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Army Doctrine and Modern War: Notes Toward a New Edition of FM 100-5

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"Contemporary operational art . . . faces an array of new problems. In this area much still remains unexplored and unresolved. Colossal changes in technology, armaments, and combat orders, which are reflected in the evolution of tactics, are still far from being satisfactorily understood in the theoretical sense on the scale of . . . the armed front as a whole." -- G. S. Isserson, 1932[1]

If the United States Army went to war tomorrow against a determined, technologically competent foe and based its operations on the doctrine outlined in Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, 1993,[2] the result would be at best a bloody victory, at worst a bloodier defeat. Army doctrine has become confused. Although it is clear that information technology has the potential to revolutionize many aspects of warfare, few are prepared to predict the outcomes of that revolution. And although information-induced changes have already begun, even the US Army must still fight using industrial age materiel and techniques.

AirLand Battle doctrine, epitomized by FM 100-5/1986, was and still is a very good doctrine for industrial age warfare. Had subsequent editions of FM 100-5 retained it and improved on it, the US Army might now have a sound basis for reviewing its core operational doctrine. Unfortunately, AirLand Battle became one of the casualties of the end of the Cold War; FM 100-5/1993 eliminated it in favor of a generalized doctrine which is antithetical to the key elements of AirLand Battle. The Army's most forward-looking doctrinal piece, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, has subsequently consigned AirLand Battle to the dustbin of history along with other legacies of the industrial age.

The scope and meaning of the information revolution for the Army have not yet become clear. We are still in the industrial age, as plans for Force XXI readily acknowledge. And even in the absence of a determined and technologically sophisticated foe, the goals of our doctrine should be the same as they are now: to win quickly, decisively, and at the least possible cost. If we are in fact facing a period of transition between 20th-century warfare and some as-yet- undetermined future form of war, it behooves us to make AirLand Battle doctrine our basis for understanding the future. That doctrine, suitably modified, can serve us until the full array of information technology-- upon which rests current speculation of radical change in warfare--has been tested, acquired, and integrated into our fleets of equipment. That doctrine, or one very similar to it, can then serve as the basis for our information age doctrine. For the immediate future we need to help AirLand Battle doctrine become all it can possibly be.

Conceptual Dissonance

It has become fashionable to profess that the current fascination with information technology will result in a manner of war so dominated by high-tech weaponry and so different from that to which we are accustomed that our current modes of thinking about warfare will become irrelevant. Intelligent observers have pointed out that even in the current epoch the ability to use strategic weapon systems to attain tactical goals, and tactical operations to attain strategic goals, is blurring the levels of war as we are used to thinking about them.[3] At the same time, Force XXI documents include wholly new categories and concepts of war--particularly information war and spectrum supremacy--implying that future war will bear little or no relation to industrial age warfare.[4] Yet there is every reason to believe that fundamental continuities in warfare will not be changing at the rate at which we expect our new technologies to change

the characteristics of conflict.

Previous radical changes in the ways and means of warfare, such as those induced by the gunpowder revolution and the industrial revolution, did not render all previous understandings of war irrelevant. They revolutionized time-space relationships on the battlefield, completely redefined tactical formations and drills, and increased firepower by orders of magnitude, but important continuities remained. Commanders still needed to mass their forces--understanding "mass" as the concentration of overwhelming force at the decisive point and time--to defeat their enemies, and they still needed to win as quickly and decisively as possible at the least cost. To do this, they still needed to maneuver, supply, command, staff, and provide intelligence to their forces. These aspects of warfare were not evolving at rates comparable to the dominant change or to each other.

The technology which brought about the gunpowder revolution, for example, although it had important implications for maneuver, supply, command, and staffing, did not in itself provide the solutions for the problems it created, and did not affect intelligence gathering or dissemination at all. In the same way, it seems certain that an information revolution in our own time will neither happen all at once, affecting every aspect of warfare simultaneously, nor affect all aspects in comparable degrees, nor render irrelevant all doctrine and ways of thinking about war that preceded it. It will be necessary, in other words, continually to change and perfect a doctrine, rather than seek to produce all at once an "information age warfare" doctrine for which there is only an incomplete "information age" army.

A large part of the problem is that the US Army recognizes (judging from Force XXI) only two types of doctrine: prescriptive and conceptual. AirLand Battle doctrine, seen as prescriptive, was designed to meet a particular threat in a particular theater. Hence it could be declared outdated because the threat to which it owed its existence had passed. Conventional wisdom--euphoric and largely misguided--similarly declared that because Europe would not likely be the scene of future American conflicts, we could create a doctrine more suited to undefined opponents in undiscovered regions. Force XXI and FM 100-5/1993, therefore, claim to be more conceptual than prescriptive and to rely on the excellent leaders of America's forces to "fill in the gaps." [5]

This view of doctrine is too simple: doctrine can be conceptual without being devoid of content, and it can be prescriptive without being either too specific or too binding. The real problem is that American doctrine has never recognized that "prescriptions" can arise not from particular threats and regional scenarios, but simply from the constant objectives of the state and the nature of war at a given time. This problem is especially serious for American doctrine today with respect to the operational art, which has been the most important determinant of victory throughout the industrial age, and bids fair to remain so for many years to come.

