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The Crisis in Operational Art

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INTRODUCTION

The conceptual foundations for the design, planning and conduct of military operations – eloquently referred to as ‘operational art’ – are in a state of crisis.¹ Over the past two decades, the operational tempo of Western armed forces has risen dramatically. Apart from the numerical increase in expeditionary deployments, the functional range of such operations has broadened considerably. Rather than confronting Soviet armoured divisions, the armed forces from NATO states have found themselves conducting peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, stabilisation and nation building operations in various theatres ranging from the former Yugoslavia to the heart of Africa. Now they find themselves facing a raging insurgency in the shadows of the Hindu Kush. What the vast majority of these otherwise heterogeneous operations have in common is that they have generally not achieved the sort of decisive outcomes that policy-makers as well as the general public expected from them. While one can put forward many explanatory factors for this state of affairs, this article focuses on one particular factor that the academic literature has so far largely ignored, namely the conceptual gap between the operational planning doctrine our armed forces are taught at their military academies and the type of operations they are asked to undertake in practice.

The core argument of this article is that operational planning doctrine has remained focussed on conventional high-intensity warfare whereas Western armed forces have been employed to confront an altogether different set of tasks. As a consequence, operational planners have been forced to operate in a conceptual vacuum. In many of these modern operations, the planner’s traditional toolkit – filled with concepts dating back to the days of Clausewitz – could not be applied without an unusual level of creativity. A string of new doctrinal publications in the UK and the US shows that doctrine development is slowly catching up. However, this awareness has not yet trickled down throughout all Western defence establishments. From an optimistic perspective, this is simply a lessons-learned process that requires a substantial amount of time. Yet one can also mount a more fundamental

¹ In allied doctrine, operational art is defined as “the employment of forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations and battles.” (*NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, AAP-6 / 2009). For alternative definitions in UK and US doctrine, see *Campaigning* (JDP 01 / 2008) or *Joint Operations* (JP 3-0 / 2008) respectively.

critique of operational art based on the argument that there exists a disconnect between political decision-making and military planning that needs to be addressed before operational art can become once more strategically adequate for the political purposes at hand.

The argument proceeds in three parts. The first section describes how joint military operations are conceptually conceived. It provides a highly simplified doctrinal template of operational art and lists the key conceptual tools and building blocks for operational design and planning. The second section argues that this standard operational design template is losing some of its relevance, not because it has been invalidated but because it is less suitable for non-conventional conflict contexts. Drawing on recent field research, it is argued that some of the key tenets of NATO joint operational planning doctrine – in particular the centre of gravity and end-state concepts – are only of limited use. The third section considers a more fundamental critique of operational art as fostering a permanent politico-military disconnect in the planning of operations. The concluding section offers some thoughts on possible ways to address these issues. On the one hand it is concluded that as long as armed forces are deployed on missions different from conventional combat, more doctrinal creativity is needed for developing a suitable conceptual toolkit for planning such operations. On the other hand it is argued that this politico-military disconnect undermining operational strategy needs to be remedied by a growing political engagement in the actual content of operational art.

1. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF OPERATIONAL ART

Operational art is applied in the course of the operational planning process. The planning of operations can itself be described as an iterative politico-military dialogue. In generic terms, this process looks as follows.² Any given situation that may require an operational response triggers a process of political deliberation, producing a political-military estimate. On the basis of prudent planning, a range of possible response options is considered. When a specific operational response can be agreed upon, political direction to the military will assume the form of an initiating directive, containing political mission objectives as well as constraints and restraints. This is where military planning starts in a formal sense: planners will analyse the mission they have been given and on that basis draw up a general operational design. Subsequently military planners will develop alternative courses of action intended to achieve the given objectives and compare these with another by means of war games. The preferred course of action will then be developed into concrete planning documents (concept of operations, statement of requirements and operation plan). When the appropriate forces are available and the plan agreed upon, an operation can be launched. This model provides the procedural context in which operational art is practiced: the political masters determine the objectives and the resources of the mission whereas military planners attempt to make the bridge between the two.

