

The Noise Before Defeat: Current Failure of Western Militaries to Formulate Strategy

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest way to victory. Tactics without strategy is just the noise before defeat.” *Sun Tzu*

Introduction

It is the purpose of this paper to show that we in the West have forsaken a tradition of combined strategy formulation, and that because of this we are facing the real prospect of military failure. Specifically it suggests that failure in Afghanistan may occur not because insurgent forces are winning, but because our current strategic practices are self-defeating. Our inability to grasp the importance of, and the ways to achieve, coherent grand strategy and combined military strategy has exposed great weakness in our system of war management. The ramifications of this are broad and very ominous.

To substantiate this bold and uncomplimentary assertion, this paper begins with an examination of what is meant by “grand strategy” and “military strategy,” and the corresponding exhausted adjective “strategic.” Various definitions of these terms, postulated by the most prominent modern theorists, are offered, as is the author’s own humble attempt at a definition and an explanatory model. The aim here is to impart a common framework of understanding for further examination and discourse.

With the presentation of this model, the paper then moves to briefly recount how combined strategy was formulated in 1918, and during the Second World War, and finally during the Cold War. The conclusion from this analysis is that success in these conflicts was derived from adherence to two principles; the first was in organizing at the highest political and military levels in order to permit identification of common interests between participating nations and then the crafting of common war policy and in some cases grand strategy. The second principle was again one of organization which saw the designation of a single “unified” military command structure for a given theatre of war, demanding all nations’ military forces fall under a single military authority who was responsible for crafting and implementing military strategy in response to the common war policy.

The third and final part of this paper looks at the current practices of war management in Afghanistan since 2001 to determine whether or not these two principles have been applied. It examines the various attempts that have been made at strategy

formulation for Afghanistan during this period and speculates about why all have failed. It therefore provides context with which we might understand the current strategic dilemma faced by the Obama administration. The larger intent of this paper is to stimulate thinking about what the West might need to do to address our strategic deficiencies.

The Dimensions of Strategy

Strategy and strategic thinking emerged as term and concept in the nineteenth century. Jomini describes strategy as “the art of making war upon a map, and comprehends the whole theatre of operations.”ⁱ His definition identifies what we today call “campaigning” or “military strategy.” Jomini introduced into western military thinking the notion that strategy had a spatial dimension, concerning the application of larger military forces over distances beyond the range of cannons, encompassing how armies concentrated, marched, encamped, sustained, and manoeuvred in relation to enemy forces. This equated strategy with higher echelons of headquarters or with an individual supreme commander. His contemporary, Prussian Field Marshal von Gneisenau, reinforced this when stating that strategy was “the science of making use of space and time.” Another contemporary, scholar and engineer William Muller, added yet another dimension, declaring strategy to be “scientific knowledge which should distinguish the commander of an army, which comprises first, the *dialectic of war*, or the scientific method of forming the *plan of operations*.” Early-nineteenth century dialectical thinking informed Carl von Clausewitz, who extended things even further by claiming that strategy was “the art of employing battles as a means to gain the object of war.”ⁱⁱ Clausewitz integrated spatial and temporal aspects of strategy with a conception of a higher purpose, and from his line of thinking we begin to discern strategy as being a dialogue between objectives sought after (called the *ends*) and the resources available (called *means*) to achieve these objectives. Inherent in this relationship is the requirement to establish priorities and to sequence the applications of military force for the purposes of policy ends.ⁱⁱⁱ

Strategic thinking matured after Clausewitz, but not uniformly across the West. The German school began to see strategy as highly contingent upon tactical success. To the late-nineteenth century German general staff officer strategy was in constant dialogue

with tactical action. “Strategy” says Helmuth von Moltke, “appropriates the success of every engagement and builds upon it. The demands of strategy grow silent in the face of tactical victory and adapt to themselves to the newly created situation.” In German philosophical thinking the means of strategy were finite and most relevant, and these made the ends of strategy bend. This led to a mindset wherein strategy was “a system of expedients...the continued development of the original leading thought in accordance with the constantly changing circumstances.” This notion of strategy as something that was wholly responsive to bottom-up tactical events remained the defining characteristic of German military thinking until 1945.^{iv}

Contemporary French and American ideas of strategy saw the relationship of ends and means in the reverse. They discerned strategy to be a top-down design that held the ends – the policy objectives - of strategy as sacrosanct, while the means were variable depending upon levels of mobilization. But such cognition did not come about through abstract reasoning. It took the crucibles of the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the First World War to consecrate this understanding. In the inter-war period both Russian and Maoist Chinese military thinking also adopted a top-down understanding of strategy, but broader in scope to that of America or France, incorporating socio-economic struggle outside of war.^v Sir Basil Liddell Hart’s influential thinking also emerged during this period, and his book, entitled *Strategy*, articulated strategic dimensions of war in a manner that has not been surpassed. Using Clausewitzian ideas of dialectic, Liddell Hart posited strategy as a continual dialogue between ends and means, but distinguished between “pure” or “military strategy” which sought military victory in war, and higher “grand strategy” which viewed the usage of war to attain a better condition of peace.^{vi}

In order to explain these complex dimensions better, this paper presents the following model. It identifies two axes that reflect strategic dimensions. The first – the horizontal axis – is temporal, and defines strategy in terms of future conditions – that is to say conditions that are desirable to us but that are not the current reality. These become short term, middle term and long term objectives. The second – vertical – axis is one of echelons of decision making. It begins at the lowest tactical level of military activity and progresses upward to the highest echelon of military strategic authority and moves into

the realm of political and diplomatic decision making. This axis also implies a spatial dimension because the highest strategic levels deal with realities and perceived futures on a global scale.

