such trivia and that our focus was on ensuring higher order thinking and synthesis. So philosophically, as a faculty member who is interested in developing leaders who can succeed in the interagency, it is important that you at the very core should believe that what you teach is not objective knowledge, but the creation of new knowledge generated from multiple variables and inputs.

Start with a Foundation

It is recommended that faculty base their teachings on four pillars—focus on student learning not your teaching, establish relevance, focus on asking the right questions not providing the right answers, and finally, provide a free-flowing multidisciplinary approach to the topic at hand.

It is All About the Student

A faculty member can lecture (note:

lecture is noted as one of the most ineffective methods for educating adults) for six hours on the National Security Decision Making process exemplified at the National Security Council, and at the end of it may feel good because he or she just dumped a bevy of knowledge upon the students. However, success is measured by what *the student* takes away, not how good someone feels about his or her lecture. It is important that the faculty member always focuses on the critical attribute of any lesson by answering the question, “What outcome do I hope to achieve by spending this time with you?” The ultimate goal is to make students prepared to solve problems in their career, and each lesson should contribute to that meta-objective.

Establish Relevancy

An unbelievable true story is one where a colleague of mine, who was teaching Joint Professional Education Phase II after the event of 9/11, never incorporated that event into the curriculum. His excuse was that he “didn’t have time” in the curriculum to discuss the implications of 9/11. My retort was that he “didn’t NOT have time.” This faculty member obviously was ignorant to exactly what he was there to teach. He thought that his job was to teach known-knowns (objective knowledge) rather than to teach students how to apply that knowledge in the real world. *Especially* when educating interagency leaders, the goal is to have students use what they learn in bettering the integrated application of the instruments of national power in pursuit of national interests.

It is imperative that real world events are used in the teaching of courses whenever possible. The use of contrived scenarios can never match the complexity of real-world issues. While some may argue that they are able to better manipulate contrived scenarios to achieve learning objectives, the opposite is true. Most times I find that a contrived school-generated scenario has a parallel school-generated solution.

The real world holds no such school solutions and will require more critical thinking from the class to evaluate proposed answers.

Seek Adaptive Answers

This pillar is all about asking the right questions rather than seeking to elicit the proper responses. In the national security environment, there are usually many right answers to address the complex problems faced (this does not mean that there are no wrong answers, but usually there are competing solutions that can be considered appropriate for the problem.) The goal should be to get the student to think through the various options, not to derive the one that fits the paradigm of the day. Teaching students to use a singular formula or framework is not congruent with learning how to solve complex adaptive problems. For example, the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) is a complex adaptive system, and to focus on the acronyms and documents of the JSPS is providing a disservice to the students. One must emphasize the WHY of each process and the interaction among the processes, not necessarily the acronym or name of the processes. The names change, the functions of the processes do not.

National Security is a Multi-disciplinary and Multi-functional Phenomenon

Even though design thinking should focus on the idea that problem framing (as it pertains to the multi-faceted national security arena) should involve trying to understand the intricate linkages of multiple systems, the tendency for faculty to want to teach a reductionist approach to national security is strong.⁵ Unfortunately, many believe that considering too much complexity muddies the situation. An important aspect of making decisions in a VUCA environment is that more information often makes the picture more ambiguous rather than clearer. Considering how information-gap decision making (and there is always an

information-gap in decision making) affects risk is a primary skill that people who operate in the VUCA environment must develop. Therefore, it is imperative that the faculty make it a habit to elicit the impact that multiple disciplines have on national security and do not allow students to provide simple answers that in the real world could be inadequate. A good example of failing to consider the multiple variables inherent in any national security undertaking is the famous “radiator slide” that General Franks briefed to

...it is imperative that the faculty make it a habit to elicit the impact that multiple disciplines have on national security and do not allow students to provide simple answers that in the real world could be inadequate.

President Bush before Operation Iraqi Freedom, wherein the end state of the operation was written as “regime change” and “removal of weapons of mass destruction.” Had General Franks taken a more multidisciplinary and VUCA frame on the problems, he might have foreseen some of the issues that would arise that caused the U.S. to stay in a very contested environment for many years.

The Best Ways to Support Creating a Learning Environment That Supports the Four Pillars

The following ten ways are offered to shed the most debilitating aspects of any classroom—standardization and predictability—while at the same time being able to meet the educational intent of the institution. The classroom is often too predictable. The class starts with a warm-up, which is usually a video clip, then there is a bevy of PowerPoint slides that recap the required reading, some discussion, and then some sort of small exercise. This formula is what students

have come to expect and employing a differing philosophy will cause some consternation. Do not let this consternation guide your decisions. Students will eventually realize the worth of the case-in-point classroom. I can attest to this as I have been using this unorthodox method for twenty-five years and have not received a negative student review in the last twenty-three years or so.