Current American doctrine does not distinguish between the operational level of war and the operational art, yet there is an important difference. The operational level of war is simply, as American doctrine describes it, the level between strategy and tactics which combines tactical successes into campaigns that achieve strategic victory. The operational art is something else again. It is the determined search for ways to achieve dominating maneuver-- a manner of fighting using high-speed maneuver and decisive firepower together to disorganize and confuse the enemy so that he can be defeated psychologically even before his forces are destroyed physically. [6] Operational art, in other words, has a content.

In a given period of warfare, under given conditions of war, operational art contains general suggestions for how to achieve dominating maneuver. By defining operational art as merely the operational level of war, American doctrine eliminates that content altogether and provides little guidance to the operational commander about how best to conduct operations so as to win decisively, quickly, and at the lowest cost. American doctrine must take its starting point not from potential technological capabilities, as Force XXI does, nor from a simple consideration of possible missions the army might have to perform, as FM 100-5/1993 did, but instead from the serious consideration of this question: given the current nature of warfare, how can American armies best achieve the objective of winning quickly and decisively and at the lowest cost in lives and money?

AirLand Battle doctrine was the closest America has yet come to a coherent doctrine which answers that fundamental question, even though the doctrine did not specifically ask it or set out to answer it. The reason for that success was, in part, the fact that AirLand Battle doctrine had its roots in Soviet operational doctrine, a doctrine which did explicitly

pose and answer that question. As we shall see, however, FM 100-5/1993 has taken American doctrine down a wrong path. The rest of this article examines AirLand Battle and its source, Soviet operational art, with a view to restoring and improving the legitimacy of the concept of AirLand Battle. Doing so would produce a doctrine capable of taking us well into the era of information warfare and, by constantly adjusting to changing circumstances, seeing us safely through it.

The Development of Soviet Operational Art: Deep Battle

Soviet operational doctrine came into being in the 1920s as a tentative answer to the fundamental problem of war at that time: how to return maneuver to a battlefield dominated by the firepower revolution. As tanks and aircraft increased in performance and reliability, Soviet doctrine changed to meet the changes in warfare brought about by the maneuver revolution resulting from the combination of new technologies and new doctrines in the 1920s and 1930s. This process continued--although interrupted by the purge of the army in 1937 and the consequent triumph of ideological stupidity through 1941--until the late 1950s when the advent of the nuclear age again posed a seemingly insurmountable challenge to operational art. Of what import is operational art, Soviet theorists and political leaders asked, when the next war will certainly be decided by nuclear missiles? By the late 1960s, those theorists (and a new group of political leaders) had come to the conclusion that operational art epitomized by the rapid maneuver of large-scale armored forces remained at the center of modern warfare, and found that the techniques developed to support such art in the 1920s were readily adapted to the new conditions of the nuclear age.

Deep Battle is the only part of Soviet operational art which is reasonably well known in the West, and it is the element of Soviet doctrine most accurately represented in AirLand Battle doctrine. Soviet Field Regulation 1936 (PU-36) described Deep Battle as "attacking the enemy simultaneously over the entire depth of his field-force layout with a view to isolating him, completely surrounding him, and destroying him." [7] But Deep Battle was only part of Soviet operational art. To understand fully how the Soviets intended to achieve dominating maneuver, we must look more closely at the context and content of Soviet operational art.

The Context of Deep Battle

Deep Battle doctrine was developed specifically to solve the fundamental problem in war at the time: how to restore maneuver to a battlefield which had become static. Despite the Soviets' excellent understanding of the problem, they could propose no solution to it in the 1920s aside from the wish that technology would solve the dilemma that technology had created. What they could and did do, however, was identify the key traits which the new technology would require in order to solve the principal problem in war.

The Soviets recognized that they were in a period of rapid technological change and that a revolution in military affairs (RMA) was imminent, [8] but they did not simply wait to see what that RMA would bring. On the contrary, even in 1921, when the performance of tanks was still hopelessly inadequate to the task, they began to outline what tanks would have to do in order to solve the operational problem. Soviet military leaders decided to guide the RMA by driving technological change in a direction established by doctrine rather than allowing unfettered technological change to determine it. [9]

Successive Operations--The Heart of Soviet Operational Art

Deep Battle was not alone the entire solution of the problem, for, in addition to trench warfare and the elastic defense-in-depth, the Soviets believed that the consequences of the development of mass armies and of the complete mobilization of societies for war also had to be dealt with. A war between mass armies, they believed, could not be won in a single general engagement but only in an uninterrupted series of successive victories. [10] Napoleon's age had passed: the search for a single decisive battle in the modern age would be fruitless. [11]

The Soviets came to believe, therefore, that victory in modern warfare could be attained only through a series of operations executed consecutively and that "the uninterruptedness of the conduct of operations is the main condition of victory." Operations could not and should not alternate with pauses, they argued, and commanders must act creatively to maintain constant pressure on the enemy. [12]

M. N. Tukhachevskii, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces in the 1930s, wrote in 1924 that operations must flow together as though they were simply "separate extensions of a single operation." If the enemy can once be brought to battle, Tukhachevskii reasoned, and his defensive position broken, then the "new destructive operation must follow straight from the advance, without any loss of time whatever." The key to victory in operations, Tukhachevskii believed, was maintaining the initiative at all times:

One must remember that, even if he has only routed the enemy in the initial operation rather than destroyed him, the attacker is in an extremely favourable position vis-à-vis the defeated side. He has control of the situation, provided only that he denies the enemy freedom of action by continuous pursuit.[13]

Tukhachevskii placed special emphasis on the absolute necessity for exploitation to follow immediately on penetration, because a pause "deprives the victor of continued control of the situation . . . [and] faces him with the need to fight a new battle, in which the chances of success are more or less equal for both sides, just as they are in the initial operation." [14]

This belief in the danger of pauses was one of the fundamental principles of Soviet operational art. G. S. Isserson, the Chief of the Department of Operational Art at the Frunze General Staff Academy in the 1930s, saw Deep Battle and the uninterruptedness of operations as inseparable. He argued that in the conditions of contemporary warfare "future deep operations will appear not as single links of a series of interrupted engagements, but as an unbroken chain extending for the entire depth of military activities." [15]

This vision of deep battle is dramatically different from the vision of deep battle which served as the basis for AirLand Battle. Whereas the depth in AirLand Battle was to be achieved by artillery, aviation, and missile fires, [16] Isserson believed that battle depth would result from the rapid penetration of ground forces into the enemy's rear and their uninterrupted pursuit of his fleeing forces. Isserson saw ground forces as the heart of all operations, close and deep, and saw artillery and aviation elements only as support elements for those ground forces. He believed, moreover, that the campaign would be decided by deep operations pursuing the vanquished foe. [17]

Nevertheless, the real solution to the problem, Isserson argued, lay not in technology or even in the development of appropriate doctrine for using the technology, but in the proper understanding of the nature of war. In the period of mass armies and defenses deployed in great depth, Isserson believed that army doctrine must be changed fundamentally. An army simply could not deploy for maneuver in depth in the same fashion in which it would deploy to fight linear war.

Isserson recognized that the reader would ask, "How can you keep the attack going that long? You will surely have to stop when your attack culminates and regroup prior to retaking the offensive!" He responded, "The exhaustion of the offensive has its true cause not so much in the self-exhaustion of the strength of the attacker as in the growth of the opposition of the defender." For the defender, pushed back on his reserves and his logistical bases, may well end up stronger at the culminating point of the attack than he had been at the beginning. Isserson believed that the greatest danger for the attacker lay in thinking that "the final moment of the operation would be the easiest," and therefore failing to prepare adequately for the final, climactic battle deep in the enemy's rear.

He argued that, on the contrary, the initial attack, "always secured by the timely concentration of forces and well-planned preparation," will be by far the easiest, but that

the greatest tension and crisis must be expected at the end. The art and firmness of the operational commander consists in approaching this decisive moment with full providence, with a new wave of operational efforts and fully armed with the necessary forces and means for the final completion of the destruction operation.

He concluded that "the contemporary operation is an operation of depth; it must be calculated for the entire depth and must be prepared to conquer the entire depth." [18]

Such a general statement of the "solution," Isserson recognized, provided no solution at all. He saw, rather, that

doctrine had to include specific suggestions for the solution of known problems. Isserson was not willing to accept a doctrine which foresaw that attacks would culminate prematurely, causing the army to go over to the defensive while preparing new strikes. He believed instead that the deployment and maneuver of the attacking forces had to be changed to avoid such premature culmination:

The deep echelonment of the opposition calls forth just as deep a deployment of the offensive. This offensive must be like a whole series of waves flowing toward the shore with growing strength in order to wash away and destroy it with their uninterrupted blows from the depths.[19]

Isserson thus introduced the notion that is at the heart of Soviet operational art: the echelonment of the attack to match the echelonment of the defense, and the principle of strategic dispersion of forces prior to their massing for the final decisive blow.

The outgrowth of the echelonment of the offensive was the "operational-maneuver group" (OMG).[20] The concept is obvious in light of the experience of the First World War: the forces which make the breakthrough cannot then exploit it in the face of strong resistance, for they will already have exhausted themselves, whereas arriving defending reserves will be fresh. A special "exploitation echelon" must, therefore, be maintained which can penetrate the breach opened by the assault forces and move for decisive victory into the operational depths. The Soviets conceived of the OMG as a second-echelon force which, itself tactically echeloned,[21] would be capable of carrying on a series of uninterrupted consecutive operations culminating in "the destruction of the opposition of the defense throughout the entire operational depth." Isserson believed his principal enemy to be positional warfare, and sought to defeat it not simply with Deep Battle or OMGs, but with the true implementation of the operational art: the pursuit of dominating maneuver in the form of a planned series of consecutive operations conducted without pause from the moment when breakthrough was achieved to the complete destruction of the enemy's defense throughout its entire depth.

AirLand Battle Doctrine

AirLand Battle doctrine is closely akin to the precepts of Soviet operational art outlined above. The kinship is especially close in the areas of Deep Battle and armored doctrine. Despite the numerous passages in FM 100-5/1986 which resonate strongly with Soviet operational art, however, many other passages, and many more omissions, reveal that the authors of FM 100-5/1986 rejected some of the central tenets of Soviet operational art. The AirLand Battle doctrine outlined in FM 100-5/1986 is, therefore, contradictory and incoherent in important areas and does not provide a clear guide for the conduct of war at the operational level.