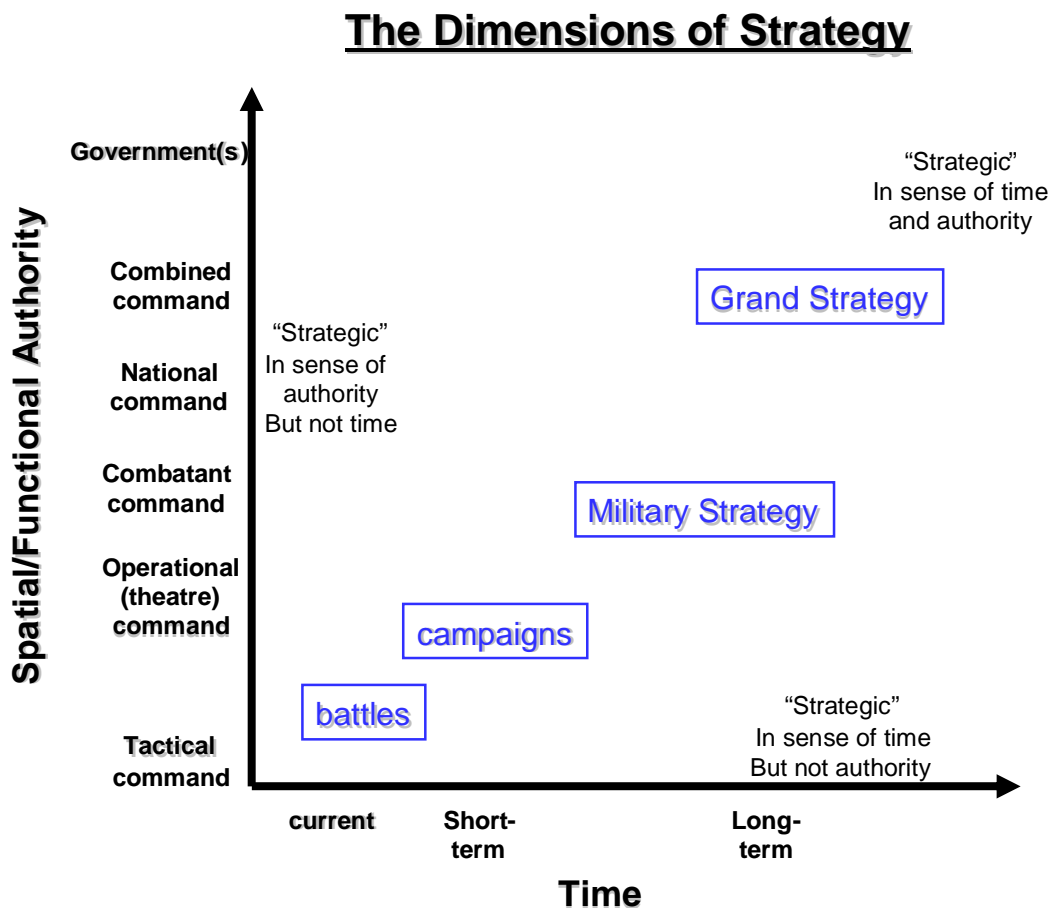


Figure 1: The Dimensions of Strategy

Using this model of strategic dimensions, we can see that it is possible to operate predominantly on one axis; for instance, it is possible at low tactical levels to have “strategic” vision about a future tactical condition that is very different from the current reality but that one may want realized. Likewise we can see that it is possible to operate at the highest strategic level but have a limited temporal focus, seeing the world in terms of current reality or a desired future condition for next week, month, year or political election cycle. With this model we can discern in the area between these two vectors the proper location for the strategic terms of the nineteenth century; “engagement”, “battle”,

“operation”, “campaign”, and “theatre of war”. Likewise we can discern the appropriate places for Liddell Hart’s military strategy and grand strategy. Once represented, we can appreciate the hierarchical nature of strategic thinking. Grand strategy is a derivative of higher national interests and policies. It is multi-dimensional, incorporating socio-economic and political-diplomatic factors, and uses these interests and policies to envision a future condition that is regional if not global, and incorporates conditions of a favourable peace after war’s end. Therefore, it is the most abstract and difficult of the echelons of strategic thinking. But if articulated, grand strategy makes military planning much easier; with it, planners can work backward from grand strategic vision to identify military strategy, in order to apply strategic *means* in campaigns, battles and engagements to achieve such strategic *ends*.

This theoretical model incorporates the French and American 20th century thinking about strategy and blends it with that of Liddell Hart. It is simplistic, perhaps even anachronistic, but deliberately so. One of the underlying contentions of this paper is that current inabilities with regard to strategic thinking are due to post-modernist relativism and fuzzy concepts such as “operational art” and “strategic corporal” and “network-centric and effects-based operations” and “flattened hierarchies”. To illustrate strategic dimensions with greater clarity than post-modernism allows, this paper will use this model to consider successful strategic practices in history and to extrapolate from these to identify lessons that we might employ today.

Western Strategy in the Twentieth Century

If we analyze the allied war effort between 1914 and 1917 within this model we see that each of the principal allied powers was running its own national war management system which focused on their own tactical forces and attempted to secure military success using relatively short-sighted military objectives that were measured in yards and months. France, Britain, and Italy circumscribed the dimensions of their own strategic thinking to points half-way up the vertical axis of our model and one tenth of the way across the horizontal. By late 1917 such myopic thinking led to a situation where normal “trench wastage” was costing the allies a thousand soldiers a day on the Western Front. At that time, Italian resolve was shaken by the German victory at Caporetto, the French

were embarrassed and worried by army mutinies, and the British thought about limiting their war aims and started oscillating between military priorities for the Western Front and the Mediterranean. With neither common grand strategy nor specific theatre military strategies to guide tactical action, senior military commanders and politicians wondered if they were indeed hearing the “the noise before defeat”. Suffering what Dr. Brock Millman accurately describes as a “counsel of despair,” the British were driven in November 1917 to meet with French and Italian leaders in Rapallo, Italy. There they agreed to establish a permanent Supreme War Council to sit in Versailles.^{vii} The Americans were invited as an Associated Power to join this multi-national council, which was entrusted with overall war management.