Operational art provides the content of how an operation is designed. The concrete input for operational art comes from two sources. The first is the creativity of the commander and his or her planning team: human imagination makes operational planning an art rather than a science. This is the intangible factor that cannot be found in textbooks. The second source is the contribution by operational doctrine. This assumes the form of conceptual planning tools that enable the design process without putting an unreasonable burden on planners in terms of imagination. Essentially, doctrine substitutes collective wisdom for individual creativity. Ideally, both aspects of operational art go hand in hand. Within the contribution of doctrine, furthermore, a distinction needs to be made between the fashion of the day –

² This outline of operational planning is based on available NATO doctrine. The standard reference documents are *NATO's Operational Planning System* and the *Guidelines for Operational Planning*. For classification purposes, however, all definitions and elements referred to in this text are drawn from the unclassified *Allied Joint Operations* (AJP-3 / 2002). This

ideas and vocabulary that come and go – and the centuries-old hard core of military professionalism. An example of the first kind is the notion of ‘effects-based operations’ – a terminology that made some highly enthusiastic, left many more utterly bewildered and now seems to be on its way out.³ What is of interest here, however, is the deep core of operational thinking going back to the days of military theorists like Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine Henri Jomini. This doctrinal core provides the conceptual instruments that are the bread and butter of operational art: centres of gravity, decisive points, lines of operations and end-states.

1.1. Centre of Gravity Analysis

Much ink has already been spilt over the concept of centre of gravity.⁴ In general terms, centre of gravity (COG) analysis is a military methodology for analysing the strengths and weaknesses of all conflict parties. The COG concept was originally coined by Clausewitz and defined as “the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends”.⁵ In NATO doctrine, centres of gravity are defined as those characteristics, capabilities or locations from which an actor derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight. The COG concept serves as the basis for more elaborate analytical frameworks such as the one popularised by Joe Strange.⁶ Herein COGs are understood to be those physical or moral entities that are the primary components of strength, morale and resistance. They are endowed with certain *critical capabilities* to achieve desired outcomes. In order to enable and sustain these critical capabilities, a COG may have corresponding *critical requirements*. Furthermore, some of these requirements are

discussion deals with NATO doctrine because it constitutes a commonly accepted international standard that is widely copied by other international organisations, such as the EU and the UN.

³ See J.N. Mattis, ‘USJFCOM Commander’s Guidance for Effects-based Operations’, *Parameters*, Autumn 2008, pp. 18-25. In NATO, the ‘effects-based approach to operations’ still exists, but is being downgraded by the political bureaucracy to being the military contribution to the ‘comprehensive approach’ – another example of a popular buzzword largely devoid of any substance.

⁴ See e.g. A. Echevarria, *Clausewitz’s Center of Gravity: Changing our Warfighting Doctrine – Again!*, Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002; D.C. Eikmeier, ‘Centre of Gravity Analysis’, *Military Review*, Jul-Aug 2004, pp. 2-5; J. Strange & R. Iron, ‘Center of Gravity: What Clausewitz Really Meant’, *Joint Force Quarterly*, 2004, #53, pp. 20-27.

⁵ C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. M. Howard & P. Paret, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976, p. 595-596.

