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# From Chancellorsville to Kosovo, Forgetting the Art of War

VINCENT J. GOULDING, JR.

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From *Parameters*, Summer 2000, pp. 4-18.

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"Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy." [1]

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Those timeless words seem more likely attributable to Sun-Tzu than to their author, Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson; they are noteworthy because they were spoken before the 1862 campaign in the Shenandoah Valley and not in the wake of the great flanking attack at Chancellorsville. It is an important distinction. Chancellorsville was a one-sided tactical victory without strategic significance. The Army of Northern Virginia gained little except an overdeveloped sense of military hubris that brought it to the slopes of Cemetery Ridge two months later. Conversely, Jackson's tactical operations in the Valley Campaign are far less worthy studies in battle management, but masterpieces from operational and strategic perspectives. That said, Jackson's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley paid much greater dividends for the Confederacy than Robert E. Lee's "greatest battle" a year later. There is a reason for that.

The object of war is the imposition of will. It follows, then, that the object of combat operations is to maximize the impact of military force on the enemy, overwhelm him physically and mentally, and convince him that further resistance is futile. Jackson understood this fully and created in his Valley Army a specter out of all proportion to its size or battlefield successes in May and June of 1862. He did this by exploiting will-o'-the-wisp operational maneuver and the ability to hit hard where not expected. This seemingly rudimentary combination allowed the Valley Army to dominate the Union war effort in the eastern theater. In a theater of operations where Federal concentration of forces and bold action might well have led to the destruction of Lee's army outside of Richmond and an early end to the war, Federal civil and military leaders were mesmerized by Jackson and his tiny army. [2] History offers few better examples of operational success serving strategic purposes.

As we enter the 21st century, the question of whether the military forces of the United States offer the same prospect of operational success to their strategic leaders is open-ended. Jackson's brilliance was the product of audacity and maneuver, not numerical or technological superiority. He did not have more men or a better cannon; nor did he achieve the Confederacy's strategic goals by thrashing a succession of Federal armies. In fact, his battlefield record in 1862 would have better supported his relief for cause than elevation to corps command. Jackson won his battles in the minds of Union soldiers in the field and decisionmakers on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Nathan Bedford Forrest might have coined the phrase "put a scare in them." Stonewall Jackson embodied it. Jackson was also fortunate enough to be blessed with superiors willing to accept transitory tactical reverses if they contributed to the accomplishment of strategic ends. Robert E. Lee has been universally canonized in American military writings for his operational prowess, but seldom given credit for what may have been his greatest attribute: lack of a zero-defect mentality.

The same is not true today. Unwillingness to brook tactical failure or incur casualties has corrupted the age-old concept of offensive operations into the narrowly focused cottage industry of precision strike. The poorly defined concept of precision engagement has engendered in the minds of too many a one-dimensional response to the infinitely more complex issue of truly achieving strategic objectives. At its core is the ill-conceived notion that the United States and its allies can intimidate, even defeat, adversaries with information superiority and smart weapons.

## Why Precision Strike Is Insufficient

Physical punishment has never been enough to accomplish political or military ends. The Army of the Potomac was

butchered at Fredericksburg and humiliated at Chancellorsville, yet had its finest hour at Gettysburg. Humans are a tough lot and have consistently risen to extraordinary levels in the wake of a physical thrashing. If the American Civil War seems a bit removed from today's events, consider Britons in the "blitz" or North Vietnamese during "Rolling Thunder." Both describe a human dimension worthy of study, but seldom considered.

Witness recent events in the Balkans. The air arms of NATO bombed a small, economically insignificant country for ten weeks and inflicted tremendous infrastructure damage, but provided little impetus to bring about a change in policy by the Slobodan Milosevic government. Thirty thousand sorties by more than a thousand aircraft left his army intact. In the absence of forces on the ground, Serb combat units had no reason to leave concealed positions, mass, and make themselves vulnerable to the air campaign NATO was conducting. In fact, evidence suggests it was only the maneuver of the Kosovo Liberation Army (a second-rate military organization at best) against Serb forces that caused the latter to become "visible" and vulnerable to effective air attack by NATO aircraft. Only then, as his tactical military forces began disappearing before his eyes, did Milosevic agree to come to the bargaining table. Save his army he must, and save his army he did; ironically, it was NATO that declared victory.