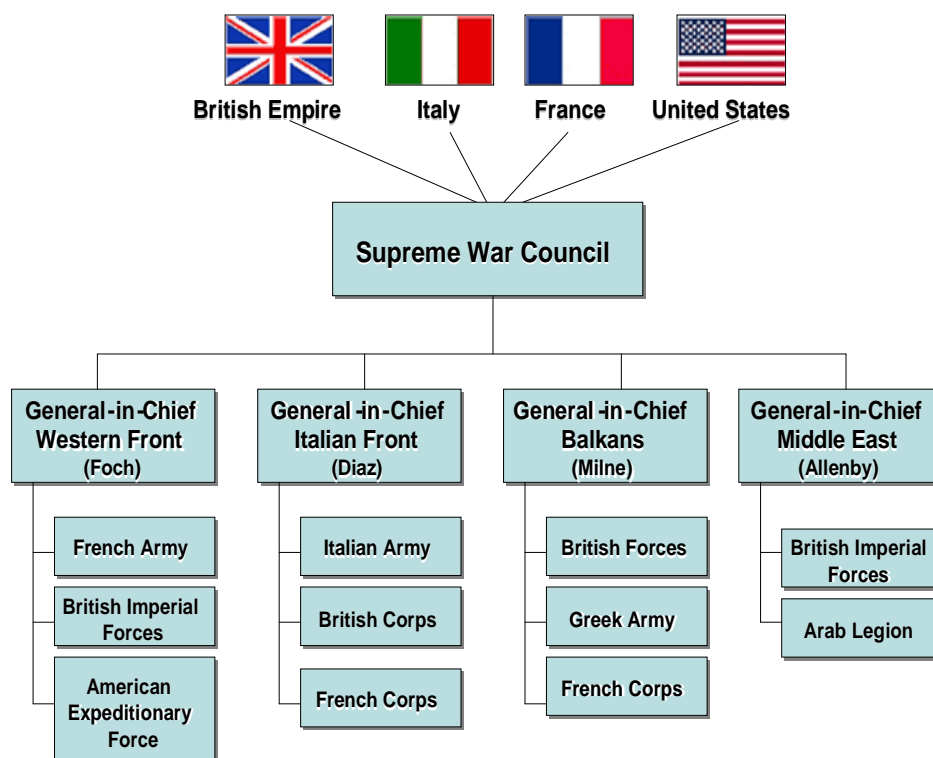


Figure 2: Strategic Organization 1918

At the Versailles council national interests and national policies were tabled and discussed and a common policy was adopted that became the allied war strategy for 1918-1919. In accordance with French and American desires the Western Front was

designated as the main effort where the allies would defeat Germany, but this would not be attempted until the arrival of sufficient American military power in 1919. To satisfy British and Italian desires, the Mediterranean could receive extra resources during the waiting period of 1918. While perhaps not achieving a level of mature grand strategy, the multinational Supreme War Council did grant the allies the organizational mechanism to formulate effective military strategy from common war policy. This was best illustrated when on March 25 1918, the Supreme War Council granted General Ferdinand Foch “supreme command” over French, American, and British Imperial forces on the Western Front. This facilitated unprecedented singleness of purpose in allied military strategic planning on that front. Foch worked tirelessly to coordinate allied defensive efforts during the devastating German offensives of spring 1918. When the Germans began to culminate, Foch – conscious that there is always interplay between strategic design and changing tactical reality - decided to take the war to the enemy in the summer of 1918. This was at least ten months earlier than the date anticipated at Rapallo and Versailles. Foch’s July 24 memorandum to generals Petain, Haig, and Pershing laid out detailed attack guidance for all allied forces, and became the strategic “blueprint” for the coordinated French, British and American offensives that defeated Germany within 100 days that autumn.^{viii}

By late 1918, Foch spoke with authority invested by political agreement, and his “supreme command” represented a singular unified military operational effort under a mutually accepted alliance strategy. The lessons of this were not lost to junior observers. Colonel George C. Marshall was General Pershing’s Chief of Operations and witnessed first hand the positive effect of Foch’s “strategic direction”.^{ix}

During the Second World War, the lessons of the Great War were again applied. Once Russia and the United States entered the war in 1941, genuine strategic planning could occur. General George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff since 1939, believed in the two guiding principles of 1918; multilateral grand strategy and unified command that could produce military strategy for a specific theatre of war. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he and Roosevelt sponsored the visit of Churchill and British military chiefs to Washington where it was agreed that an organization equivalent to Supreme War Council would be established. The British-American Combined Chiefs of Staff

(CCS) was created to manage the grand strategy of the war.^x The CCS functioned through a system of standing committees and programmed meetings where the service chiefs and political leaders of leading alliance nations met to determine the course of the war. As such it addressed common interests and crafted common war aims, amalgamating these into common war policy which made decisions regarding ends and means much easier. As well, Marshall also convinced the CCS to adopt the mechanism that had made Foch so successful, unified command for each major theatre of war. This allowed for all services of every participating nation to be united under a single lead-nation's commander-in-chief (CINC) who would craft the theatre strategy necessary to achieve the grand strategy designed by the CCS and their political masters.^{xi} By placing all theatre CINCs below the multi-national CCS, this also pre-empted inter-service rivalry and competition between CINCs, who would continually ask for more resources, but whose individual horizons were too narrow to appreciate the larger war-management problem.^{xii}

The CCS had standing planning committees dedicated to strategic alignment of each nation's resources and plans in accordance with the agreed-to priorities. Of the hundreds of issues to prioritize, perhaps the most well-known became the "Germany first" decision, which recognized the need to allocate sufficient strategic means to defeat Germany before re-allocating these resources to defeat Japan. The standing committees reviewed tactical situations and emerging realities with longer term plans, reconciling differences and preparing for important grand strategic dialogue that would occur throughout the war at a series of conferences between the leaders of the Great Powers; America, Britain, Russia and the Free French. At Washington, Argentia, Arcadia, Quebec, Casablanca, Cairo, Tehran, and Yalta key leaders of the Great powers met to debate and find agreement upon the main issues of strategic ends and means.