...you should speak only about 5% of the time. And when you do speak, it should always end with a question...

1) Keep dialogue open

While this is a value that many faculty like to espouse, I have found in my years of observing classroom discussion that it is not always a practiced value. Let us be honest, the overwhelming cultural value of hierarchy is strongly ingrained in most classrooms.⁶ The professor is the answer person. In addition, the tradition of the leader having the last word is also deeply ingrained in most cultures. It also is quite common for many to interpret disagreement with insubordination. A way to ensure that the classroom becomes a place that can be an adult learning environment where intellectual debate is valued is to model that behavior early in the course. A tactic I like to use is to have a faculty member I know who is oppositional to my perspective on a subject visit the classroom early in the class (often on the first day of classes) and have that faculty member offer a counterpoint in a very informal manner while I make it a point to model debate. Once this is modeled, I tell the students that this is what I would like to see among and between the faculty and students. It usually opens things up. In addition, I ensure that I do not pontificate, which brings up the next point.

2) Speak only 5% of the time

One of the more difficult techniques for a faculty to master is to not speak unless necessary. Because you are usually only one of fifteen people in the classroom, I would offer that you should speak only about 5% of the time. And when you do speak, it should always end with a question so that you are a catalyst for further discussion, not a purveyor of known-knowns. For example, if a class was on the introduction of the attributes of a collaborative leader, most faculty might show a PowerPoint presentation with a list of those traits, providing insights to each attribute in a lecture like format. Although the faculty member might ask for insights about each attribute, this is an inadequate way to hold the class, because first, the students were supposed to read the material the night before, and most of what you will be doing is repetitive. Second, you will be providing the insight (think lecture) when it should be the students who need to think about the topic and internalize the critical attributes. So, you should start with a series of questions. This gets the students beyond the usual mind-numbing mechanistic approach that many have.

In addition to the question offered, a faculty member should have a series of about six or more questions that encourage the students to think about the process. In addition, the faculty member only needs to ask questions, if a student perhaps states something that is “off,” then the faculty should redirect that information. For example, if a student confuses the concepts of soft power, smart power, and sharp power, the faculty member should note that the student appears to have misunderstood the concepts and then ask the class for a technique or techniques (metaphorical thinking, etc.) that they may use to have a better understanding of the topic. The students have the knowledge, one just has to be able to (and want to) tap into that knowledge. A difficult part of this is being comfortable with silence. After you ask a question, often

the students will wait for the faculty member to answer it (visit a classroom and note how often this is done). Let that silence stand. If you must break it, then ask if it is not clear, or ask a follow up question that might be easier for the students to answer. Do not answer your own questions.

3) Use “you are” questions

This technique is simple but very effective at taking the student out of the “I do not know anything” mode and putting them into a different role. “You are” questions put the student in a different mindset and will set them up for success after the classroom. In the “you are” questions, the students role play. For example, “you are the combatant commander...” or “you are the UN or USAID representative...” This approach provides the real-world context. The answers to these types of questions are very rarely school solutions, and most of all, the entire class can critique the answer. Each person in the class will most likely have a differing perspective or varying priorities. Each will determine the key pieces of information missing. Collectively, the class will create a cornucopia of discussion that will increase the critical thinking of the group.

4) Provide minimal direction or “A blank whiteboard is the best teacher”

This technique always discombobulates the students and a good many faculty. How will they know what to do if we do not provide them the format and requirement? I will never forget the words of a senior military officer who just returned from being a chief of staff during Operation Iraqi Freedom. I asked him what we needed to improve as a force and he said solving problems without direction. I often see this from my students. “Tell us what you want, and we will give it to you,” they say. My philosophy is just the opposite—you provide me what you think is a good answer in a good format and together we will judge whether you have communicated your solution well. The world is not about formats,

it is about solving complex problems and then effectively communicating the solution. While I will provide some theoretical frameworks to use, I will not provide precise “fill-in-the-blank” format that is usually the hallmark of junior personnel. The interagency for the most part does not have doctrine or formats, so providing minimal direction might be the most important aspect of developing leaders. I (and many others who have adopted this approach) have received significant feedback from graduated students who thank us for this aspect of their development. A blank whiteboard is the best teacher.

Leading the interagency is about people not products.