Milosevic understood that territory, however coveted, is useless without ground forces to control it and that, even if driven off "key terrain," an army in being need never admit defeat. Where there is no defeat, there is only unresolved crisis. This is not a new concept. Put another way, "the defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date." [3]

While some would say NATO operations in Kosovo were a classic case of precision strike accomplishing the mission, history will likely judge them a 20th-century Chancellorsville. Clearly, NATO achieved a decisive and one-sided tactical victory, and if the goal of US strategy in the 21st century is to demonstrate tactical acumen at the expense of militarily challenged adversaries, then the standard may well have been set. Much like the air campaign itself, however, such thinking represents a shortsighted view of the operational art.

Combat operations serve no purpose if they become ends unto themselves. Time and Tomahawks notwithstanding, Clausewitz is as relevant today as he was a hundred years ago. The fundamental nature of war changes with neither the times nor the technologies used to prosecute it. [4] Recent US military interventions have occurred in environments of brutality and nonlinearity that more resemble the Thirty Years War than what we might expect from modern man. Reluctance to put the life of US soldiers on the line only exacerbates and accelerates the suffering of those we set out to help.

During the ten weeks of NATO air attacks, untold numbers of ethnic Albanians were murdered, over a million driven from their homes, and their country left a shambles. [5] When the smoke cleared, the Serb army was left to fight or brutalize another day. Recently, a former Air Force Chief of Staff challenged those who have asserted that the NATO bombing campaign failed to save ethnic Albanians from the atrocities visited on them by the Serbs. He noted that the murder of six million Jews during World War II "accelerated as Allied ground troops approached the death camps," but that "this unhappy fact does not prevent us from concluding, rightly, that we won the Second World War." [6] This very bad analogy overlooks two nontrivial facts: first, the World War II Allies' war aims were not focused on the death camps; and second, Allied ground forces had a still very much intact Wehrmacht to contend with in 1944 and '45. In contrast, NATO's goal *was* to stop the killing, and its ground forces never faced the prospect of locking horns with the likes of a modern-day Panzer Lehr. The issue of whether or not NATO "won the war" is yet to be resolved, but the entire Kosovo operation begs two simple questions: Did it help the victims of ethnic cleansing, and has the violence been curtailed? The answer is negative on both counts.

The world's only superpower sent the strongest possible signal that, while it is willing to conduct military operations in situations not vital to the country's national interests, it is not willing to put in harm's way the means necessary to conduct these operations effectively and conclusively. Not only has this message been transmitted to potential adversaries, it has also once again sounded the siren's song across America that military operations are high-tech and bloodless affairs. Arrogance spawned by a single one-sided "victory" is not the exclusive province of the Army of Northern Virginia, and our 21st-century Cemetery Ridge awaits us if we allow political expediency and transient technological advantage to become the determinant of successful military operations.

The United States has chosen to ignore Jackson's admonition that we "mystify, mislead, and surprise" our enemies. As long as America has lagers full of air- and sea-launched cruise missiles and assorted other precision munitions, it all too often also has an "on the shelf" military response. Diplomacy has become an afterthought based more on consensus of the willing (NATO) to "respond" than take the time to "shape." This slippery slope will not go unnoticed by future enemies who are presumably paying more than cursory attention to what is becoming the new American way of war.

Eschewing the greater argument about vital interests and what the United States is willing to risk in order to protect them, the fact remains that success in military operations *and the peace that follows* can come only as the result of proficiency in fully integrated sea, air, and land operations. Technology does not, and never will, change that basic fact. To make such proficiency a reality, military forces must demonstrate operational and tactical competence enough to engender confidence in their strategic leaders. In the minds of current US decisionmakers, ground forces equate to slow response, high risk, and casualties. The advocates of precision strike beat this drum constantly.

Three things need to change. First, strategic decisionmakers must accept the fact that mission accomplishment might entail casualties. Second, the services must develop the doctrine, organizations, training, and equipment that will enable US forces to accomplish all missions quickly, effectively, and economically. The Army and Marine Corps, in particular, must demonstrate to the National Command Authorities that ground forces are a viable part of *economical* military operations. Bosnia and Kosovo have already proven they are a requirement. Third, military professionals must cease the philosophical gravitation of maneuver to the exclusive province of ground forces. Maneuver must engender the entire national decisionmaking psyche and be as psychological as physical. It goes to the very core of the oft-cited, seldom-achieved "shaping" segment upon which the United States' national military strategy is founded. In the absence of such a mindset, a true strategic view and usable operational art for the 21st century cannot exist.