To begin with, however, AirLand Battle doctrine was a giant step forward for the American army, and the "tenets" of AirLand Battle were and are far superior to the "principles of war" which guided American doctrine before 1986, and which seem to be returning to prominence today (at least to judge by FM 100-5/1993). AirLand Battle doctrine placed maximum emphasis on the initiative:

[AirLand Battle doctrine] is based on securing or retaining the initiative and exercising it aggressively to accomplish the mission. . . . [W]e must throw the enemy off balance with a powerful blow from an unexpected direction, follow up rapidly to prevent his recovery and continue operations aggressively to achieve the higher commander's goals.[22]

The first tenet of AirLand Battle, initiative, reads almost as if it had been written by Isserson:

Applied to the force as a whole, initiative requires a constant effort to force the enemy to conform to our operational purpose and tempo while retaining our own freedom of action. . . .

In the attack, *initiative implies never allowing the enemy to recover from the initial shock of the attack.* This requires surprise in selecting the time and place of attack; concentration, speed, audacity, and violence in execution; the seeking of soft spots; flexible shifting of the main effort; and prompt transition to exploitation. The goal is the creation of a fluid situation in which the enemy steadily loses track of events and thus coherence. *The defender is not given the time to identify and mass his forces or supporting fires against the attack because of the ambiguity of the situation presented to him and the rapidity with*

which it changes. Retaining the initiative over time requires thinking ahead, planning beyond the initial operation, and anticipating key events on the battlefield hours, days, and weeks ahead.[23]

AirLand Battle doctrine implicitly recognized the problem which the Soviets had developed their operational art to solve--if the defender is given the opportunity to gather his wits about him and reorganize, he can at the least re-form a coherent defense and force the attacker to fight, in effect, another penetration battle, the costs of which will be high and the result of which will be in doubt. The solution is to develop a force structure and a doctrine which, having once penetrated, will be able to retain the initiative, keep the enemy disorganized, and push forward at high speed until total victory has been attained.

The second tenet of AirLand Battle, agility, also underlined the importance of speed and the need to retain the initiative:

Agility--the ability of friendly forces to act faster than the enemy--is the first prerequisite for seizing and holding the initiative. Such greater quickness permits the rapid concentration of friendly strength against enemy vulnerabilities. This must be done repeatedly so that by the time the enemy reacts to one action, another has already taken its place, disrupting his plans and leading to late, uncoordinated, and piecemeal enemy responses.[24]

In other words, the attacker must force changes in the situation faster than the defender can evaluate and respond to them. In this way the attacker can keep the defender from ever re-forming a coherent defense and initiating counter-measures of his own. Similarly, in its discussion of close, deep, and rear operations and the use of armored forces, AirLand Battle doctrine appears to be a statement of determination to execute dominating maneuver--the goal of good operational art.

But there were important problems with American operational doctrine even in 1986. In the first place, AirLand Battle doctrine took no real account of the issue of consecutive operations. The Soviets in the 1920s had identified not one, but two fundamental problems in that epoch of warfare: trenches and positional warfare resulting from the firepower revolution formed one problem, but the enormous growth both of populations and of industrial power, and the development of the means of harnessing those factors to create mass armies, formed a separate problem. Of those two problems, the mass army and the mobilized state has proved the more enduring, yet AirLand Battle doctrine did not recognize that this problem might prevent the Army from attaining decisive objectives in a single operation. It mentioned only:

Sequential campaigns in a single theater occur when a large force changes or secures its original goal or when the conditions of the conflict change. . . . Or a new offensive campaign may have to be undertaken if strategic goals change or are not secured in the initial campaign.[25]

Far from recognizing and confronting the likely need for consecutive operations, therefore, AirLand Battle doctrine implicitly assumed that consecutive operations, in the ordinary course of events, would not be necessary. In other words, AirLand Battle doctrine rejected the advance made by Soviet operational art and returned to the age of Napoleon in its thinking:

[Operational art's] essence is the identification of the enemy's operational center-of-gravity--his source of strength or balance--and the concentration of superior combat power against that point to achieve a decisive success.[26]

The general assertion that the attacker should seek out the defender's center of gravity and attempt to destroy it is, of course, correct. The problem with this statement, as with many other statements in FM 100-5/1986, is, rather, in its tone and in its omissions. In general, AirLand Battle doctrine leaves the reader with the feeling that if it is not possible to win the war in a single campaign, or the campaign in a single operation, then American forces will pause, regroup, plan, and deliberately launch another campaign or operation. The doctrine implies that it is not necessarily the case that successive operations will be needed. By failing entirely to address the issue of operational pauses, furthermore, FM 100-5/1986 conveys the impression that the length of the pause is not important. These problems are especially clear in its fixation on culminating points and phases of the offensive.