5) After-action-review the process first

After an exercise, it is common to “take a brief” and critique a product. However, the essence of an exercise is best served if the process is critiqued first not last. Start the briefings with questions such as—“What was the most contentious point in the brief?” “What pieces of information did you wish you had to make the result better?” “What points are not getting briefed that might possibly be important?” “What was the communication dynamic in the group?” These types of questions *before* the brief relax the students and provide a perspective on their product they did not have. Leading the interagency is about people not products. In addition, this review of the process tends to decrease the defensiveness and thereby increase the critical thinking of the participants.

6) Teach the subject being brought up at the time

This is generally one of the more difficult adjustments that faculty must make. Most curricula, although divided up into neat two- and four-hour blocks for the most part, is contiguous

and interrelated to a degree that makes it hard to teach only the portion prescribed for the day.

For example, the subjects of multinational operations, incorporation of industry, force management, strategy, planning, etc., are all systems that coexist and are interactive. Thus, when teaching the subject of force development, the impact of allies should be addressed. The extent to which it is addressed, using case-in-point teaching, will depend on the students. The curiosity and experience of the class will determine the focus on this system. Meanwhile, the faculty member must be adaptive and should discuss its impact to a satisfying degree. The faculty member must then be able to integrate the issue into future teaching, and not be so obstinate as to go back over the issue when the subject comes up later as a formal part of the curriculum. What should the faculty member do when it later is a part of the formal curriculum? The faculty member takes the students to a deeper level of understanding. This takes a lot of practice. Like my 9-11 example previously highlighted, a faculty member must be able to go beyond the mind-numbing presentation of slides and bring the curriculum to life. This requires much work.

One of the worst techniques for critical thinking is to present students with a...list of lessons learned or things to consider.

7) Do not compartmentalize your subjects

This is analogous to the previous practice. When teaching the course, it must be addressed as it would be in on-the-job-training in the real world. The mental model of crawl-walk-run is outdated when it comes to adult learning. The experiences that adults have need to be tapped into so that the complexities of the course are addressed up front. I used to teach faculty development for a university and would tell the

faculty to “start at the end.” This technique is analogous to the “flipped classroom,” however, even though touted by many, it is rarely used correctly. Jump into complexity right away. Use real world examples that are not so simple, and the students begin to see not only that the concept is not simple (few are), but that in application there are a multitude of ways to apply it. This dive into complexity is disconcerting at first, but the class soon embraces this way to learn, and in my experience, produces very positive feedback from students.

8) Never provide known-knowns unless...

One of the worst techniques for critical thinking is to present students with a PowerPoint slide that contains a list of lessons learned or things to consider. Why think further about the topic, if you, the faculty, have presented me with the school solution? Even if the faculty tries to elicit discussion after the slide is shown, it is usually truncated. However, if one asks a question without showing the slide, it will force the students to think about the subject at hand. The students have done the reading, thoughtfully approached the subject, and will have some relatable experiences.

For example, putting up a list of “Top ten things to consider when leading within the interagency” is an invitation to truncate thought and discussion. As the authoritarian faculty member, you are in essence and by default providing the answer. I have seen this done way too many times. The faculty member tries to invite discussion on the topic by saying things like “What is not up here?” or “What do you think so and so means?” Ron Heifetz asserts that faculty never do this. The question is more constructively asked as “What are the top ten things to consider when leading within the interagency and defend/explain your answers?” This puts the learning onus on the students. The one exception to this is when, during the act of delving into deeper aspects of the topic, there

appears to be the wrong impression of a concept, then as the faculty member you should invite the class to correct it. At the end (which seems a bit backwards) of the discussion, it is okay to provide the precise definition (unless a student provides it earlier in the discussion). As a faculty member you are trying to generate internalization of the concept, not memorization of the concept. The difference between the two makes all the difference.

9) Challenge students to enhance leadership skills

There are technical problems and adaptive problems.⁷ While solving each type of problem requires leadership, adaptive problems require a more comprehensive leadership approach. As such, the goal of the majority of education institutions should be to develop adaptive leaders. Challenge your students early to treat the classroom as a leadership laboratory, wherein each one develops the skills necessary to lead. Most times students focus on getting the “right” answers in class or providing the most complete answers. While these are admirable pursuits, the more sought after goal should be to develop the team. Students can practice things such as convincing others, defending their position, cajoling allies, emotional temperance, eliciting key information, determining how various perspectives should impact the design, etc. All of which are critical attributes of an adaptive leader.

10) Innovate how to internalize

This harkens back to the philosophical pillar that it is what the student learns that is important. There are myriad ways to help the students internalize the critical attributes of any lesson. These techniques are well-documented in college teaching texts. However, the one that students have said was the most effective was to present them with something real-world and have them apply the day’s lesson to that. The lesson comes to life, and I have heard students say that they will never forget some lessons because of the relevance of the application.