### **Strategic Maneuver**

Successful operational maneuver can occur only in conjunction with a sound strategic counterpart. Successful maneuver at any level is derived from reserving options for yourself and denying them to your enemy. William Tecumseh Sherman would have called it putting your enemy on the horns of a dilemma, a philosophy which must transcend the battlefield.

Military operations, even at the lowest level, have profound strategic implications. Task Force Ranger in Somalia is a recent example. National-level policies and decisions have an equally profound influence on the military commander and can easily gore him on those same horns of dilemma. The fact that "war is a serious means to a serious end" should of itself caution senior leaders, in and out of uniform, from becoming the "irresponsible enthusiasts" Clausewitz warned against.[7] Technology-inspired panaceas which provide ad hoc tactical success may do so at the expense of long-term strategic flexibility. At the national level, flexibility can only be the product of a willingness to use all facets of the country's combined-arms capability.

Excepting the demise of the Soviet Union, one could make the case that the United States has not achieved a strategic victory since World War II. This, despite the fact that it has demonstrated limited operational and tactical acumen on a number of occasions. Even these successes will prove transitory if the current trends of casualty- and failure-phobia continue to gravitate to the tactical level. Mid-level commanders serving on the edges of America's empire are now routinely quoted as saying that force protection is their highest priority.[8] Such statements are a sad commentary; force protection is a commander's inherent responsibility, but it is never a *mission*, and accomplishment of the mission is *always* the highest priority.

Lack of willingness to be unpredictable and take risk precludes total victory at any level. Above all else, maneuver warfare is founded on those very principles. There is something to be said for the adage "nothing ventured, nothing gained." This is not to imply that US forces should be recklessly employed by either the National Command Authorities or rifle company commanders; however, if a man on the ground with a rifle is a required factor in the overall equation for success, then he should be employed. Statements to the effect that "if mission and force protection are in conflict, then we don't do the mission"[9] will continue to unduly restrict our forces as long as senior leaders tell us that the "well being of our people must remain our first priority." [10]

Joint Vision 2010 postulates that information superiority will enable the emerging concepts destined to characterize

American military operations. Perhaps, but maneuver warfare is predicated on more than bumper stickers that postulate total knowledge of the enemy. Situational awareness encompasses such additional factors as familiarity with a well-defined end-state, appraisal of friendly capabilities, assessment of risk, and ability to adjust plans on the fly. Knowledge of the enemy is important but never perfect, and need only be good enough to allow decisionmakers to develop courses of action that pit friendly strengths against enemy weakness at the operational level. Operational planning doctrinally focuses on determination of the desired end-state and identification of the enemy's center of gravity and critical vulnerabilities at each of the levels of war.[11] Doctrine also tells us that planning must additionally include analysis of the *enemy's* desired end-state and *our own* centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities.[12] Expediency has no place in the equation. Shortsighted solutions that play well in the media or pander to preconceived notions of public support generate long-term problems that become yet more difficult to solve.

Expedient solutions since the Gulf War have centered around the related issues of casualty avoidance and precision strike. These two concepts have become inexorably linked, particularly when the United States finds itself at odds with an adversary with any credible military capability. The result has been the notion that modern warfare is a bloodless, high-tech affair where the only national investment is in bombs (dollars) and not the lives of American citizens. The danger in this kind of thinking is insidious. There cannot be strategic maneuver when national policy becomes synonymous with casualty avoidance and precision punishment. This reactive approach to wielding the military option is attractive by virtue of its quantifiable success in the media and apparent lack of human cost, but it fails to address the ultimate human dimension of conflict. War is an interactive event that both sides try to win by adapting to the other's initiatives. The side that adopts the long view, remains flexible, and diligently applies lessons learned from short-term setbacks will ultimately accomplish its ends.

American military actions over the past several years have developed a predictable singularity. We bomb things that are easily identifiable and don't move: bridges, power grids, and the ubiquitous command and control center. Such targets are based less on an analysis of the enemy's center of gravity than on "do-ability" and media visibility. Precision-guided munitions are optimized for fixed infrastructure targets, not support of operational maneuver. In effect, the United States has reverted to a high-tech version of the famous Cold Warrior Curtis Lemay's "bomb them into the stone age" philosophy. The great irony is that General Lemay's proposed bombing of infrastructure in North Vietnam was labeled inhumane economic warfare and rejected, despite the fact that thousands of US troops were at risk on the ground. In the 1990s, with no ground forces at risk, the United States has routinely bombed infrastructure targets that had significant economic impact on combatants and noncombatants alike.