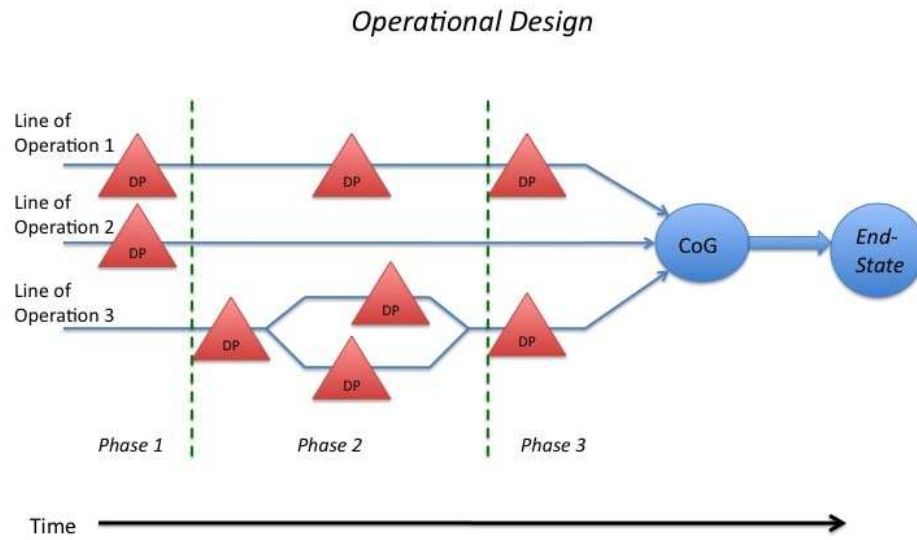
vulnerable to neutralisation in such a way that the COG loses its critical capabilities. These are labelled as *critical vulnerabilities*. This gives rise to an analytical grid wherein the military planner first has to identify an actor's COG or critical capabilities. Subsequently, critical requirements and vulnerabilities can be deduced as potential targets to be attacked or protected. This grid can be applied on all conflict actors (friendly forces, neutrals and opposing forces) and on all levels of analysis. (strategic, operational and tactical). While there exists much discussion on how the COG concept should be precisely defined and whether it can be salami-sliced into different levels of analysis, COG analysis remains a highly popular methodology to understand how an actor can be thrown off balance and forced to collapse.

1.2. Decisive Points and Lines of Operation

After analysing the centres of gravity of the conflict parties the next step is to visualise an operational design by means of decisive points and lines of operation – both concepts first introduced by Clausewitz' contemporary Jomini. An operational design provides the general outline of how an operation should develop. A *decisive point* is a geographic place, specific event, critical factor or function that allows one to gain an advantage over one's adversary: it is a point from which a COG can be threatened. Usually, these decisive points can be logically deduced from the capabilities, requirements and vulnerabilities already identified in the COG analysis. A *line of operations*, furthermore, links such decisive points in temporal, spatial or functional terms on a path to the adversary's COG. The underlying assumption is that the neutralisation of this COG will in turn bring about the defeat of the adversary and as such the desired end-state: the situation wherein the mission objectives have been achieved. Typically, how an operation should work towards its objectives can thus be visualised by several lines of operations connecting decisive points, which can be grouped into different phases in time. If required, different options can be accommodated into the design by means of branches and sequels. These

⁶ J. Strange, *Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, Perspectives on Warfighting Series N° 4 (2nd ed), 1996.

lines all converge towards an adversary's COG and the attainment of the end-state. Graphically, an operational design 'template' looks as illustrated below.⁷



⁷ Simplified from AJP-3, annex 3B.

2. APPLYING OPERATIONAL ART IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

In recent years, substantial debate emerged over the question whether this conceptual reference framework outlined by operational planning doctrine is fully applicable when planning operations that are different from conventional, force-on-force conflict. “Centres of gravity, lines of operations, and decisive points are difficult to discern in a complex mix of political, economic, and military peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans or when attacking a worldwide, weblike, self-organizing, transnational terrorist organization such as al-Qaeda”.⁸ Moreover, questions can be raised over the tenuous link between the neutralisation of the opponent’s COG and the political end-state. Lines of operations converge towards this COG, beyond which “one is left in a void, hoping that things will turn out all right.”⁹ Even the very existence of a realistic end-state may be in doubt – a problem that goes far beyond the military aspects of operational art. These issues can be amply illustrated by recent operational experience.