Reaching back to Clausewitz for another concept, AirLand Battle doctrine asserts that "a vital consideration for operational commanders during a campaign is sensing culminating points." It continues:

In the attack, operational commanders design their campaigns to defeat the enemy prior to reaching their culminating point. Defending commanders try to avoid a decision until the attacker has to assume the defense himself. The attacker must sense his own culminating point and avoid overextension. Since all offensive operations end in defensive dispositions, this phase of the campaign should be foreseen and planned.[27]

It hardly requires saying that commanders design campaigns to win before they culminate, or that the defenders try to stay alive until the attack has culminated, thereby allowing the defenders to seize the initiative and counter-attack. It is also obvious that the attacker must be wary of his attack's culminating too soon, as well as of overextending himself. From all of which it does not follow that all offensive operations end in defensive dispositions and that a defensive phase of an offensive campaign should be foreseen and planned for. On the contrary, the conclusion should be that the attacker should in every way possible see to it that his attack does not culminate too soon. If the attacker feels that his attack will soon culminate, he should examine every expedient which could keep the attack going long enough to attain his objective. Above all, the planners of the campaign should have seen to it in the first place that the attack would succeed before it culminated and should have made provision against the need to reinforce the attack to keep it from culminating prematurely. To foresee and plan for a phase of defensive operations before the attack has achieved its objectives, a proposition stated clearly here, is to foresee and plan for likely defeat.

The theme of culminating points and transition to the defense recurs later on in FM 100-5/1986:

Operational level offensive planning must take into account the influence of friction and make a realistic estimate of friendly capabilities. When complete success cannot be attained in a single operation, the campaign should be separated into phases that allow the attacker to regain the advantage before continuing. When forces are inadequate for the complete occupation of the theater, the commander may have to assume the defensive when he has reached his culminating point.[28]

Again, the failure in the doctrine is in omission, not in statement. It is true that when forces inadequate to attain the objective are launched on an offensive they will probably reach a culminating point and have to go over to the defensive while reinforcements are brought up and successive operations are planned. The bland statement of this proposition, however, implies that it is a normal occurrence which presents no particular problems when, in fact, it is a dreadful occurrence which may cost success in the operation, the campaign, or even the war. This statement implicitly assumes that force composition, force structure, and doctrine are constant and that they may or may not be sufficient to attain the objective. If they are not, then the attack will have to stop for a time. What will happen when the attack stops is not described, but is clear from history: the defender will regroup and reorganize his forces into a coherent defensive position. He will bring up reinforcements and develop fieldworks and obstacles. If the pause is long enough, he may correct deficiencies in his own planning and doctrine which the just-concluded successful operation has shown him. In the worst case, he may launch his own offensives either as spoiling attacks or as counteroffensives. The initiative, in other words, will have passed to the defender, and the attacker again will have to expend lives, time, and treasure to regain it and proceed with his own attack. This is not a matter to be tossed off lightly or (as here) totally ignored. On the contrary, it is the heart of the problem of operational art.

The Wrong Direction: FM 100-5 in 1993

Whatever may have been the flaws of the AirLand Battle concept outlined in FM 100-5/1986, that doctrine was nevertheless both a vast improvement over previous American doctrine and a giant step in the right direction. Since the experience of the Gulf War did not invalidate the basic principles of AirLand Battle--or of operational art as the Soviets conceived it, for that matter--it would have seemed obvious that the next iteration of FM 100-5 would see even further improvement in AirLand Battle doctrine and additional steps in the right direction. Unfortunately, FM 100-5/1993 completely eliminated the more or less coherent doctrine embodied by AirLand Battle and replaced it with a confused mass of contradictory operational prescriptions which add up to a determination to move slowly and cautiously, avoid casualties at all costs, and achieve victory through planning. So thoroughly was AirLand Battle

rejected as a concept that the term does not appear in FM 100-5/1993, a sign as ominous in its own way as was the disappearance of the term "deep battle" from Soviet doctrine in the years following Tukhachevskii's murder.

The largest single change in the tone of FM 100-5 in 1993 was the incredible emphasis on planning as the route to all military benefits, to the exclusion of even the most basic advice about how to achieve good combined arms operations, synchronization, initiative, and surprise operationally:

The application of combined arms . . . is complex and demanding. *It requires detailed planning and violent execution by highly trained soldiers and units who have been thoroughly rehearsed.*[29]

Retaining the initiative over time requires thinking ahead, *planning beyond the initial operations*, and anticipating key events on the battlefield hours, days, and weeks in advance.[30]

In a violently executed attack, agility is particularly important. It requires that commanders *anticipate developments and prepare branches and sequels* so that they are ready to exploit opportunities by shifting forces and activities quickly.[31]

To preserve synchronization on a fluid battlefield, *commanders conduct detailed initial planning.*[32]

In each of these examples, the problem lies not in what was said, but in what was not said. By pointing out the need for careful planning and implying that initiative, synchronization, and agility, among other traits, can be attained through planning, the doctrine obscures the fact that *action*, not preparation, wins or loses battles. The most detailed description of desirable procedures in FM 100-5/1993 focuses exclusively on the planning process:

As part of the preparation process (during the deliberate planning process for lower echelons before they issue their orders), commanders gather their subordinate commanders and battle staffs to review and adjust the synchronization of the battle plan. This brief-back is normally conducted over a map or terrain model. It begins with the subordinate commanders' descriptions of the timing and employment of their concepts of maneuver and fires to execute their commander's course of action and likely contingencies. Face-to-face synchronization meetings serve to reveal operational gaps and synchronization problems. Commanders and staffs do a lot of *if this, then this* type of wargaming. They might even ask an element to role-play the enemy to effect a two-sided nature to planning--just as will occur in the attack. Commanders also provide for branches and sequels to the basic plan so that, during conduct of the operation, units can more easily adapt while sustaining the momentum.[33]

The planning process outlined in this selection is a good one--the problem is that it is far more detailed than any of the sections relating to actually conducting operations. Whereas the doctrine outlines planning procedures down to such details as the advisability of conducting planning brief-backs over maps or terrain models, such critical operational issues as conducting and exploiting penetrations, defending against enemy attacks, and the use of reserves receive little or no attention.