The results of precision strike against tactical formations have been less compelling, and the lessons of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm have not been lost on individuals and organizations unfriendly to the United States. Enemies now seek the urban battlefield and have relearned techniques of cover and concealment long atrophied during the Cold War. NATO's initial post-Kosovo battle damage assessment claims have been tempered by physical evidence suggesting that many very expensive bombs hit many very inexpensive decoys or nothing at all. Battle damage assessment aside, a sobering conclusion from all this is that the further the United States gets from major theater war, the greater the demand for expensive munitions which exist in finite numbers. Events since the Persian Gulf War would indicate that military operations other than war (MOOTW) generate rules of engagement that restrict commanders to the almost exclusive use of precision-guided munitions (PGMs). Based on PGM expenditures during the ten weeks of bombing in Kosovo, the "two nearly simultaneous major theater war" strategy seems more than a little suspect. The Department of Defense has requested \$1.4 billion in supplemental funding to replenish stocks of PGMs used during Operation Allied Force.[13]

The most precise instrument of war any country can produce is the man on the ground. As military operations gravitate toward the MOOTW side of the scale, US forces will encounter enemies who combine skill in tactical deception and concealment with the savvy to exploit fear of collateral damage and American casualties. Such enemies will require more than precision strikes to defeat them, and our military operations will require more than space or airborne sensors to assess them.

The battlefield of the 21st century will require forces on the ground, yet the United States is loath to put such forces in harm's way. As long as this remains the case, enemy commanders have no incentive to array their forces for conventional military operations. Unfortunately, this does not mean that these same forces cannot conduct ground

operations that we justifiably find reprehensible. The well-publicized discoveries of mass graves by the initial NATO forces to enter Kosovo bear this out. Yet instead of examining this fact as a "deficiency," NATO declared victory and stood by while the media and politicians demonized the Yugoslav government for political purposes. Strategic leaders need to get beyond the rhetoric, look objectively at accomplishment of the desired end-state, and determine what could have been done differently to make the operation more effective in its totality. If stopping the bloodshed is one of the primary objectives of military intervention, then declaring victory should wait until it has truly been achieved. There is no victory in the Balkans.

### *Strategic Stumbling*

The picture that begins to emerge is a United States quickly moving down the path of establishing a diplomatic and military precedent which describes a policy lacking workable options. Without options there is no maneuver, only a throttle that enables us to increase or decrease the level of punishment we mete out as our satisfaction with overall progress in a given situation waxes and wanes. Too little time is spent shaping and far too much responding.

The United States and its allies have become strategically hamstrung by a well-publicized aversion to casualties. There is universal agreement that the real issue is reluctance to incur casualties in situations not in the national interest, but since US forces are routinely employed on such missions, the argument is moot. This is not a new issue. Bismarck questioned the use of his Pomeranian grenadier in the Balkans more than a hundred years ago. The fact of the matter is that few nations have deliberately squandered their soldiers' lives in the quest for world tranquillity, or even dominance, and the United States is not the first to find itself confronted by the thorny dilemmas inherent in superpower status. It is probably worth remembering that "a great country can have no such thing as a little war." [14]

When US forces are employed, the whole world is watching, the whole world is judging, the whole world is learning. What the world is learning now is that the United States will not put ground forces in harm's way during the critical early period of intervention. When ground forces are ultimately employed as "peace" enforcers, they are locked in a secure enclave where they have minimal influence on post-hostilities. While it is a marvel of American culture that US soldiers can enjoy lunch at their sandbagged Burger King in Camp Bondsteel, Yugoslavia, one has to wonder what people whose homes have been destroyed must think. From the operational standpoint, it is intuitive that what goes on "outside the wire" will become more and more vague to America's peacekeepers the longer they remain in their self-proclaimed "metropolis." [15] Our allies call it Disneyland. [16]

Situational awareness comes from more than intelligence reports and overhead imagery, and an enclave mentality does more than protect US forces from the "destruction, anguish, and hazards" of the peacekeeping environment. [17] It monasticizes the peacekeepers to the point where their presence is little more than a mass casualty waiting to happen. Reverting to an enclave mentality, with soldiers conveniently centralized in a well-defined area, is an open invitation for indirect attack. The lessons of Beirut and Khobar Towers are still valid. Admittedly, both are worst-case scenarios, but both happened. Even in the absence of catastrophe, however, there is no development of overall situational awareness or kinship between these soldiers and the people they have been sent to help.