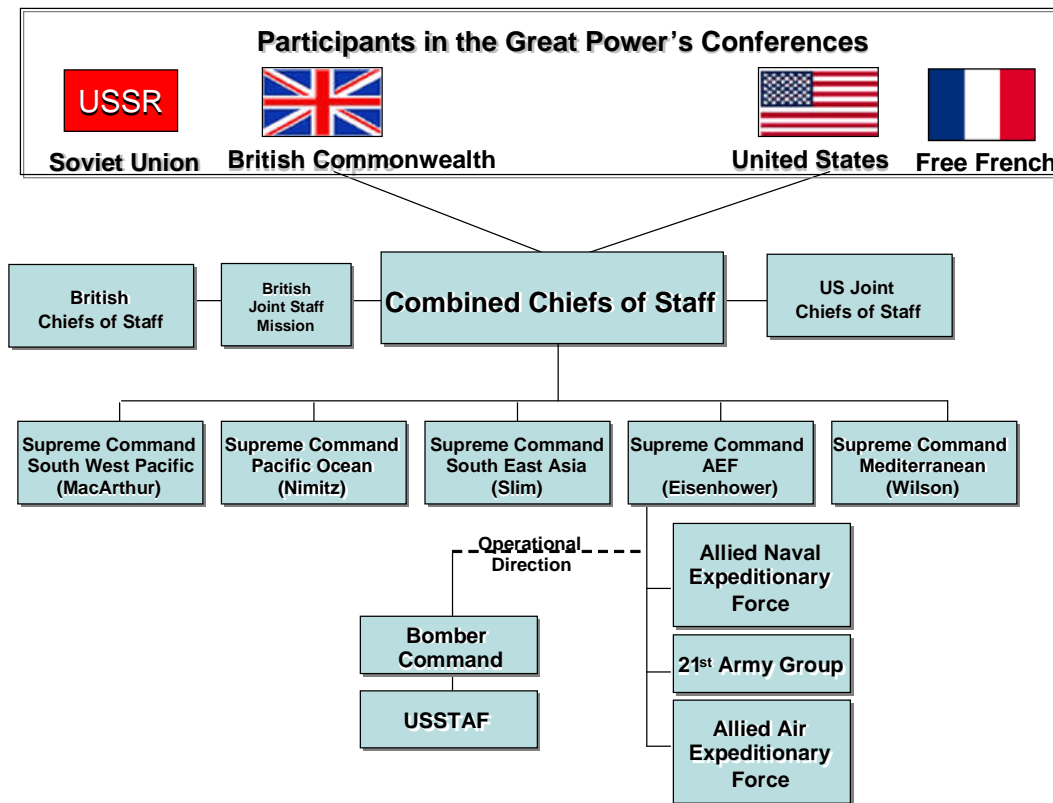


Figure 3: Strategic Organization 1945

To achieve success within the CCS committee system and within the Great Powers conference structure, all parties had to relinquish a degree of sovereignty. General Marshall did so when he conceded to agree to an invasion of North Africa in 1942, even though he thought it more effective to plan for an immediate invasion of Western Europe in order to relieve pressure upon the Russians. He conceded again in agreeing to the invasion of Sicily and Italy in 1943, but made the other powers agree to harbour resources for the invasion of Europe in 1944 - despite British attempts to expend efforts in the Mediterranean. He also gained acceptance from the others that his chosen man – General Eisenhower – would be appointed Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).^{xiii} Once appointed Eisenhower, like the other CINCs in the Pacific, South East Asia, and the Mediterranean, also learned that compromise was necessary. He answered to the CCS, but frequently addressed issues raised by political leaders of various governments. By small degrees he had to give up full authority in order to accommodate political and military concerns of alliance partners whose finite resources

could not be squandered away in one costly operation.^{xiv} While it had taken several years to determine grand strategic priorities and workable military strategic command relationships within the Great Power alliance, and while compromise was necessary on most issues of *ends* and *means*, once the common war policy and unified command structures were established, the result was enduring moral singleness and unity of purpose that led to the defeat of the Axis powers and Japan.

The Allies affirmed two lessons by war's end; the efficacy of a single CINC as essential to achieving military unity of effort in a given theatre of war, and the requirement that theatre commanders be responsive to a higher strategic body where the competing requirements of policy and military strategy come together to be debated, and where the ends and means dialectic can be continually addressed. Experience in both world wars informed them that the advantage of military unity under singular geographic commanders was not in itself sufficient to sustain alliances; strategy formulation required compromises and pluralism beyond the capacity of a theatre CINC. The first lesson was foundational in creating the American Unified Command Plan (UCP) in 1946; the second guided the formation of NATO in 1949.^{xv}

NATO had been established in 1949 when Eisenhower's former Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) transformed into Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). By that time, during European reconstruction and global decolonization, there was no questioning of American-led command constructs. Within the alliance, however, American military and political leaders understood that military command of a theatre did not equate with American control of strategy formulation. This had to be done in a multi-lateral forum that could achieve results similar to the CCS committee system of World War Two. Therefore, the NATO Military Committee was established, comprised of military representatives of each member; and the North Atlantic Council (NAC) was created, comprised of permanent representatives - or on occasion member states' key leaders. The NAC became the civil-political forum for debate over combined grand strategy to which SHAPE was responsive in its military strategy.