2.1. The Applicability of Conceptual Planning Tools

In many operations, given the political guidance, the concepts described above cannot be applied automatically. When an intervention force is instructed to remain neutral and impartial – as is the case for UN and many UN-mandated operations – one can still use the COG concept for analysing the conflict parties, but neutralising or defeating their COG cannot be part of the mission. UN peacekeepers in Lebanon, for example, consider the seizing of illegal arms – a critical capability – to be a decisive point in their line of operations of containing Hezbollah and other militant groups.¹⁰ Yet as the UN blue helmets are bound by the principle of neutrality, the responsibility for disarming these armed elements rests with the Lebanese armed forces, which are in turn unwilling or incapable to do so. By consequence, the UN force cannot realise its own campaign plan – it can only foster the sort of conditions that favour a course of events in the right direction. UN planners still use COG analysis as an orientation tool, but the restrictiveness of their

⁸ J.K. Greer, ‘Operational Art for the Objective Force’, *Military Review*, Sep-Oct 2002, p. 26.

⁹ P. Lessard, ‘Campaign Design for Winning the War... and the Peace’, *Parameters*, Summer 2005, p. 39. Cf. W.G. Pierce and R.C. Coon, ‘Understanding the Link Between Center of Gravity and Mission Accomplishment’, *Military Review*, May-Jun 2007, pp. 76-84.

¹⁰ See A. Mattelaer, ‘Europe Rediscovered Peacekeeping? Political and Military Logics in the 2006 UNIFIL Enhancement’, Brussels: Egmont Institute, *Egmont Papers N°34*, 2009.

political mandate prevents them from actively exploiting the vulnerabilities of others. The staff officers planning the EU operation in Chad in 2008 encountered similar difficulties.¹¹ EU forces were being sent into potentially hostile areas but were instructed to remain impartial. In this context all the armed groups who could pose a military threat were labelled as 'spoilers'. The 'own forces vs opposing forces' framework could thus be used in a hypothetical sense. Yet this catch-all formula implied that while individual groups could be analysed on a tactical level, one could go no further on the operational level than saying that spoilers drew strength from the general climate of impunity. An opposing strategic centre of gravity to guide operational design simply did not exist.

In more general terms, the contemporary operational environment – whether one qualifies it as 'war amongst the people' or 'fourth generation warfare' – poses a considerable challenge in analysing the situation with sufficient clarity. Centre of gravity analysis for the NATO operation in Afghanistan has been shifting continuously in a search for the intended stabilisation effects. As the targeting of insurgent leaders did not stem the rise in violence, thinking about the insurgents' COG evolved towards their supply lines stretching into Pakistan. Yet the realisation that the ISAF mission had evolved into counterinsurgency belatedly triggered a rethink towards a population-centric approach. Harking back to traditional counterinsurgency doctrine, the Afghan people were turned into the COG of the campaign.¹² Current thinking about the *centre of gravity of the mission* rather than that of a conventional opponent constitutes creative re-interpretation of doctrine, yet it requires a higher level of creativity on the part of the planners and brings them in doctrinally uncharted territory.

A final issue is that contemporary crisis management and stabilisation missions tend to constitute multidimensional operations. As such, military security is generally but one line of operations in a more encompassing civil-military campaign design. The trouble is that the entire campaign design vocabulary is by and large unknown outside of the military community. Correspondingly, risks are high that no single actor or organisation is in charge of the overall coordination. All operations mentioned above qualify as

¹¹ See A. Mattelaer, 'The Strategic Planning of EU Military Operations – The Case of EUFOR Tchad/RCA', Brussels, Institute for European Studies, *IES Working Paper N°5*, 2008.

illustrative examples. Yet apart from the lack of coordination, this multidimensional character also raises questions over the extent to which military planning doctrine can substitute for an appropriate conceptual toolkit for planning civilian efforts. In the EU context, which constitutes a real laboratory for integrated 'civ-mil' planning, civilian planners tend to borrow heavily from the conceptual terminology of their military colleagues. Yet the EU's integrated police units are obviously not intended to decisively defeat anybody – begging the question whether Clausewitz really provides the best intellectual foundation for planning police missions.

2.2. Towards the End-State?

Another major conceptual hurdle concerns the notion of the 'end-state', i.e. "the political and/or military situation to be attained at the end of an operation, which indicates that the objective has been achieved".¹³ The problem here is essentially political in nature: can a realistically achievable end-state be defined in operations that are generally multi-national as well as multi-agency? Yet the political difficulties involved in this regard have significant implications for planning doctrine and operational art.