The real unintended consequence is even more insidious and damaging. The portrait of US ground forces becomes complete in the eyes of future enemies: too valuable to be risked in combat, too soft and coddled to bear the rigors of peacekeeping. The legacy of Stonewall Jackson's foot cavalry has been consigned to the dusty pages of US military history.

It all makes one wonder why our soldiers are there in the first place (probably the soldiers wonder as well). If the primary mission of US forces has become their own force protection, there is no justifying their leaving home in the first place, especially in view of the fiscal overhead incurred by operating in this manner. The cost of Camp Bondsteel was estimated in October 1999 to be \$32 million and rising. [18] Once again, the employment of ground forces has been characterized by "overhead" and a lack of operational flavor.

Developing a force that is operationally capable and genuinely respected by its enemies ensures force protection; surrounding the force with concertina does not. Any nation's military leaders are responsible for providing forces that give decisionmakers the options they need to maneuver on the strategic battlefield quickly, effectively, and with the expectation that the loss of human life will be minimal. The Department of Defense has demonstrated room for

improvement in all areas; yet the Joint Statement on the Kosovo After Action Review devotes scant attention to enhancement of ground forces in future operations. This, despite acknowledgment early in the paper that "military force could not stop Milosevic's attack on Kosovar civilians,"[19] at least not military force as NATO employed it.

In a National Security Seminar at the Army War College in June 1999, a civilian participant made the statement that he was never prouder of the United States than he was with the intervention in the Kosovo crisis. When asked if he would have felt the same way if American ground forces had been used to accomplish the mission more quickly to reduce the scope of refugee exodus and atrocity throughout Kosovo, he was not so sure.[20] His reasoning was that ground forces equated to friendly casualties. This hesitation of an American citizen is reflected in the hesitancy of our nation's leadership. The desire to do the right thing is tempered by the realization that to do what is right, and to do it right, implies casualties. Lessons learned from military operations need to extend beyond enhancing what we most recently did to what we must do in the future. The military landscape is rapidly changing, and buying more Joint Direct Attack Munitions or Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missiles is not necessarily the answer. Such weapons may well be part of the answer, but only a part.

Long-range precision strike will always be an option, but to truly put future adversaries on the horns of a dilemma, the additional dimension of equally precise combined-arms ground operations is an absolute requirement. The National Command Authorities must have at their disposal forces that provide options that are usable and cost-effective. Failure to do so consigns the United States to a single-dimension military option, and consigns US military forces to a powerful but in many cases inappropriate or even ineffective tool of national policy.

## **Operational Maneuver**

Operational maneuver cannot--must not--wait for arrival in theater. Joint Publication 3-0 tells us that "the principal purpose of maneuver is to gain positional advantage relative to enemy centers of gravity in order to control or destroy those centers of gravity." [21] War is not about positional advantage; it is about defeating the enemy. Operational maneuver is not the first step in a scripted sequence of events designed to achieve victory. Effective military operations are not conducted point-counterpoint on a lacquered chessboard (or a flat screen display). Chess, unlike war, is a gentleman's game where the players enjoy perfect situational awareness and politely take turns moving their pieces. Combat is not a game. The winner hides his pieces and takes a dozen moves before the enemy gets even one. General Sir William Slim's sergeant major said it well when he counseled the then-young cadet, "There's only one principal of war. . . . Hit the other fellow as quick as you can, as hard as you can, where it hurts him most, when he ain't lookin'." [22]

Operational maneuver must resonate with an ever-increasing cadence that achieves psychological advantage at the outset and enemy defeat at its termination. Mentally and physically, US forces must drive the tempo and create that specter of dominance and invincibility Stonewall Jackson understood so well. The United States and its allies are not going to intimidate future enemies by bombing them or deploying technologically advanced weapon systems to secure areas in theater. The 21st-century fighter will not be cowed by diplomatic or military signals, just as the bully on the block was never impressed with reason.

