

Canada's creation of an operational doctrine has led to strong debate in the military and academic circles over what it is and how it should be applied. It has steadily changed since it was first introduced over 20 years ago. This essay will look at what the Canadian operational doctrine was at the turn of the century and what the Canadian forces have focused on. This will set the background for how the doctrine is being implemented now and what needs to change. General Rick Hiller said in 2005 that the Canadian forces were operating in a "post conflict environment."¹ (PCE) What he meant by this term was that the Canadian Forces were not just in Afghanistan to defeat the Taliban military, rather they were now playing an important role in stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan now that the Taliban government has been replaced.² The Canadian Forces' operating doctrine however, almost completely focuses on preparing the operational commander for military concerns. This paper will argue that in order to be a more effective tool for an operational commander in the 21st century, the Canadian Forces' operational doctrine needs to also address issues in this PCE that are not solely of a military nature.

Operational doctrine deals with the operational level of war. Though various countries have different interpretations of what the operational level is, there is a general consensus that the operational level is: "... a link between strategic goals and the tactical employment of forces, and that its practice involves the planning,

¹ General Rick Hiller " Planning for success: The Operational Art in post-conflict Afghanistan" *Canadian Military Journal* (Vol. 6, No 3 2005) P.6

² Ibid P.6

conduct, and sustainment of major operations or campaigns.”³ The Canadian forces views the operational level of warfare as the level where campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained to accomplish the strategic objectives within the theaters of operation. The Canadian Forces operations manual states that the operational art (doctrine) is “ the skill of translating strategic direction into operational and tactical action.”⁴ This definition of the operational level is very similar to both the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) and the United States Armies which the Canadian Forces relied heavily on to define their own doctrine.⁵

Military leaders have implemented operational doctrine for over thousands of years. Hannibal, the Carthaginian commander successfully used a form of operational doctrine that cumulated in the battle of Cannae in 216 BC. This saw the envelopment of the Roman forces, and because of the successful termination of this battle, the Romans would not engage in another major battle against the Carthaginians in Italy during the rest war.⁶ Most Western militaries begin their historical study of the operational doctrine with the Prussian Army in the latter half of the 19th century, examining both the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.⁷ This is because of the Prussians effective use of

³ March, W.A. *Joint Doctrine Precis* Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 1998

⁴ *Canadian forces Operations, B-GG-005-004/AF-000* (2000) P. 1-4 TO 1-5

⁵ US Joint Publication 3-0 *Doctrine for joint operations* (2001.)

⁶ McKercher, B.J.C. Hennessy, Michael. *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War.* (London: Praeger, 1996). P.2

⁷ Various Authors. *The Operational Art: Canadian Perspectives Context and Concepts.* Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2005 P.10

mass transportation (railways) and modern weapons (machine-guns.) The Germans effectively used troop mobilization, railway movements, and logistics through a flexible command coordinated by the Prussian General Staff.⁸ The Germans no longer limited themselves to one theater of war where tactics of a large battle would determine the strategic success, but would operate in a number of theaters. When examining the operational level of war in a historical context, the German use of Blitzkrieg from 1939-1942 is predominately seen as one of the most effective uses of operational warfare. That said, arguments have been raised that because the Germans focused so much on the operational level of war, the German grand strategy devolved and they lost track of what their strategic aims were. This watering down of strategy led them to lose focus of both diplomatic and political factors that are so important to acquiring the strategic goals.⁹

Canadian operational doctrine was introduced after the Vietnam War, following changes of the American army, who after the war looked at the operational level to see where they could become more effective. There were many debates in academia and the military before the American army released a field manual in 1986 covering what they saw as their operational doctrine.¹⁰ In the summer of 1989, the Canadian Army produced its own paper dealing with how they saw the Canadian operational doctrine and how the armed forces would apply it. This document was supposed to cover the evolution of operational thought for the next 15 years. The document,

⁸ Paret, Peter. Ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986 P.300

⁹ Menning, Bruce. "Operational Art's Origins" *Military Review* 77, no. 5 1997 P.33

¹⁰ Naveh, Shimon. *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*. London: Frank Cass, 1997, xviii-xx

called *Canadian Land Forces Synopsis of Operational Concepts for the period 1996-2005* was outdated almost immediately after it was published.¹¹ In December, the Berlin Wall fell and Canadian forces returned home. Now that the strategic objectives of the Canadian forces had changed the application of this doctrine on how war would be waged and who it would be waged against would have to be revisited.