The emphasis on planning is unfortunate, but does not in itself constitute a fundamental flaw in the doctrine, or a fundamental turn away from the trail blazed by FM 100-5/1986. The treatment of speed and initiative in FM 100-5/1993, however, does constitute such a turn. FM 100-5/1993 basically rejects the desirability of maintaining high-speed, high-tempo operations, and fundamentally misunderstands the nature of initiative and the ways in which an army can attain and maintain it.

FM 100-5/1993 redefined initiative from "setting or changing the terms of battle by action" to "depleting the enemy's options while still having options of their own." It abjured the notion of risk-taking as well; whereas AirLand Battle sought to achieve the initiative through "audacity which may involve risk-taking," FM 100-5/1993 makes no mention of "risk-taking" and seeks to attain the initiative by "anticipating events on the battlefield"--in other words, by planning carefully.[34]

This focus on planning to achieve initiative is not confined to the definition. On the contrary, the doctrine frequently repeats the assertion that initiative means having options when the enemy has none and that this situation can be

achieved by planning and forethought:

Commanders achieve the initiative by making adjustments and having options when the enemy has none.[35]

Staffs continually work to generate workable options for the commander as fighting continues and friendly forces seek to gain and maintain the initiative.[36]

The initiative is critical to successful offensive operations. Whatever its purpose, campaign plans must be flexible enough to accommodate change so commanders can shift their main effort in response to either setback or opportunity without losing the initiative. Accordingly, *commanders anticipate likely enemy actions and prepare contingencies for them and train their units to do likewise. Successful commanders do not run out of options, and are always looking for ways to hurt the enemy. Anticipation and continuous formulation of attack options are key.*[37]

Commanders and staffs gain and maintain the initiative by continuously developing executable options through the campaign to keep the enemy off balance.[38]

This definition of initiative is fundamentally at variance with the AirLand Battle definition--and with any definition which has been used by successful armies before. Good planning is necessary if a force is to gain the initiative, as it is in any military operation, but it is not sufficient for conducting successful campaigns. The keys to attaining the initiative are speed and surprise, and the key to retaining the initiative is the uninterrupted conduct of operations. All three of those elements require good anticipation and planning, it is true, but FM 100-5/1993 clearly implies that anticipation and planning alone will achieve and maintain the initiative, which they most emphatically will not. It is astounding that a doctrine supposedly drawing conclusions from the Gulf War would conclude that speed and the uninterrupted conduct of operations were less important than they had been, yet that is precisely what FM 100-5/1993 did.

In 1986, AirLand Battle had listed speed as one of the characteristics of offensive operations and stated:

The attack must move rapidly. Speed is absolutely essential to success; it promotes surprise, keeps the enemy off balance, contributes to the security of the attacking force, and prevents the defender from taking effective countermeasures. Properly exploited, speed can confuse and immobilize the defender until the attack becomes unstoppable. Finally, speed can compensate for a lack of mass and provide the momentum necessary for attacks to achieve their aims.[39]

In 1993, the entire section on speed was eliminated and its place taken by a section on tempo, which rejected the importance of speed in the conduct of offensive operations:

Tempo is the rate of speed of military action; controlling or altering that rate is essential for maintaining the initiative. As opposing forces battle one another, *military operations alternate between actions and pauses. Sometimes units go slow at one point in order to go fast later.* Commanders seek a tempo that maintains relentless pressure on the enemy to prevent him from recovering from the shock and effects of the attack. . . .

Tempo can be either fast or slow. While speed is often preferred, commanders adjust tempo to ensure synchronization. At times, tempo may be slowed to ensure conditions are set before accelerating again to gain the advantages that come with speed. The attacker may adjust his tempo prior to the final decisive action to ensure the location of key enemy targets, to arrange forces for a simultaneous attack in depth, or to complete resupply and repositioning to sustain the immediate transition to exploitation and pursuit. . . .

Tempo provides the necessary momentum for attacks to achieve their objectives. *Tempo is a combination of speed and mass that creates pressure on the enemy. Speed, moreover, is not a substitute for the mass produced by sound tactics. Commanders who overextend their ability to mass effects or otherwise act hastily may give the advantage to the enemy.*[40]

Thus FM 100-5/1993 rejects the importance of speed and concludes that mass, not speed, is the key to successful attack. Since it is clear from the rest of the doctrine that by mass is meant not massing of forces, but massing of fires, it is clear that FM 100-5/1993 is an applied firepower doctrine: tactics which in any way hinder the massing of *all available fires*, even for the purpose of maintaining speed and the initiative, are "unsound." Speed has been replaced as a desirable characteristic by "tempo" which is defined as speed *plus mass*--and speed was definitely *not* considered sufficient to make up for deficiencies in mass.