American military forces enjoy a profound geographical advantage from the outset in conducting operational maneuver. Their operations will be directed at enemies who are reached by coming from significant distance, frequently over water. The oceans and seas of the world should be viewed as high-speed avenues of approach and not as time-distance obstacles. US military forces are, by their nature, expeditionary. If they are uncomfortable with or unsuited for that role, they are irrelevant. To be relevant, military forces must be quickly employable and already possessed of the training and tools they need to accomplish the assigned mission *immediately upon arrival*. Employing military units, however technologically advanced, with the notion of "training them up" in theater is as inefficient as it is dangerous. The deployment of Task Force Hawk to Albania in support of Operation Allied Force graphically illustrates the pitfalls.

The notion of a "lodgment phase," as described in Joint Pub 3-0 is outdated and requires reexamination in light of enemies who will seek to deny ports and airfields to US forces. It should come as no surprise that China, for one, has concluded that one of the United States' most exploitable vulnerabilities is its reliance on fixed bases in the region.[23]

To predicate future military operations on secure entry facilities and conveniently located overseas bases breeds operational clumsiness and creates vulnerabilities. Such thinking is predictable and invites the very casualties that have become so integral a part of the national decisionmaking process. Ports and airfields are potential killing zones for military forces that tarry around them, particularly in the early stages of US intervention. This transcends facilities "in country," and includes those conveniently located elsewhere in theater. Future enemies will be able to reach out across strategic distances. It is a basic and asymmetric approach to warfare that is often alluded to but seldom taken seriously.

Focus must be on the enemy, not his facilities. From the moment the decision is made to employ military force, the process of setting the tempo and overwhelming the enemy begins. The fact that intelligence will be incomplete and our knowledge of enemy dispositions sketchy does not matter. If there is such a thing as information superiority, it is surely a chimera that will be attained incrementally only as the situation develops. It will not exist going in, nor can we wait to achieve it before commencing military operations. Colonel Chesty Puller might have overstated it a bit when he told his Marines on the eve of the Inchon landing that "we'll find out what's on the beach when we get there,"[24] but there's some validity to his cautionary advice. Intelligence is a constantly moving target that improves only as the situation develops.

Emotional baggage rooted in the sometimes archaic concept of "fire and maneuver" frequently drives us to wait for the one additional piece of information that will better enable us to accomplish the mission. The dogma that you cannot maneuver in the absence of fires is not only passé, but counterproductive to high-tempo operations. If your mission is to kill snakes, there are times when you're just going to have to kick the rock to find out whether one is under it. The key to success is replacing the fear of kicking the rock with confidence in your ability to strike effectively before being struck.

Fire and maneuver are neither sequential nor separate components of combined-arms operations. When our enemy disperses his forces to make them less vulnerable to the threat of air-, sea-, or ground-based fires, he has already reacted to the initial stages of our operational-level maneuver. This reaction is a mixed blessing from the US perspective. On the positive side, enemy military formations degrade their ability to conduct effective military operations by hunkering down in dispersed and concealed positions. This is a plus, however, only if we choose to exploit the situation and fully comprehend that there is also a negative side. By holding the sword of precision strike over our adversary's head, in many cases we will compel him to resort to a style of warfare for which we are ill-prepared and for which nonbelligerents on the ground pay a horrific price. When the United States and its allies pose little threat to the military units that provide tangible power and presence on the ground, enemy commanders are relatively free to conduct the small-unit, "police" type actions that UN forces uncovered the results of in Kosovo. The legacy of these depredations goes beyond purely altruistic humanitarian concerns. The resultant climate of reprisal and instability remains long after the precision strikes have ended and precludes mission accomplishment in the truest sense. Ongoing Albanian reprisals against the Serb population in Kosovo hardly describe the end-state NATO was looking for.

Winning at the operational level requires the destruction of the enemy's capacity and will to conduct *any* military operations. This equates partially to the physical destruction of military equipment and the forces that employ it, but much more to his cohesion and perceived ability to carry on. Because we are fighting an enemy who wants to preserve what we seek to destroy, US forces will find themselves with a window of opportunity in which to capitalize on his fear of precision strike. While dispersed and concealed, enemy forces are ill-prepared to conduct conventional military operations and are susceptible to the first canon of maneuver warfare: strike his gaps while avoiding his surfaces.