It is a never-ending learning process for faculty

I invite the reader to revisit and reflect on the quote at the beginning of this article. This article provides one perspective on how a faculty member can make this happen. It is not meant to be an authoritative piece or the final word, but part of a continuing conversation on education. I offer that using the various techniques in pursuit of having students increase the capability to solve complex problems is not only a never-ending learning process for faculty, but an uncomfortable one as well. One has to read the room throughout and audible an innumerable number of times when using case-in-point. I invite the reader to perhaps use the information within this article to audible and change some small aspect of his or her teaching to improve the student’s learning and ability to lead in the interagency. **IAJ**

Notes

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Strength in Communication: A Study of Defense Intelligence Agency's Application

by Allyson Rogers

Napoleon Bonaparte has been credited with saying that “the secret of war lies in communications.”¹ Day-to-day operations are equally, if not arguably, more important than wartime communication, as transparent information flow allows for buy-in from the public, policymakers, and stakeholders. While there has long been ambiguity in approaches to communicating, academia and industry have worked to standardize best practices and share them with the federal government. However, bureaucracy and long-standing traditions to conceal and protect information prevent some government agencies, particularly those within the Department of Defense (DoD), from freely communicating. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) is one such organization. The DIA's efforts to effectively communicate internally and externally are inherently challenging because of the organizational structure, policy, and authorities of the communication office and the lack of understanding about the communications role in the strategic environment.

According to DoD policy, timely and accurate information should be made openly available so that the public, Congress, and media may better understand facts about national security and defense strategy. Joint Forces doctrine underscores communication as a core competency for leaders and a warfighting function (Command and Control), establishing that this skill requires more than just the transmission of information. Communication as a competency generates a shared understanding and builds mutual trust by providing timely, accurate, transparent, and authentic information—tenets that are fundamental among DoD and branch-specific doctrine, as well as academia and industry. More than just a foundational tenet, communication is a responsibility of every U.S. government office and DoD entity. One resource that is available throughout the DoD community to assist with the responsibility of disseminating information is the public affairs officer (PAO).

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The Role of Communicators

At the most fundamental level, PAOs are responsible for providing their leaders with the atmospherics and optics related to mission objectives, intent, and purpose, as well as the timely and truthful dissemination of information to a wide array of audiences, including but not limited to internal workforces, media, public and private entities, and Congress.² A communication professional must maintain situational awareness of historical, current, and potential cultural sensitivities, perspectives, and attitudes to appropriately advise principals on how to shape information and messages.³ To that end, the communicator serves as guiding counsel, which has the responsibility to not only inject considerations into decision-making conversations, but also to act as a sounding board when discussing options and opportunities to shape and enhance information.

When [a] message is miscommunicated, misinterpreted, or incomplete, credibility and relationships deteriorate.

Professional communicators require well-developed emotional intelligence to understand the resonating effect and impact of shared information.⁴ They are also responsible for understanding the way information is received, interpreted, and used based on the medium of delivery, use of key phrases and buzzwords, tone, gestures, translation, and other culturally and generationally specific internal and external factors. Therefore, the act of sharing and receiving information creates a communication-based systems perspective process that collectively and simultaneously generates meaning, and that meaning creates shared understanding and affords proper conveyance of an intended message. When that

message is miscommunicated, misinterpreted, or incomplete, credibility and relationships deteriorate.⁵

As it pertains to credibility, completeness and consistency are industry principles and standards that have the ability to quickly tarnish reputations when not upheld. Professional communicators are responsible for conducting business in a way that, to the best of their ability, provides transparent and comprehensive information to maintain accurate context and content.

Controlling the Narrative

The PAO's role requires more than just telling a story about an organization or mission, they must also seek to control it through continuously nested and complementary messages. While common dictionaries define a narrative as a formulated account of connected events—or a story—the U.S. government and DoD entities consider it a powerful and conceptual sense-making tool. Moreover, the narrative is a critical component of a communications strategy that nests within each higher echelon to ensure synchronization and consistency.