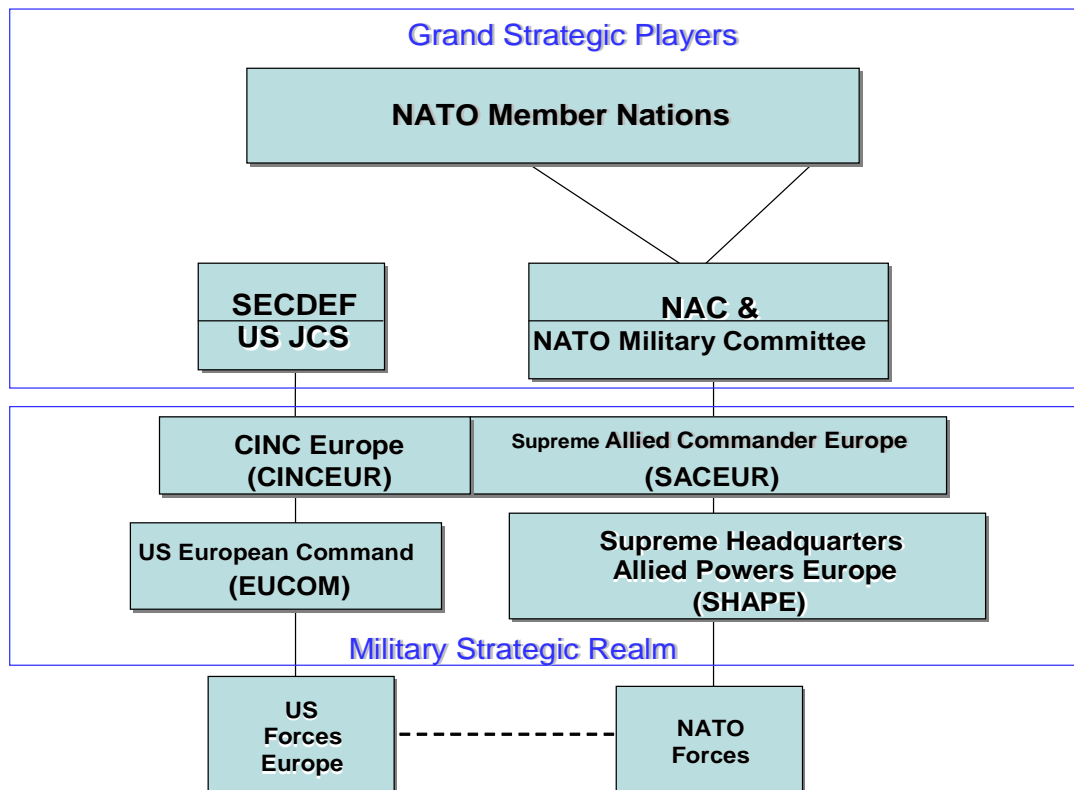


Figure 4: Strategic Organization NATO

Within SHAPE, and in the military chain of command in each member nation, the sentiment favoring powerful supreme command was so strong that it became entrenched. Europeans have always since deferred to SACEUR, provided that alliance strategy formulation remains in the Military Committee and the NAC. UN-sponsored operations in the Former Yugoslavia in 1996 demonstrated how NATO operations under the UCP could be executed maintaining the principle of military unity of command under multi-lateral political oversight. SACEUR remained the singular theatre strategic commander, responsive to both the NAC and to the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). SACEUR accepted such frustrating factors as national caveats in order to sustain the alliance political support that has endured for over a decade. Operations in Kosovo in 1999 were far more problematic as lack of political agreement to attack Serbia created unprecedented caveats, yet SACEUR still maintained that “the NATO process worked ...I was persuaded of the basic soundness of NATO decision-making.”^{xvi} The principles of multilateral grand strategic organization, combined with unity of command at the level

of military strategy led to allied perseverance in Bosnia and Kosovo that has been successful.

The Strategic Void in Afghanistan

When we consider strategic dimensions of the war in Afghanistan 2001 to 2009, in comparison to those demonstrated in the twentieth century by Europeans and Americans, one is struck by the contrasts. Grand strategy and military strategy have defied Western efforts there, creating opportunity for an ever-growing insurgency by the Taliban. In this section we will attempt to show that in relation to the model presented earlier, American and NATO efforts have failed to transcend to strategic levels on the vertical axis, and have remained short-sighted on the horizontal.

In part, this is a result of the fact that American thinking about multinational operations changed in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11th 2001. Looking back upon American-led success in Desert Storm, and at the problems encountered with some Europeans in Kosovo in 1999, American strategic sentiment in 2001 favoured ad hoc coalitions over the constraining nature of an alliance. Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld's phrase was often repeated in 2001: "The mission will define the coalition; the coalition will not define the mission."^{xvii} What these words reflect was a feeling that in the post 9-11 world, war strategy formulation would be confined within the Executive Branch of the US Government, and executed by US combatant commanders, with tactical support from "invited" coalition members. No one in Washington felt the need for an modern equivalence of the Supreme War Council, the CCS committee system, or the Cold War NAC. The problems this created soon surfaced in Afghanistan.

At the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in 2001, "supreme command" fell, in accordance with the Unified Command Plan, upon Commander Central Command (CENTCOM). In the absence of any higher combined strategic forum, CENTCOM also assumed lead role in coalition war management: a huge departure from past practices. Sympathy for the United States, and the assumption that operations in Afghanistan would be short, caused few nations to raise political objections to a CENTCOM lead, even though the commander of CENTCOM was not subject to any non-US political scrutiny. Commandant commanders do not normally feel compelled to subject themselves to political oversight by anyone other than the SECDEF and the

President, and periodic congressional review. However, at the same time, combatant commands are not organized for grand strategic processes. Therefore, the only grand strategic thinking that informed CENTCOM in 2001 was that coming from the Pentagon related to the budding “global war on terrorism.” When American military attention quickly diverted to Iraq in 2002, no further grand strategic initiatives were considered for Afghanistan outside of those proposed at international conferences at Bonn, Berlin, Madrid and Lisbon. These were not the modern equivalents of the Second World War Great Powers conferences. Rather, they were ostensibly donor conferences, whereat the international community committed resources to Afghan development and set benchmarks for Afghan political reform. None of these conferences dealt with the use of military operations to secure a better peace. Each conference confirmed the trajectory of Afghan development efforts, but these were on a different trajectory than CENTCOM-led military efforts. In relation to the model presented at the commencement of this paper, no grand strategy emerged for Afghanistan, and no coherent military strategy was achieved. Much like the situation on the Western Front in 1917, the military and development efforts in Afghanistan never rose above the middle of the vertical axis, and few initiatives moved beyond short term timelines.