The conventional approach would describe gaps as isolated and vulnerable enemy formations that can be overwhelmed through a combination of operational and tactical surprise and effective fire and maneuver. Nothing new here. The difficulty (and current deficiency) is integrating operational and tactical maneuver. Traditionally, US forces have compensated for a lack of true operational maneuver in ground forces by using a phased approach. The notion of lodgment first, then "decisive combat and stabilization,"[25] is the antithesis of operational dexterity. It squanders the opportunity to exploit operational-level maneuver achieved *en route to enemy territory* and results in degeneration to a battle of attrition as both sides seek to mass combat power and sustainment in the vicinity of the lodgment. There is no place for a lodgment mentality in doctrinal publications or in the initial stages of future US military operations.



US maneuver elements must strike into areas of enemy strategic interest which are defended either lightly or not at all. The intent is to "penetrate the enemy system and tear it apart." [26] In some cases, this will include attacks on centers of gravity, but more often on what are generally referred to as critical vulnerabilities. The employment of ground forces will not wait for every command post, armored vehicle, and strongpoint to be identified and targeted. Such a capability obviously requires a tactical self-confidence that is shared by operational and strategic planners. Once on the ground, combined-arms maneuver units will aggressively seek out enemy formations with a combination of organic sensors (air, ground, electronic) and reachback to nonorganic assets. Enemy commanders will be placed on the horns of a dilemma. They can remain hidden, dispersed, and combat-ineffective, or they can begin to take the steps necessary to meet the threat presented by potent ground forces maneuvering throughout the battlespace, oftentimes between them and their sources of sustainment and reinforcement. The more they react, the more vulnerable they become, susceptible not only to the organic fires of the combined-arms maneuver force, but to the reachback fires from air- and sea-based platforms. The enemy's downward spiral begins and accelerates as an ever-increasing and well-directed tempo of operations takes away his options and overwhelms him.

### *Getting There*

Unfortunately, such a capability does not exist today. Employment of US decisive force is predicated on forward-basing at best, benign ports and airfields at worst. Neither assumption reflects the realities of military operations in the 21st century, and both relegate employment of decisive force to the "too hard and too risky" category.

Solutions to the lodgment dilemma generally fall into two categories: deployment "from CONUS to combat," or to an intermediate staging base prior to commencement of military activities. Neither is the answer for ground forces. While the prospect of conducting combat operations directly from the continental United States is attractive philosophically, it is impracticable beyond small, specialized missions more properly categorized as raids. As the potential for combat operations in their truest sense increases, our ability to conduct them directly from the United States diminishes proportionally.

The US Army's ongoing Army After Next program, charged with looking at land combat in the 2025 time frame, began conducting strategic and operational-level wargames in 1997. It became evident early in the process that the concept of "CONUS to combat" was flawed and, if executed, in many cases forced strategic decisionmakers into unwelcome situations. [27] Army futurists are now looking more toward the use of intermediate staging bases in proximity to the area of military operations.

While a step in the right direction, this approach has problems of its own. Depending on erstwhile friends and allies to grant basing rights in the increasingly complex and dangerous world is a questionable proposition. Certainly, if they are proximate and available, US forces would be foolish not to use them. Given the propensity of future enemies to carry the war to wherever the threats to his success may be, however, America should remain mindful that it will take a very courageous nation indeed to allow US forces to launch attacks from its sovereign territory. The United States and its allies experienced this problem time and again during the closing years of the 20th century in Southwest Asia and the Balkans. The trend is not likely to change.

Few would dispute that the deployment of decisive force to a major theater war requires traditional entry points, a dependency that clearly describes a US critical vulnerability. Enemies of the future will regard access denial as a primary mission. To expect anything else is fanciful and dangerous. Given US reliance on afloat prepositioned equipment to compensate for a shortage of amphibious lift, both the Army's Afloat Prepositioned Sets (APS) and Navy/Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) become at once indispensable and archaic. Diesel submarines, mines, and easily neutralized or targeted ports and airfields all describe serious threats to a capability that has served the United States well since the 1970s, but which requires a serious reappraisal. Reliance on sophisticated deep-water ports or in-stream offloads within tank main-gun range of the beach should be the stuff that causes strategic planners sleepless nights.

The best avenue of approach for ground forces may also be their best forward base. It is no accident that the Navy and Marine Corps regard seabasing as the cornerstone of future operational capabilities and are even now exploring the key issues of sustainment, fires, and command and coordination from the seabase. [28] Is such a configuration

invulnerable to enemy attack? Absolutely not. Is a seabase less vulnerable to attack than a fixed land site and more responsive to a rapidly changing operational environment ashore? Absolutely. New strategic imperatives, operational requirements, and friendly critical vulnerability analysis necessitate new ways of thinking.