“Every HQ is engaged in an ongoing ‘Battle of the Narrative’—a cognitive contest between competing nations, entities, and ideologies. They focus on diminishing and supplanting the appeal of the adversary’s narrative while explaining and increasing the legitimacy of our mission and actions.”⁶ A narrative serves as “an effective way to showcase a message” that is crafted to build enduring support and understanding among audiences.⁷

The means of controlling a narrative requires relationships, rapport, trust, and constant observation between and among leaders, PAOs, and the public. Effective narratives control “interpretive frames, vocabularies of motives, feelings and affective displays and actions,” which then serve as functional sustainment of an activity, objective, or mission.⁸ Well-formulated

narratives invite a sense of social conformity, such that audiences subscribe to the conveyed message and begin to identify with it, further strengthening the information. Controlling and fostering that dynamic requires a strategic plan reinforcing the narrative's relativeness and position in the past, present, and future.⁹ The goal of controlling narratives is not to distill or dilute truth, but rather provide the necessary framework by which facts are meant to be interpreted and understood. When used effectively and with integrity, narrative control further strengthens and promotes objective clarity; it is a continual act of revising and redefining based on feedback, understanding, and developing information about emotions, trends, and interactions.

Employing Communicators

In his remarks at the 2019 Public Affairs Forum, then-Secretary of the Army Mark Esper proclaimed that commanders should use communications professionals as integral leaders on their command staff.¹⁰ Some commanders and agency leaders may not implement that recommendation, particularly because PAOs have a wide scope of responsibility that often is not well understood. However, if they heed Esper's guidance, they must also provide an information flow to support communication activities.

Effectively intertwining communicators into planning and operations briefs requires an organizational culture that understands and embraces transparency. When commanders are reluctant to integrate PAOs into their process it is often because it is unfamiliar, but it is becoming increasingly more necessary as a way to achieve desirable information effects. Retired Admiral Michael Mullen, former U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, identified the two have a mutually beneficial relationship. In 2009, he wrote, "... the lines between strategic, operational, and tactical are blurred beyond distinction. This is particularly true in the world

of communication, where videos and images plastered on the Web—or even the idea of their being so posted—can and often do drive national security decision-making."¹¹ Now, more than a decade later, those words have never been truer, especially with the role of disinformation and misinformation in the current environment. Tactical conditions are being impacted by the strategic level communications that are targeted at ill-advising and misguiding viewers to believe a false narrative and behave in a specific manner—not only does this have effects on the ground, but reverberations can be felt through the operational decision-making process.

Effectively intertwining communicators into planning and operations briefs requires an organizational culture that understands and embraces transparency.

The way agencies and organizations influence public opinion is through the written and spoken word. As discussed above, the role of PAOs is to understand how to properly shape that interaction with the public, and properly articulate information in a way that will be understood by audiences and achieve desired effects. According to Clausewitz the will and passion of people "constitute(s) the spirit that permeates war as a whole, and at an early stage they establish a close affinity with the will that moves and leads the whole mass of force."¹² Whether in war or in peace time, retired Colonel Steve Boylan wrote, "the court of domestic public opinion, driven by modern communications, can have a dramatic impact on military decisions, generally at the strategic and operational level, but also down to the tactical level."¹³ Publicly shared information has the capacity to sway the general populace to support or obstruct governmental and non-governmental actions; thus, public opinion and their situational

awareness about current and enduring events wield incredible power. It is not dissimilar to a shaping operation, wherein commanders use kinetic and non-kinetic battlefield tactics to influence the opposition to react and respond in a specific manner. Consequently, commanders must view strategic communication and the role of a PAO as equally important to an operation's success as the fires or logistician roles.¹⁴

Overall PAOs contribute to mission success because they have the expertise to “engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power.”¹⁵

DIA Directive (DIAD) 5400.400 identifies [the Office of Corporate Communications (OCC)] as the agency authority and principal advisor for corporate communications...

The DIA Way of Communicating

Within DIA, there's one directive that establishes the executive office that manages communications efforts—the Office of Corporate Communications (OCC). The DIA Directive (DIAD) 5400.400 identifies OCC as the agency authority and principal advisor for corporate communications, which is defined as “a set of activities and efforts that combines DIA's mission and vision into cohesive messages delivered to internal and external audiences such as overseas, partners, media, the general public, and other stakeholders.”¹⁶ The definition goes on to explain that OCC integrates the agency brand, identity, programs, and initiative information into a cohesive, coherent, and consistent message to build an understanding about DIA's mission, enhance credibility, and promote transparency.

However, the directive itself stops short of mandating timely and effective use of OCC in everyday agency activities, only identifying the need to coordinate with OCC prior to the release of information.

The directive does not outline the services that OCC provides the agency, nor does it supply a reasonable expectation for using the office in a timely fashion. Many interactions between agency program offices and directorates to OCC come in the form of a last-minute request for review. This reactive standard operating procedure does not afford OCC the necessary time to review products, ask questions, and release a thorough and brand-consistent message. While that is not always the case, there has been less accountability within the agency to adhere to the DIAD.