It was not that there were not attempts at strategy. The World Bank, ably assisted by Canadian personnel working for the Afghan government, helped to craft the Afghan National Development Strategy in 2005, which helped discipline Afghan Government development spending. But such spending was dwarfed by the billions of dollars spent by donors outside of Afghan government. Likewise, Security Sector Reform could also be considered as strategic. This reform allowed for five nations – Germany, Italy, Britain, Japan, and the United States - to work individual initiatives for police and justice reform, counter-narcotics, disarmament, and training the Afghan National Army (ANA). Each of these was a strategic initiative aimed at bringing greater stability and peace to Afghanistan. However, these efforts (except the ANA reform) were independent of CENTCOM or of the US government, and therefore remained unaligned with strategic thinking occurring in Washington. No combined international committees were formed to address strategic alignment of these initiatives.

Most nations that were contributing forces to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) seemed happy that civilian and military efforts remained separate. Between 2001 and 2004 there was no place where strategy alignment or combined military strategic planning could occur. The coalition liaison teams based at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa were relatively low-level and could consider only tactical issues. These teams had no influence upon military strategy development, and despite the appearance of a “supreme command” structure, the tactical level coalition contributions in reality operated at full discretion of their parent nations with various national caveats for their employment. They were not obligated to perform uniformly under commander CENTCOM.

With this dispersion of strategic interests it is fair to say that in this period, no one was in charge of the overall Afghanistan mission. Each of the G8 nations worked their independent pillar of Security Sector Reform, and the senior American military commander in the theatre had little connectivity to these activities, and neither the G8 nations nor CENTCOM integrated their activities with the growing developmental efforts of the World Bank, the Asia Development Bank, or the United Nations Assistance Mission – Afghanistan.

Dysfunction in strategic dimensions emerged as a serious issue with the growth of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and their assumption of the military mission in Afghanistan. Originally an independent, UN-mandated, British-led mission overseeing the post-conflict transition of Kabul, ISAF began without a command relationship with the US headquarters in Bagram.^{xviii} This independence ended in 2003 when the ISAF mission was taken over by NATO, and it was brought under an entirely European chain of command, extending from ISAF headquarters in Kabul to NATO Joint Forces Command (JFC) –Brunssum in the Netherlands, then on to SHAPE in Belgium. But there was still no formal relationship between this military mission and the American-led OEF mission, then run from Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) headquarters in Kabul. The Americans saw CFC-A as superior to ISAF, functioning at the operational level.^{xix} As such the successive commanders of CFC-A attempted to formulate campaign plans which, if effected, might have produced military strategic results in Afghanistan. The first of these was written in 2004, but was

completely revised under a new American commander in 2005. These plans did not impact upon NATO, who continually perceived CFC-A to be just another tactical level headquarters, separate and distinct from the three-star ISAF tactical headquarters, and certainly not its superior.^{xx} Therefore, NATO did not embrace US military planning efforts for Afghanistan. Unable to see or reconcile this difference in perspectives, and each side assuming it was correct, a decision was nonetheless made to expand the ISAF areas of responsibility beginning in 2004 to assume control over the northern part of the country, the western part of Afghanistan in 2005, and all the territory in Afghanistan in late 2006.

This decision was predicated upon US desire to reduce its military commitment to Afghanistan – backfilling American troops with NATO forces. By 2006 there was no American military strategy in Afghanistan beyond that which called for transition of tactical control from OEF to NATO/ISAF. The final and most sensitive part of this transition occurred between May 2006 and February 2007, when CFC-A was disbanded. At this time the British-dominated NATO Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters assumed the lead in ISAF, and a Canadian-led Brigade accepted the task of working under OEF to oversee NATO deployment into southern Afghanistan, allowing for its transfer to ISAF in August 2006. Once that was successfully accomplished, US ground forces operating under OEF in Eastern Afghanistan were placed under NATO/ISAF in November 2006.