The clearest manifestation of the problem is of course the situation where the end-state simply cannot be defined. This can be the result of a lack of consensus between participating nations. It can also reflect an unwillingness to get bogged down in open-ended deployments. Several military operations conducted by the EU qualify as examples: the end-state is often replaced by an end-date on which the troops return home. In 2006, an operation intended to secure the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was in advance limited to a duration of four months. This undermined the deterrence strategy of the operation: the electoral contenders only had to postpone resorting to violence until the date EU forces left the country. The lessons-learned process following the operation concluded that the idea of an end-date was a conceptual non-starter. Yet only two years later the EU operation in Chad featured another end-date. Here only a last-minute handover to a UN peacekeeping operation avoided a collapse of the improved security situation. However, the end-date guidance implied that the operational design for the

¹² See J.D. Alford and S.A. Cuomo, 'Operational Design for ISAF in Afghanistan: A Primer', *Joint Force Quarterly*, 2009, #53, pp. 92-98.

¹³ As defined by the *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (AAP-6 / 2009)*.

Chad mission consisted of parallel lines of operations that ended in mid-air rather than converge to a COG or an end-state.¹⁴ Furthermore, in spite of its nonsensicality, the 'end-date' concept now seems to creep its way into doctrinal codification.¹⁵

Apart from the complete absence of an end-state, the problem may be that the envisaged end-state does not correspond with the level of ambition in mandated tasks and/or available resources. The operational design of the UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon illustrates the former.¹⁶ The strategic end-state of the UN operation is that the Lebanese government would exercise full sovereignty throughout its territory. Yet the double mission given to the blue helmets, namely to assist the Lebanese armed forces and to ensure their area of operations is not used for hostile activities, clearly does not give the UN the authority or the tools to bring about the desired end-state. The case of Afghanistan illustrates the case where there is an obvious disconnect between the available resources and the official end-state of a moderate and democratic Afghan government exercising sovereign control throughout the country. Such an ambitious end-state is widely unrealistic given the scarce military resources and even scarcer reconstruction and development means available for the campaign. As such, it triggers ongoing confusion and debate about what the real desired end-state of the campaign should be.¹⁷ The overall conclusion is clear: without clearly defined objectives and a realistic end-state, sensible planning cannot begin.

2.3. Implications for Operational Art

As stated earlier, operational art relies both on doctrinal guidance and individual creativity. While these ideally go hand-in-hand, shortfalls in one need to be remedied by the other. Good doctrine reduces the need for imagination and creativity just as creative planning can make do with little doctrinal guidance. The main consequence of a misfit between doctrinal constructs fine-tuned for conventional warfare and unconventional real-world scenarios is that it increases the burden of creativity required from individual

¹⁴ Cf. Mattelaer, 2008, op. cit.

¹⁵ As evident from the *EU Military Rapid Response Concept*, Brussels: Council of the European Union, 2009

¹⁶ Cf. Mattelaer, 2009, op. cit.

¹⁷ See J. Coelmont, ed., 'End-State Afghanistan', Brussels: Egmont Institute, *Egmont Papers N° 29*, 2009.

commanders and planners. Sometimes this hardly has any meaningful effect: mission success often depends more on political factors than on the fine details of military doctrine. Yet in other cases, the lack of appropriate doctrinal support cannot be discarded as a non-issue. Simply put, the armed forces cannot concentrate all their efforts on fine-tuning doctrine for the type of missions they are most comfortable with at the detriment of the missions they are tasked to undertake in the real world.