The DIA's Office of Corporate Communication comprises three divisions—congressional communication, strategic communications, and strategic outreach—and several branches, which include protocol, mission engagements, history, and multimedia. In total, OCC has more than 85 employees that include senior executives to junior officers and contractors. With the administrative support staff and senior leaders removed from action officer operations, there are approximately five to 10 people per branch who are responsible to a strategic-level agency of 16,500 employees. The DIA has five directorates, five regional centers, three integration centers, numerous field offices, and geographically dispersed officers at combatant commands. The OCC's ability to maintain operational awareness is challenged by the lack of its visibility and authority, which is merely recommended by the current DIAD.

An additional complication is that DIA's Office of Facilities and Services owns the print department and a design team, and there are several program-specific communication specialists dispersed throughout the agency's program offices, none of which have any

responsibility or accountability to OCC. At times, there have been conflicting directorate-driven tasks that have been ill-aligned to the greater agency brand and are adrift from the agency message. Furthermore, the Prepublication and Security Review Program, which by DIA policy has the authority to review and approve content for public dissemination, falls under the Information Management and Compliance Office. The current OCC-related DIAD does not articulate any responsibility for oversight of these agency assets, nor is there any mandate for coordination.

What Right Looks Like: One Way, Not the Way

Management theories and models would suggest that a hierarchical structure that mandates an upward flow of information for approval may breed a micromanagement dynamic that is time-intensive. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has demonstrated that the inclusion of the communication team can expedite the process and better prepare key stakeholders for potential pitfalls, proactively preparing the organization to answer questions.

"When our office was created, an email was sent from the then-assistant administrator to the agency's national leadership that explained the role of the office of communications and its duties to anticipate issues and manage the strategic communications for the agency writ large," said Kate Naughten, Communications Director for NOAA Fisheries. She explained that the administrator's memo established the communications office in 2010 as a direct report to the deputy assistant administrator for operations. The new office also had support from the agency's chief of staff, which has consistently been the key to the office's success. Since the memo, Naughten and her team established the type of services that her office

would offer, including proactive planning and message development, crisis communications, video, podcast, website design and architecture, article writing, product consultations, editing, communications training, and coaching.

...inclusion of the communication team can expedite the [flow of information] and better prepare key stakeholders...

"We're an office built to serve the agency. We are a team of technical (subject matter experts) in strategic communication. Our leadership and the agency as a whole needed that," said Naughten.

That original memo created a common understanding that the agency's national communications office would be the trip-wire for any controversial communications issue before it bubbled up to leadership. We develop and vet what the agency's position and plan will be when it comes to communicating complex, controversial issues. Oftentimes we're the conduit to leadership. So, if (staff) want to message decisions, issues or milestones externally, and they want leadership – being the assistant administrator and the deputy assistants and chief scientist – sign-off, then they have to work with us.

Naughten explained that while the agency does not have a specific policy that dictates the standard operating procedure of funneling actions and ongoing activities through the NOAA Fisheries Office of Communications, the shared understanding established by the memo and the continued endorsement from the chief of staff's office help keep things running smoothly. She explained that operations are efficient when her team is read in from the beginning, not at the last minute. It is a success when leadership expresses their appreciation for the efforts to properly

prepare and then execute the communications plans they are sent.

“We live in the middle ground between the subject matter experts who are involved in the issue and are trying to develop the messages and the leaders who have the final say on our agency’s position or approach,” she said, adding that their standard operating procedures, including developing communications plans for high visibility announcements, “usually guarantee success” because it is approached as a whole-of-agency, team effort.

“We live in the middle ground between the subject matter experts who are...trying to develop the messages and the leaders who have the final say on our agency’s position...”

NOAA Fisheries, similar to DIA, has three divisions—regulatory programs, scientific programs, and operations—five regional offices, six science centers, and six headquarters program offices, alongside policy, legal, and administrative and technical support offices. NOAA Fisheries employs 4,200 people and the communications team is comprised of approximately 14 people at headquarters. The NOAA Fisheries communications efforts are augmented by local teams from regional offices. Some locations have one or two full-time dedicated communications specialists, while other locations have additional assets in the form of contractors.

Naughten explained that, when forming the national communications office, some of the technical experts that were dispersed throughout headquarters offices were brought together to build the new national team. However, without a wire-and-block organizational chart that incorporated all communicators under the then-newly established office, some programs

maintained their lead communications specialist. Thus, when NOAA Fisheries Communications was established, so too were weekly meetings among the communications office staff and the program-specific communications staff, which eventually developed into a NOAA Fisheries Headquarters Communications team. From there, coordination efforts were expanded to include the regional and science center communications leads. That led to the formation of the Regional Communications Council, which has biweekly meetings, as well as a one-week-long annual in-session meeting. NOAA Fisheries leadership usually participates in the Regional Communications Council’s annual meetings.