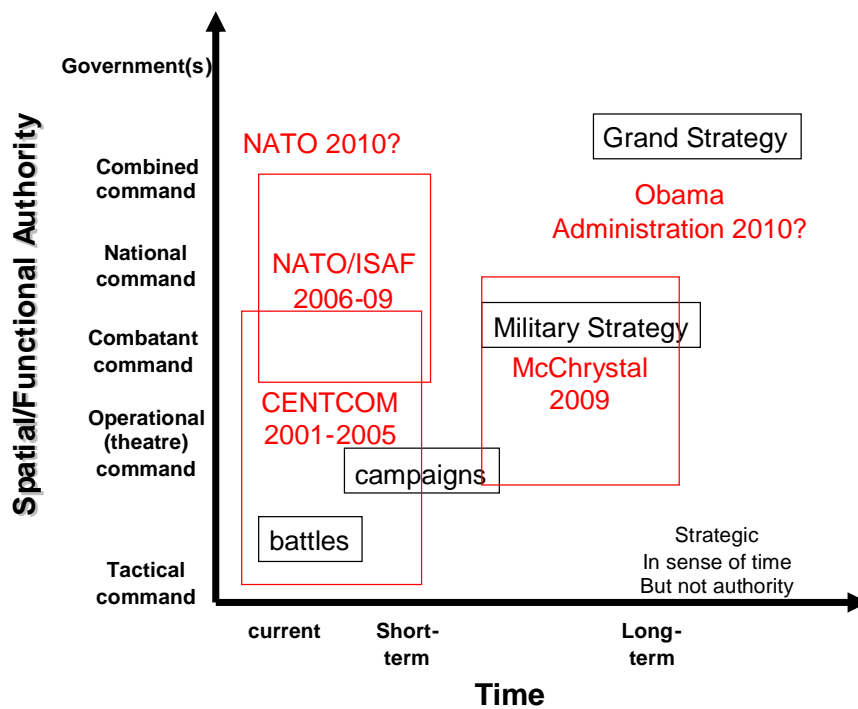


Figure 5: The Dimensions of Strategy in Afghanistan 2001-2009

Without any grand strategic organization to oversee transitions of the military mission, and without transference of any American military strategy beyond American efforts to build the Afghan National Army and kill terrorists, formulation of military strategy for Afghanistan fell to NATO in 2006. Under the British General Richards, ISAF headquarters began active campaign planning. However, SHAPE remained reluctant to embrace Richard's plans as "strategic" and looked to JFC Brunssum as the operational level headquarters to formulate the way ahead for ISAF. Brunssum was ill-equipped for true military strategy formulation, and was too far removed from the realities of Afghanistan to provide the necessary planning or operational guidance. More importantly, JFC-Brunssum had no authority over the US headquarters that remained in Afghanistan – Coalition Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). By 2007, NATO had still failed to formulate a military strategy for Afghanistan and CSTC-A felt compelled to pick the ball. American leaders in CSTC-A, under authority of the American commander of ISAF and commander CENTCOM began to produce another iteration of a campaign plan for Afghanistan. Their efforts never made it to SHAPE, and

were restarted when a new American commander took over ISAF the following year. Drawing upon American planning expertise from the US Army War College in Carlisle Pennsylvania, another attempt at military strategy was started in 2008, but was stopped with assumption of command by General McChrystal in 2009. It seems in hindsight that no ISAF or American campaign plan for Afghanistan survived a change of command parade.^{xxi}

The void of grand strategy and military strategy in Afghanistan has created great opportunity for the re-emergence of the Taliban. The extent to which this enemy has grown since 2006 is alarming, but was not acknowledged until the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated before Congress in April 2009 that without immediate changes in the Afghanistan mission, the Taliban growth might be irreversible within two years. Admiral Mullen's statement was a catalyst General McChrystal to conduct concerted effort to craft military strategy that clearly links strategic ends and means. Using the White Houses' March 2009 White Paper on US Policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the McChrystal strategic assessment of August 2009 articulates ends and ways, and identifies a deficiency of strategic means.^{xxii} He subsequently stated a requirement for an infusion of 40,000 more soldiers to arrest Taliban growth. As such, McChrystal's assessment may be the beginning of allied efforts to fill the strategic dimensions currently void in Afghanistan. However, if we consider it in relation to the strategic dimensions model presented earlier, the following questions logically emerge: without a multinational body working issues of grand strategy that combine common national interests within a war policy that is palatable to the major players in Afghanistan, can this American-grown military strategy galvanize NATO nations who are resentful at finding themselves inheriting a growing insurgency they had previously dismissed as an American problem? Is this the best strategy to serve grand strategic interests of the United States and the Europeans? Also, will the McChrystal strategy and commitment by the Obama administration of more troops to implement this strategy lead to the grand strategic conferences and planning efforts which in 1918, the 1940s, and in the Cold war led to long-term commitment, sustainable resolve and ultimately military success and a better peace? The answers to these questions will be forthcoming in the next few months and will be decisive in determining the future of Western military efforts in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

In this paper we have reviewed a model that allows us to appreciate the complex issue of strategy and strategic dimensions, from which we can better understand current strategic dilemmas. Using the model as a means of common understanding we have examined – at least superficially - strategy formulation in the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War. From this we have identified two principles which have assisted in allied efforts to secure victory in those conflicts; grand strategic international political-military organizations that drafted war policy, and singular theatre military commands that ensured unity of command and effort in the crafting and implementation of military strategy. The final portion of this paper has reviewed how the West has failed to apply these principles in Afghanistan, the point where strategic void threatens military defeat.

It is the author's conclusion that we in the West have a significant failing in understanding strategic dimensions. This is the result of two identifiable problems. The first is that Western military professional military education is failing to teach strategy correctly, if it is taught at all. A study of Anglo-American professional development curricula will reveal a decidedly tactical and operational focus. Pure strategy has been obfuscated by heavy emphasis on “operational art”, “campaign design”, “centre of gravity analysis”, and “measures of effectiveness in effects-based operations.”^{xxiii} Instruction in traditional strategy is limited to national perspectives of what constitutes the military strategic level vis-à-vis national political authority. In Britain, Canada and Germany there is very little instruction on the American UCP and combatant command structure and the evolving Inter-agency Management System. In the USA, there is no instruction on NATO strategic procedures. Without common instruction about what constitutes strategic dimensions on either side of the Atlantic, it is little wonder that there is a lack of common understanding about strategy between alliance partners. The second component of our failing to understand strategy relates to the continued bureaucratization of military practices. Two observable phenomena illustrate this, the expansion of the size of military headquarters, and continuance of the practice of frequently changing military commanders. Partially in order to spread opportunity to gain operational experience, and partially to allow alliance generals from different nations to have their turn at the helm, both American and NATO commands constantly change hands, with the obvious result

that no strategic impetus lasts very long. While the bulk of this paper deals with organizational issues related to strategy formulation, these largely cultural issues must also be addressed if the West is to avoid military failure.

In summation, this paper is written to define in more traditional terms the dimensions of strategy, and to speculate upon our current strategic troubles. It encourages further thought, research, and dialogue about the dimensions of strategy, so that we may be assured that the losses we are suffering will not be seen by future historians as “the noise before defeat”.

ⁱ Baron Antonie Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 69.