Doctrine development does not sit still. The problems regarding the applicability of planning tools have been noted by scores of military personnel with operational experience. As such, they have triggered a lessons-learned process of which the first doctrinal offshoots have been recently published. For the US and the UK, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq constituted a very sharp educational process in counterinsurgency. In 2005, a US Department of Defense directive instructed that stability operations should be treated on an equal footing with combat operations.¹⁸ Amongst other things, this new orientation gave birth to a new US Army and US Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency* manual.¹⁹ It advocates the idea that the COG of insurgents is usually their ability to sustain popular support. Therefore, the argument goes, an operational design for counterinsurgency should follow logical lines of operations to several distinct objectives rather than converge towards an opposing COG. Furthermore, the concept of 'design' – a deliberative method for understanding complex problems – is informing a full review of US Army campaign planning doctrine.²⁰ Similarly, the British armed forces engaged in an in-depth reflection process about the military contribution to security and stabilisation.²¹ British doctrine remains strongly committed to COG analysis as the basis of operational art, but states that in stabilisation missions, COG analysis demands a different focus from conventional campaigning. Rather than informing targeting decisions, COG analysis for stabilisation should enable the commander to choose when, where and how to exert influence and help him define *decisive conditions*, i.e. those circumstances that are necessary to achieve a campaign objective and as such constitute or enable the end-state.

¹⁸ *Stability Operations* (DoDD 3000.05 / 2005).

¹⁹ *Counterinsurgency* (FM 3-24 / MCWP 3-33.5 / 2006).

²⁰ Cf. *Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design* (TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 / 2008).

²¹ *Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution* (JDP 3-40 / 2009).

This makes clear that doctrinal adaptation is already underway. The questions are: does it go far enough, and does it go in the right direction? On both accounts, the answers are mixed. An initial observation is that the past and ongoing doctrinal reflection mostly takes place in the US and the UK. It has yet to trickle down into allied doctrine – a process that has started but is far from finished. Within NATO, new doctrinal publications on COIN and Comprehensive Operations Planning are underway. Just as is the case for many other developments, however, the transformation of planning doctrine is uneven and occurs at different speeds amongst the different allies. It can be doubted whether adequate doctrine for the full spectrum of operations has already permeated all Western defence establishments.

The second question is even more difficult to answer beyond reasonable debate. After all, what is the right direction? For the purpose of this discussion, two suggestions will have to suffice as food-for-thought. Firstly, do the deliberations about adequate planning doctrine need to focus on counterinsurgency or cover a wider range of stabilisation missions? While current operations constitute a powerful driver for a focus on counterinsurgency, the broader logic of strategy suggests that future contingencies may again look different from Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, doctrine needs to be grounded in experience: one cannot plan for those famous unknown unknowns. Yet taking into account all recent operational experience – including that of EU and UN missions – there is likely to be plenty of material for reflection on a wide range of operations. Second is the inter-agency challenge. In spite of the popular discourse about the comprehensive approach, there remains enormous room for improving the basics of joint interagency planning and staff work. While several military academies have opened up their staff colleges to civilians this remains the exception rather than the rule. As long as military staff and civilian staff are not trained together in operational art and do not understand each other's vocabularies, how can they be expected to operate seamlessly together in the field? Taken together, these two questions (and partial answers) point to challenges that go beyond the doctrinal aspects of operational art and touch upon political choices.

3. THE TROUBLED LINK BETWEEN OPERATIONAL ART AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

The preceding discussion about the level of adequacy of operational art derives its salience from the expectation that operations will deliver the intended objectives. Operational art serves to support the strategic effectiveness of operations. In this regard one can speak of a crisis in operational art: operations do not sufficiently deliver what is expected from them. Apart from a conceptual gap in planning doctrine, however, one can also relate this crisis to a more fundamental gap between operations and politics.

One recent version of this argument is that the operational level of war – as introduced in the English-speaking world in the 1980s – has driven a wedge between politics and warfare.²² By defining ‘operational art’ so broadly as to encompass the design of campaigns, the political leadership has been reduced to the role of strategic sponsor. Being part of the professional jurisdiction of the armed forces, the operational level usurped the role of civilian leadership in campaign planning. Political strategy, devoid of tactical views, thus became prone to miscalculation and wishful thinking. In this reasoning, campaign design must return to the national strategic leadership. In order to foster a bureaucratic process for ‘strategic art’, the study of strategy should engage the political leadership as much as the military so that operational art can focus again on tactical actions.