The emphasis on mass and planning, and the deemphasis of speed, reflect a more fundamental problem: FM 100-5/1993 is a doctrine which is afraid of the capabilities of its own forces and is dominated by the fear of taking casualties. In discussing battle command, the emphasis is decidedly not on audacity and decisiveness:

Decision making is knowing *if* to decide, then *when* and *what* to decide. These are tactical, operational, and strategic judgments. Being in command means anticipating the activities that will be put into motion once a decision is made, ***knowing how irretrievable some commitments will be once put into motion***; knowing the consequences of the act of deciding; anticipating the outcomes that can be expected from the implementation of a decision.[41]

In discussing penetration operations, the emphasis is on how costly they are:

Because penetration is an attack into the strength of the defense, it could be costly in friendly casualties. Penetration may be necessary to rupture enemy defenses on a narrow front to create assailable flanks and access to the enemy's rear. Commanders may attempt penetration on one or several axes, depending on the forces available. Commanders carefully weigh the advantage of attacks on multiple axes to avoid undue costs and casualties.[42]

It is quite true that penetration operations may be higher in cost than exploitations, and that they should be avoided whenever possible--but the fear of losing control of a fast battlefield has led to a determination to move slowly and cautiously which will ensure that the army will have to fight frequent penetration battles. The whole idea behind the Soviet emphasis on speed, and AirLand Battle's emphasis on speed and initiative, was that the army would have to fight a single penetration battle, while the maintenance of the initiative through the conduct of high speed operations would ensure that all future operations would be in the nature of exploitations. The point was to prevent the enemy from ever re-forming a coherent defense which would have to be penetrated. FM 100-5/ 1993 still desires to keep the defense disorganized, but has become so concerned with culminating and with loss of "synchronization" through "excessive" speed, that it practically guarantees the defense time to reorganize itself.

The fear of losing control has gone so far that FM 100-5/1993 defines a new type of culmination--intelligence culmination:

Factors other than combat losses and lack of resources can influence culmination. For example, a commander could outrun his current intelligence in an attack that moves faster and farther than planned. The resulting increase in risk by continuing to advance may be acceptable if the commander knows he can overmatch any combination of forces he is likely to encounter. Given the lack of sufficient intelligence at that time, however, he may begin taking needless losses or otherwise jeopardize the success of his operations. At that point, the better course of action might be to go more slowly to develop the situation.[43]

Casualties should be kept to a minimum. There can be no doubt of the desirability of conducting operations with as little loss of life as possible. The question is how to minimize losses, however, not whether or not to minimize losses. The confusion in current doctrine is fundamental, in that it reflects the fact that many people identify speed with loss of control and unconcern about losses. Slowness, on the other hand, correlates highly with prudence and the desire to minimize losses. Despite common misperceptions, however, even Soviet doctrine was designed to minimize losses, and the lessons of the historical study of operational art make it clear that appropriate speed keeps losses to a minimum, and prudent slowness, to the contrary, is highly dangerous.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that FM 100-5/1993 greatly underestimates the capability of modern Army forces to move fast without losing control and incurring "needless" losses, and also greatly underestimates the enemy's likely ability to respond. Despite numerous exhortations to remember that battle is not one-sided, FM 100-5/1993 never considers that operational pauses and reductions in tempo give the enemy the opportunity to respond and reform his defenses. Perhaps because the Iraqis proved so maladroit in this area, the current doctrine takes it for granted that we can move slowly and deliberately with impunity. There is no basis in fact for this belief. In the face of a motivated, determined, well-equipped enemy, slowness kills more surely than speed. FM 100-5/1993 presents no argument to undermine the view of operational art outlined by the Soviets in the 1920s and 1930s, which argued that high-speed ground operations, conducted in harmony with air (and now missile) attacks throughout the depth of the enemy defense, would make it possible to launch a single penetration operation and then achieve victory on however large a scale through the rapid and uninterrupted exploitation of the initial breakthrough. That principle, the principle of dominating maneuver, remains valid to this day and is not in any way challenged by FM 100-5/1993. It is the principle of operational art to which American doctrine urgently needs to return.

Toward a New FM 100-5

All of the flaws in FM 100-5 outlined above are flaws of execution which come from a major flaw of conception. Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, claims to be the Army's "keystone warfighting doctrine. It is a guide for Army commanders. It describes how to think about the conduct of campaigns." [44] The trouble is that FM 100-5 does not seek to answer the right question. It is organized in a way which answers the question, "What sorts of operations might the Army have to conduct and how, generally, should it think about conducting those operations?" The result is a very shallow doctrine. An Army commander who looked to FM 100-5 to find out how to conduct offensive operations, what the role of the exploitation in operations should be, or how to deploy forces and conduct operations so as to achieve the most decisive possible victory in the shortest possible time with the fewest possible casualties, would come up almost empty. FM 100-5 describes what the desired outcomes and methods of proceeding are, but leaves vague or undefined how they should be achieved. It is a doctrine without a content.

Part of this lack of content is surely deliberate, and reflects the desire to avoid restricting the actions of commanders in the field. This desire is reasonable--it is not possible for the writer of doctrine to prescribe in advance the details of deployment or of the operational use of forces in any given circumstance. On the other hand, a balance must be struck between trammeling the commander's options and giving him no guidance whatsoever. The Army's "keystone warfighting doctrine" must do more to suggest how the commander on the ground can go about accomplishing what he must.