“We had to work really hard to establish relationships,” said Naughten, adding that it took nearly four years to get operations to where they are today, running smoothly, not only within the agency but also with audiences. She said that just as much work went into obtaining agency buy-in as did establishing a way to communicate transparent, informative messages to the public, media, and stakeholders. “When new leadership or communications staff come on board, there’s an education process to help them get up to speed and understand how we plan for, coordinate, and conduct communications. We have a collegial, collaborative culture and that’s worked well. It’s a two-way street. There’s a lot of trust among the agency leadership and the communications team.”

“For most communications, our office is the conduit to and from leadership; we help facilitate getting information to the front office and we try and shape communications projects or products before they get too far down the pipeline for clearance,” she said. “Usually, staff call to discuss an upcoming issue, announcement, event, or whatever with us. For the high visibility issues, I try and get initial feedback from the chief of staff. Armed with those insights, our office then works on preparing and executing a communications plan for whatever the issue

is. Our goal is to add value, be of service, and facilitate a successful outcome. Our success is the agency's success.”

While Naughten and NOAA Fisheries have developed a culture of inter-cooperation and collaboration, she said that, for continuity's sake, it would help to have established policies and authorities. The concern is that as employees retire or move on, those who have seen what “right” looks like and how fluid information can flow from developer to leaders to dissemination, there's nothing that formalizes the process or authorities.

Adopting the NOAA Model

In a Joint Force Quarterly article, Admiral Mullen wrote, “I would argue that most strategic communication problems are not communication problems at all. They are policy and execution problems.”¹⁷ While the organizational structure, policy, and authorities are not officially documented for NOAA Fisheries Communications Office, the way in which they conduct business is a model proven effective for disseminating information and protecting the agency by providing accurate, timely, and transparent communication to stakeholders. Using the concept for operations established by NOAA Fisheries, it is recommended to more fully actualize its potential by codifying standards and protocols into policy and authorities bequeathed to a communications office.

As previously identified, DIA's communication office is currently supported by DIAD 5400.400, which stipulates the existence of the office, but stops short of supplying legitimate authorities or permanency among staffing actions for leaders and decision-makers. DIA policy does not require communication efforts (from anywhere within the agency) to be coordinated with or through the DIA Office of Corporate Communications.

As Naughten explained, with agency-wide buy-in for coordination through the national

communications office, endorsed by the deputy assistant administrator for operations, the chief of staff, and other key leaders, NOAA Fisheries—as an agency—is better prepared for communicating high-level decisions and ready for blowback, media queries, congressional requests, etc. Thus, program offices providing the communications office with better situational awareness of activities has worked well for the agency. While the communications office is not solely responsible for mitigating and handling blowback, by having visibility on issues, messages, products, and program happenings, NOAA Fisheries Communications is able to anticipate what audiences might say, or do; readily positioning the agency to respond.

DIA policy does not require communication efforts (from anywhere within the agency) to be coordinated with or through the DIA Office of Corporate Communications.

Naughten explained that her office is not the authority to say what is a “go or no-go.” But she said her office “can ask probing questions and provide feedback to start a conversation about potential communications issues that may not have been considered,” explaining that action officers and subject matter experts are solely focused on their project usually, not the how or why of strategic communications. “We help expand the discussion to take into account other key factors like messaging, tactics, and timing,” she said. The NOAA Fisheries Communications Office aligns information released with a most suitable timeline and broadens the spectrum of release to the advantage of the agency, thereby pacing agency messages—harnessing timely interest of—and spacing it out so there is a steady stream, while also connecting key influences or affected parties to ensure no one is blindsided.

Like the DIA’s director, NOAA Fisheries’ Assistant Administrator is a political appointee, which means the agency leader changes every few years. “With new leadership comes different levels of access and interest for the communications office,” she said. However, the continuity positions in the NOAA Fisheries’ front office provide enough institutional knowledge to support the intent of the 2010 memo and solidifies the role of the communicators. Additionally, there is a NOAA policy that dedicates a position on the agency’s leadership council to the director of communications, which assists in maintaining top-level access to decision-making conversations.

Pertaining to DIA, it would be advantageous to adopt the NOAA Fisheries model and, taking it a step further, formalize policies and authorities for the betterment of the OCC’s efforts that, in turn, support the whole agency. Among the recommendations for changes include a policy to include OCC on traffic from program offices to the front office (i.e., command suite), authority to be the clearance and release authority of DIA-related information, a policy to provide an enforcement mechanism to use DIA branding, and a restructuring of all DIA communications assets to be organic assets of OCC with embedded assignments to the directorates and program offices.