The same argument has been made on the basis of semantic rather than doctrinal grounds.²³ Here it is argued that strategy has gradually become conflated with policy. The arrival of the nuclear age implied that strategy was no longer concerned with how to wage war but rather how to prevent it from occurring. Through phrases like ‘grand strategy’ and ‘national strategy’, the concept of strategy lost its military meaning and became a synonym for policy. The semantic gap between policy and tactics thus came to be filled by the operational level of war. Yet as the operational level remains generally devoid of political considerations, this state of affairs led to a malfunctioning

²² J. Kelly and M. Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*, Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009. The terms ‘operational level’ and ‘operational art’ were respectively introduced by the 1982 and 1986 versions of the US Army Field Manual *Operations* (FM 100-5).

²³ H. Strachan, ‘The Lost Meaning of Strategy’, *Survival*, 47 (3), 2005, pp. 33-54. For a related view, see E.N. Luttwak, ‘From Vietnam to *Desert Fox*: Civil-Military in Modern Democracies’, *Survival*, 41 (1), 1999, pp. 99-112.

politico-military interface. In this view, subordination of the military to political control has led to a situation wherein the use of force is treated as an instrument of policy about which policymakers have only limited understanding.

As there exists a scholarly consensus about the need for more strategy in the Clausewitzian sense, i.e. connecting tactics to politics, the discussion about doctrinal development receives a critical corollary on the political level. The doctrinal input for operational art needs to reflect the wide variety of operations Western armed forces are tasked to undertake. Yet even the best doctrine cannot compensate for flawed political strategy. Muddled objectives, inadequate resources and absence of a proper conceptual framework connecting ends and means will make an operation depend on hope and good luck rather than on military professionalism. Ignorant policy-making about military operations is at least as important when discussing the lack of successful outcomes. Addressing the problems in operational art, therefore, goes beyond adapting doctrine: it also implies re-engaging and educating the political level in campaign planning. The transformation of operational art is not only about the conceptual toolkit, it is also about who uses it: better tools are desirable, but more competent users even more so.

CONCLUSION

This article reviewed the foundations of operational art. It argued that there remains ample scope for improving the planning toolkit for unconventional operations. The hard core of planning doctrine – centre of gravity analysis as a basis for designing lines of operations leading to the end state – is not invalidated and remains applicable for future contingencies of major combat. Yet it is not universally applicable to other types of operations. Stabilisation and reconstruction tasks ideally do not imply the defeat of anyone. The choice to engage in operations other than conventional warfare is a legitimate political decision, and such operations are unlikely to disappear in the near future. Therefore, doctrinal reflection on such operations needs to be pursued vigorously, so that Western armed forces will be better geared to address the challenges these operations represent. Yet all military operations are in need of political ownership to be truly strategic. This requires expertise and awareness of operational art on the political as well as the military level. The desired reflection process on operational art thus concerns a broader audience than the military. The political leadership cannot aspire to behave strategically without understanding what sort of tactical performance creates what strategic effect. In practical terms, this suggests the following conclusions:

The development of allied planning doctrine needs to give due importance to operations different from major conventional combat. Territorial defence and interstate conflict may represent the most extreme security threat, for which the armed forces need to retain their expertise, but this does not discharge them from being able to address lesser security challenges with a lower degree of professionalism.

Campaign planning is not a professional preserve of the military. Planning may constitute the hard core of military professionalism, but the military alone often cannot secure strategic success. This is shown as much by the great campaigns of the past as by contemporary multidimensional efforts: peace is the result of many factors. Good campaign planning involves statesmen as well as generals: the making of strategy needs both.

Every art relies on training and education. Civilian and military professionals need to go to staff college together if they are to cooperate effectively in practice. Joint education is the best way to ensure that those engaging in

operational art share a common vocabulary and reference framework. Without a common language and a basic level of doctrinal awareness, multi-agency cooperation as well as an effective dialogue between the political and military leaderships are likely to stand in linguistic and conceptual confusion.