One way to do that is to reorganize FM 100-5 so that it answers the questions, "What are the most significant problems in warfare in this epoch which a successful army must solve, and how can we go about solving them?" Such an approach would give to FM 100-5 a coherence, cogency, and content that would make it much more useful to operational commanders than it currently is. Soviet Deep Battle doctrine was specifically designed to answer that question for the main problem of the 1920s: how to return maneuver to war. It began explicitly with that question, and just as explicitly answered it: deep battle, armored forces of certain capabilities, and the conduct of operations in a particular general way would avoid trench warfare and restore mobility. From that doctrine it was possible to determine what technical characteristics weapon systems had to have, and then to press the development of those systems along the right lines.

The Soviets could also easily determine what their tactical and operational doctrine had to be in order to answer the needs of warfare at the time. The doctrine that they produced was coherent and had great content, although it did, in fact, go too far, restricting the options of commanders by paying excessive attention to tactical and operational details. American doctrine today can proceed along a similar course without, however, restricting commanders' options. It must chart a middle course between Soviet doctrine of the past and FM 100-5 as it is now, answering the questions: "What are the most significant problems in warfare today, and how will we solve them to attain victory?"

1. Isserson, G. S., "The Evolution of the Operational Art," in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskikh voennykh trudakh 1917-1940 (Questions of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Writings, 1917-1940)* (Moscow: 1965), p. 389. Hereafter cited as VSOI.
2. Hereafter FM 100-5/1993.
3. Douglas MacGregor, *Breaking the Phalanx*, forthcoming from Praeger, and TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, *Force XXI Operations: A Concept for the Evolution of Full-Dimensional Operations for the Strategic Army of the Early Twenty-First Century*, hereafter *Force XXI*.
4. *Force XXI*, p. 3-11, for example, states, "A key component of depth and simultaneous attack will be measures taken to win the information war. These measures will include the establishment of electromagnetic-spectrum supremacy through nonnuclear electromagnetic pulse generators, space-based information denial systems, and computer viruses." Information warfare is, of course, not a new concept, but *Force XXI* has given it a new meaning.
5. *Force XXI* is explicitly not a work of doctrine, but instead sets out to describe "the conceptual foundations for the conduct of future operations in war and OOTW." (*Force XXI*, p. iii).
6. The concept of dominating maneuver is well described and documented in MacGregor, *Breaking the Phalanx*.
7. Field Regulation, 1936 (*Polevoi ustav 1936* or simply PU-36), §112, as cited in Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii* (New York: Brassey's, 1987), p. 197. This field regulation was the best and most complete official statement of Deep Battle doctrine and the rest of Tukhachevskii's (and others') operational art. It was gutted following the army purges which began in 1937.
8. This term had not yet come into use, but Soviet military leaders at the time made constant reference to the fact that future wars would be fought in radically different ways under radically different sets of circumstances.
9. See, for example, V. K. Triandafillov, ed. and trans. Jacob Kipp, *The Nature of Operations of Modern Armies* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1994), p. 21. Triandafillov was a Deputy Chief of Staff of the Red Army writing in 1929.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 145 and 149-50.
11. I. P. Uborevich, VSOI, p. 171. Uborevich was a Deputy People's Commissar of Military Affairs writing in 1922.
12. Kamenev, VSOI, p. 152.
13. Tukhachevskii, in Simpkin, p. 91.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
15. G. S. Isserson, VSOI, pp. 395-97.
16. This is clear from FM 100-5/1986, pp. 19-20. It is interesting to note that that doctrine defines "deep maneuver" as an element of "close operations," rather than of "deep operations."
17. It is difficult to compare Soviet notions of depth with American notions, for FM 100-5/1986 defines close operations as those operations concerning units in contact with the enemy, and deep operations as those concerning units not in contact. Presumably even operations deep in the enemy's rear are, therefore, "close" operations if they are conducted by forces in contact with the enemy. The difference in definitions is intriguing.
18. Isserson, p. 398.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 399.
20. See David Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1991),

and *The Soviet Conduct of Tactical Maneuver: Spearhead of the Offensive* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass 1991).

21. Ibid.

22. FM 100-5/1986, p. 14.

23. Ibid., p. 15. Emphasis added.

24. Ibid., p. 16.

25. Ibid., p. 10.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 32.

28. Ibid., p. 110.

29. FM 100-5/1993, p. 2-3. Emphasis added.

30. Ibid., p. 2-6. Emphasis added.

31. Ibid., p. 7-1. Emphasis added.

32. Ibid. Emphasis added.

33. Ibid., pp. 8-3 - 8-4.

34. Compare FM 100-5/1986, p. 15, and FM 100-5/1993, p. 2-6.

35. FM 100-5/1993, p. 6-15.

36. Ibid., pp. 6-15 - 6-16.

37. Ibid., p. 6-19. Emphasis added.

38. Ibid., p. 8-2.

39. FM 100-5/1986, p. 97. Emphasis added.

40. FM 100-5/1993, pp. 7-2 - 7-3. Emphasis added.

41. Ibid., p. 2-14, italic in the original, bold italic added.

42. Ibid., p. 7-12.

43. Ibid., p. 6-9.

44. FM 100-5/1986, p. i. and FM 100-5/1993, p. iv.

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