ⁱⁱ For Gneisenau quotation see Peter G. Tsouras, *Warriors Words: A Dictionary of Military Quotations* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co. Inc., 1994), 405. For Muller see; William Muller, *The Elements of the Science of War* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Co., 1811), B2. For Clausewitz, see: Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Everyman's Library, 1993), 146.

ⁱⁱⁱ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Everyman's Library, 1993), 164-166.

^{iv} For quotations see; Helmuth Graf von Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War* edited by Daniel J. Hughes (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1993), 47. For analysis of German tactically-oriented thinking see; Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Art* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 105-164.

^v For succinct rendering of these differences see; James J. Schneider, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1994).

^{vi} B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Penguin Meridian, 1991), 353.

^{vii} Brock Millman, “A Counsel of Despair: British Strategy and War Arms, 1917-1918” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 36 (2), 241-270.

^{viii} Lt-Col. T.M. Hunter, *Marshall Foch: A Study in Leadership* (Ottawa: Directorate of Military Training Army Headquarters, 1961), 186, 195-196. For a review of the dynamics of supreme command under Foch see Dominick Graham and Shelford Bidwell, *Coalitions Politicians & Generals: Some Aspects of Command in Two World Wars* (London: Brassey's, 1993), 63, and 142-149. See also Ferdinand Foch, *The Memoirs of Marshal Foch*, translated by Col. T. Bentley Mott (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Incorporated, 1931), 270.

^{ix} Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 422-423. See also Graham and Bidwell, *Coalitions*, 159. For description of Foch's “strategic direction” see Foch, *Memoirs*, 275. To illustrate Foch's unique level of cognition regarding supreme command across this vast front see remembrances of American Colonel T. Bentley Mott, Pershing's Liaison officer at Foch's combined headquarters, when upon presenting Foch with General Pershing's concerns during the Argonne offensive that September, Foch whisked him to a billiard table covered with western front maps and said: “I am the leader of an orchestra. Here are the English Bassos, here the American baritones, and there the French tenors, When I raise my baton, every man must play or else he must not come to my concert.” See Foch, *Memoirs*, xxvi.

x This system was an evolution from the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Imperial General Staff systems that had proved effective in mobilizing, training, equipping, and fighting millions of British imperial soldiers during World War One. See John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 131-160; and Graham and Bidwell, *Coalitions*, 150-57..

xi Forrest C. Pogue, *George Marshall: Ordeal and Hope 1939-1942* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 375. See also Maurice Matloff and Edwin Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942, United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953), ¹²³⁻¹²⁴ *Strategic Planning*, 123-127. Unified commands began at the Arcadia Conference (December 1941) where Marshall was successful in convincing prominent opponents of the “unified command” concept (most notably Winston Churchill) of the necessity of putting Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Wavell in charge of all multi-national army, navy and air force units in the newly designated Southwest Pacific Area (descriptively named the Australian-British-Dutch-American Command – or ABDA). This command was short-lived after the losses incurred in subsequent Japanese offensives, but the principle of unified commands endured.

xii Marshall had witnessed the rivalry between Pershing and the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Peyton March, in 1917, due to Pershing's insistence that he worked directly to the President, through the Secretary of War, and not to the CSA. His understanding of his command function was exactly that of General U.S. Grant, the only civil authority he need report to was the President's. This was easy to argue in a war being fought by the United States on only one front. Marshall faced a war of multiple theaters of operations, each with competing demands for resources, and he understood the role of the JCS in defining which theater had priority. For an interpretation of the Marshall-Pershing relationship see Graham and Bidwell, *Coalitions*, 150-156. 159-163. Maurice Matloff and Edwin Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 123-124, 166-169; and Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, 380.

xiii Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command, The United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), 30.

xiv For a full treatment of this relationship see James C. Humes, *Eisenhower and Churchill The Partnership that Saved the World* (Roseville, CA.: Prima Publishing, 2001).

xv The Unified Command Plan lays out American geographic and function joint command headquarters that place a singular commander in charge of all American service forces within a given theatre. The plan is reissued periodically by the President of the United States.

xvi Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2000), 447. General Short, the Air Component Commander, was more frustrated when non-US aircraft refused to bomb certain targets. As Clark states: “We paid a price in operational effectiveness by having to constrain the nature of the operation to fit the political and legal concerns of NATO member nations, ...but the price brought significant strategic benefits.” See page 476. SACEUR himself was frustrated with alliance operations when his orders to seize the Pristina Airport (to prevent Russian entrance into Kosovo) were not executed by the British national commander, General Jackson (see pages 394-403).

xvii The author heard this often while employed as a strategic planner within the Joint Planning Group at United States European Command headquarters during 2001 and 2002.

xviii The US military perspective until late 2003 was that the politics of Kabul would interfere with proper military operations in Afghanistan and should be avoided. See David W. Barno, “Fighting “the Other War”: Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005” *Military Review* September/October 2007, 32-44.

xix David Barno, “Fighting”, 30-67.

xx This is from personal experience of the author while participating in planning for ISAF expansion 2004-2005 as a member of HQ ISAF V, working through JFC Brunssum. Commander JFC Brunssum refused continuously to acknowledge an operational level function inside of Afghanistan, believing that the operational level resided fully at Brunssum. This caused considerable friction between the two HQs, and further confused relations between these HQs and CFC-A.

xxi This observation is the author's, who was an active participant in planning efforts in Kabul in 2004, both in ISAF and CFC-A, and in Washington and the ARRC in 2005, and on the peripheries in Kandahar in 2006 and at CENTCOM headquarters in 2007. review of strategy formulation and command and control was part of official duties at the United States Army War College 2008-2009.

xxii For White Paper see: http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf . For General McChrystal's "strategy" see: http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf . Both documents accessed 26 October, 2009.

xxiii For example of scope of this issue see; Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, *How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), also accessible at: <http://www.StratgeicStudiesInstitute.army.mil>