## Conclusion

Maneuver is a strategic issue whose essence lies in the reservation of options for yourself and the denial of them to your adversaries--at all levels. It is not the exclusive province of the operating forces or tactical units. Yet it is the responsibility of these units to develop the capability to execute maneuver warfare and to give strategic leaders the confidence they need that these forces can fight and win effectively and economically. Strategic maneuver sets the tone and must begin with leaders who are willing to use all the tools at their disposal to achieve national objectives. These same leaders must not be intimidated by the risk of tactical failure--even casualties--as they pursue strategic success. The country will never produce another Stonewall Jackson if it doesn't first cultivate another Robert E. Lee.

The doctrine, organization, and training to support the quick, decisive, and temporary employment of US combat forces will follow, regardless of the level of war. Accomplish the mission, turn the peacekeeping over to coalition forces, come home.

If the situation then resurrects itself because of some misguided perception that America's "foot cavalry" has returned to its US bases and the coast is clear, let no future enemy fail to understand that we will be back quickly, economically, and just as decisively. The word will get out. Before long, enemies will come to understand that a US military response entails more than precision strike. Successful combined-arms operations, of which precision strike is a part, will create a true deterrent to those who would threaten the vital interests of America and our allies.

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## NOTES

1. Peter G. Tsouras, *Warriors' Words* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1994), p. 121.
2. Jackson's forces numbered anywhere from less than 3,000 to approximately 16,000 during the period from the battles at Kernstown to Cross Keys and Port Republic. See James I. Robertson, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend* (New York: Macmillan, 1997).
3. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 80.
4. See Alan Beyerchen, "Clausewitz, Nonlinearity, and the Unpredictability of War," *International Security*, 17 (Winter 1992/93), 59-90, for an in-depth discussion of the applicability of Clausewitz to the future battlefield.
5. Peter Finn et al., "Across Kosovo, Death at Every Turn," *The Washington Post*, 16 June 1999, p. A1.
6. Merrill A. McPeak, "The Kosovo Result," *Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1999, p. 62.
7. Clausewitz, p. 86.
8. Don M. Snider, John A. Nagl, and Tony Pfaff, *Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, Pa.: USAWC, Strategic Studies Institute, December 1999), pp. 1-2.
9. Ibid.
10. William S. Cohen and Henry H. Shelton, "Joint Statement on the Kosovo After Action Review," 14 October 1999, prepared joint statement presented by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Hereinafter referred to as Cohen and Shelton.
11. US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington: GPO, 1995), p. 20.

12. See Dr. Joe Strange's "Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities," *Perspectives on Warfighting*, Number Four (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Association, 1996). Dr. Strange provides an exhaustive discussion and analysis of these two vitally important considerations in strategic planning.
13. Cohen and Shelton.
14. Tsouras, p. 468. Attributed to Lord Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington (1815).
15. R. Jeffrey Smith, "A GI's Home Is His Fortress," *The Washington Post*, 5 October 1999, p. A11.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Cohen and Shelton.
20. The National Security Seminar is a week-long annual event at the US Army War College, during which non-DOD civilians participate with War College students in a full spectrum of formal presentations and informal discussions.
21. Joint Pub 3-0, p. IV-8.
22. US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrinal Pub 1, "Warfighting" (Washington: GPO, 1997), p. 69. Hereinafter referred to as *MCDP 1*.
23. Mark Stokes, *China's Strategic Modernization: Implications for U.S. National Security* (Carlisle, Pa.: USAWC, Strategic Studies Institute, 1999), p. 141.
24. Robert D. Heinl, *Victory at High Tide, The Inchon-Seoul Campaign* (Annapolis, Md.: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1979), p. 77.
25. Joint Pub 3-0, p. III-18.
26. *MCDP 1*, p. 73.
27. The author has participated in a number of TRADOC-sponsored Army After Next wargames conducted at Carlisle Barracks, Pa.
28. For detailed discussions of Navy and Marine Corps development of seabasing as a future operational concept, suggested readings include *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, *Ship to Objective Maneuver*, *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010*, and *The MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore*, all available through the Marine Corps web site, <http://www.usmc.mil>.

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