A distinction of Canada's operational doctrine from the framework that it shares with its allies is what size of commitment Canada views as operational. Most Western countries view it at theater level or campaign focused. This definition is not applicable for the Canadian Forces as it has only been at this level of command once, when Admiral Murray held operational command of the North West Atlantic during World War 2.¹² However, this is the operational level understood by Canada's Western allies. Canada will most likely never play a role as significant as this again in military operations. Canada has had to find a unique definition on what constitutes its operational level: "No specific level of command is solely concerned with operational art. In its simplest expression, operational art determines when, where, and for what purpose major forces will fight. It governs the deployment of those forces, their commitments to or withdrawal from battle, and the sequencing of successive operations to attain operational objectives."¹³ When dealing with issues that solely affect Canada there is not much need for an operational doctrine;

¹¹ Various Authors. *The Operational Art: Canadian Perspectives Context and Concepts*. Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2005 P.16

¹² Granatstein, J.L. Morton, Desmond. *Canada and the Two World Wars*. Ontario: Key-Porter Books, 2003 P. 228

¹³ *Conduct of Land Operations-Operational Level doctrine for the Canadian Army (1998)*

politicians and the Chief of the Defence Staff would very tightly control the difference between strategic objectives and tactics used to achieve those goals.

The Oka Crisis in 1990 is a prime example. The operation was so small that the oversight from above could be directly focused on the task. This meant that though there was a commander in the field (General Foster) who organized movement and deployment of forces in the area, he was not given authority to make operational decisions on how this force could be used. This was left to National Defence Headquarters who determined Canada's strategic and operational goals.¹⁴

However, Canadians will need to know operational doctrine when they are part of a joint operations such as NATO or the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) where Canadian officers will have a say and a role to play at the operational level.

In 1994 the Canadian armed forces released a new paper covering operational doctrine now that the cold war was over: *The Conduct of Land Operations- Operational Doctrine for the Canadian Army*. This would be the blueprint for the operational level of command when the Canadian Armed forces entered Afghanistan. One of the dominant themes of this doctrine was maneuver warfare.¹⁵ Maneuver warfare, in contrast to attritional warfare that grinds the enemy down (as demonstrated by trench warfare in the First World War), was understood by the Canadian forces to "break the spirit and will of the opposing high command... not to

¹⁴ Bland, Douglas. *Chiefs of defence: Government and the Unified Command of the Canadian Armed Forces*. (Toronto: Brown Book company, 1995).

¹⁵ *Conduct of Land Operations-Operational Level doctrine for the Canadian Army (1998)*

kill enemy troops and equipment.”¹⁶ It was envisioned by the Canadian Forces that they would be a part of a bigger coalition, organizing battalion-sized forces that would be quickly deployed and then pulled back from the operations. This type of doctrine was reminiscence of the role that Canadian forces had planned to use during the Cold War.

Maneuver warfare however, has its limitations, proved by the mission in Afghanistan. In the Canadian Army doctrine it is stressed that: “Commanders think and react faster than their foes in order to mass friendly strengths against enemy weaknesses.”¹⁷ This is a valid part of military campaigns, however, as stressed by Carl Von Clausewitz, author of *On War*, one of the most widely read books on Western strategy, military campaigns are conducted with “other instruments of national power- diplomatic, economic, and informational- to achieve strategic objectives.”¹⁸ Afghanistan is demonstrating by the continued instability in the region that operational commanders have a larger responsibility than a successful termination of hostilities. In this conflict, if there is going to be lasting peace, they also need to help rebuild the areas they have occupied. For this, the operational commanders will need to know more than how to launch successful attacks. The doctrine should cover the broad range of tools that Clausewitz emphasizes are necessary for a successful campaign, as the operational commander will be engaging in a more complex role than to just defeating an enemy force.