The...most comprehensive recommendation for DIA includes a complete overhaul of the communication personnel structure within the agency.

Establishing a policy that mandates OCC inclusion in conversations and traffic to-and-from the front office ensures that the communications office has visibility on agency activities in real-time. The OCC, in this instance, would not be used as a filter or gate guard, just as NOAA Fisheries Communications is not.

Instead, OCC would be a trusted agent for sound counsel, a PAO role defined by DoD doctrine. In doing so, OCC would have situational awareness to appropriately and timely interject to ensure the agency is protected and communications efforts are more proactive, thereby aligning strategy to mission for the betterment of the agency. In serving as a trusted advisor, there is a responsibility to explore and anticipate how information will or could be received to posture the agency (and its leaders) for follow-up questions or blow-back, as well as act as a sounding board to enhance opportunities to promote transparency and instill trust among audiences. Additionally, with the OCC as the sole release authority of agency information, capitalizing on the currently existing directive, but with the above policy in place, enhances efforts to cohesively and coherently disseminate information about the agency.

Currently, the OCC DIAD identifies that agency elements will adhere to the branding guidance. The DIAD charges the OCC with creating and maintaining branding guidance. However, there are no enforcement mechanisms established to generate followership of the directive. If the DIAD were expanded to articulate that no agency information would be shared unless it is in proper branding, using more stringent language, could provide enough deterrence for issuances off-brand. This would effectively mitigate the lack of knowledge about the DIA, its mission, and program office activities though ensuring released content has a unified look and feel.

The last and most comprehensive recommendation for DIA includes a complete overhaul of the communication personnel structure within the agency. Essentially, this action suggests that all communicators within DIA—from the program offices and directorates—alongside all related service capabilities would be absorbed into OCC. This restructuring would include the design

and print department from the Office of Facilities and Services, the Prepublication and Security Review Program from the Information Management and Compliance Office, the design and dissemination team from the Directorate for Analysis, and the outlier program-specific communication specialists. These assets would be organic to OCC, with direct accountability and authority from OCC. To that end, personnel would be task-organized and embedded in the program offices and directorates for day-to-day operations. Bringing the entire communication specialties and capabilities into and under one umbrella ensures alignment with the agency strategy as the primary function and purpose; this would reduce mission creep and overtasking of communicators while enabling better collaboration and coordination among communication efforts for the betterment of the agency brand and consistency of messaging.

Naughten said that at NOAA Fisheries collegiality drives collaboration. However, with DIA as a DoD entity, in which policy drives nearly everything, having a restructuring with the policy that authorizes the manning strength and tasking capabilities of OCC, it would be easier to gain traction and have a lasting impact for the long-term agency gain. Thus, top-level reinforcement and building relationships in order to use the NOAA Fisheries Communications model as the standard operating procedure will not be enough for OCC.

The one aspect not yet addressed is the DIA application of a communication model that works for an agency outside of the Intelligence Community (IC) and with a completely different mission set. Promoting more authority, a restructure, and codified access and visibility does not mean that additional content will be shared to public audiences. However, it presents an opportunity to share more, when appropriate, with intentional audiences because the correct technical experts are aware of real-time reports and operations. To this point, during

the Annual Threat Assessments hearings and other open congressional sessions, politicians and oversight officials have asked the IC to be more transparent and share more information. If additional access and authority were given to the right communicators, brought together by a cohesive and collaborative structure throughout the agency, that request could more easily be met. The emphasis of this recommendation is about information, not influence; if more meaningful content about the agency, its mission, and operations could be shared, it would be the responsibility of the agency and its leaders to promote transparency, tell its story, inform the public, and raise situational awareness about the DIA and the IC.

...without the appropriate time and coordination among agency program offices, there are numerous missed opportunities or underdeveloped communication plans.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if the DIA is going to continue to expand situational awareness of stakeholders and compete for its equal place among federal agency messaging, it must implement changes in the way of policy and authority for the OCC. The CIA and other DoD entities have a large publicly accessible information flow, while the DIA is working to better posture its messaging in the public arena. But without the appropriate time and coordination among agency program offices, there are numerous missed opportunities or underdeveloped communication plans. By issuing policy, the OCC would have the legitimacy and resources it has been lacking. Additionally, by providing expanded authority the agency would reinforce the role of the OCC. In the current information age, it is imperative that DIA messages and information are heard

and understood among stakeholders. The DIA must lean forward and be proactive in its approach to communications or fail in the information environment. **IAJ**

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