¹⁶ Lind, Williams. *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1985 P. 124

¹⁷ Various Authors. *The Operational Art: Canadian Perspectives Context and Concepts*. Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2005 P.40

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The Canadian forces have been deployed in Afghanistan for 6 years, and “winning by ‘systematic disruption’ through maneuver, producing defeat without destruction,”¹⁹ did not happen in the way predicted. The Taliban government was defeated in 2001, but in this “Post Conflict Environment,”²⁰ more Canadian soldiers are dying and the security of the country has deteriorated for the ISAF and the Afghanistan people. Once the Taliban government was removed from power, supporters of that regime switched from fighting a conventional war to one of guerilla warfare using means such as improvised explosive devices and raids on the civilians. In this way, they are able to weaken local support, the Canadian forces’ operational command, and control of the theater. This guerilla style of warfare is destabilizing the effectiveness of the Canadian Forces, and how Canadians are operating in this country needs to be reexamined and changed so that Canada’s role becomes more successful. One area that needs to be examined is how Canada’s operational doctrine is being applied and if it is comprehensive enough for the realities of war in the 21st century.

Examining the Canadian forces’ operational doctrine shows that: “... [The] purpose of maneuver warfare is to defeat an enemy by shattering his moral and physical cohesion rather than by destroying him by incremental attrition.”²¹ This does not seem to have all the answers in such a complex environment. No longer can Canadian forces be focused on just military aspects. As Colonel James Greer of the United States Army said in his seminal paper published in the fall of 2002: “Future

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Combs, Howard. Hiller, Rick. “ Planning for success: The Operational Art in post-conflict Afghanistan” *Canadian Military Journal* Vol. 6, No. 3 2005 P. 8

²¹ Hope, Ian. “Misunderstanding Mars and Minerva: The Canadian Army’s Failure to Define an Operational Doctrine” *Canadian Military Journal*. Vol 4. No.4 2001-2002

Army forces must be truly full spectrum. That means leaving behind the almost total focus on physical force and developing balanced capabilities to attack the physical, mental and moral aspects of opponents..."²² Even more than that, there is now a need for the operational doctrine to focus on civil matters, as this area of the doctrine is very insignificant.

The strategies that the Canadian Forces' operational doctrine (as well as most other military operational doctrines) has focused on are not comprehensive enough for this new world of warfare. Colonel William Flavin, an associate professor of Peace Operations Concepts and Doctrines for the US Army peacekeeping Institute, states that there is a difference in conflict termination that is the formal end of fighting, not however the end of conflict and conflict resolution which is the end of hostilities where a resolution has happened.²³ NATO, and by extension the Canadian Forces' doctrines are written to cover conflict termination: "If the conditions have been properly set and met for ending conflict, the necessary leverage should exist to prevent the adversary from renewing hostilities...the opponent may have to accept defeat, terminate active hostilities, or revert to other types of conflict such as geopolitical actions or guerilla warfare."²⁴ Reverting to other types of conflict is precisely what happened in Afghanistan and what the ISAF and the Canadian military command are now dealing with. The operational doctrine cannot just cover how to topple an enemy's military or government. Issues that also have to be dealt

²² Greer, James. "Operational Art for the Objective Force" *Military Review*. September-October 2002 P.23

²³ Flavin, William. "Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success" *Parameters*. Autumn 2003 P.96

²⁴ Ibid. P.97

with in the operational doctrine are how to rebuild that society so that the causes for being there and the continuation of hostilities through other means have been removed. This means that the operational commanders need a doctrine that now covers areas in the civil sphere if the strategic goals such as regime change (a stable government that can support itself) are to be achieved.

The operational doctrine now needs to focus in helping commanders' deal with issues that will arise in PCE. The current doctrine focuses five pages on civil/military issues and uses the Canadian forces in Netherlands during World War Two as the historical context. The historical context discusses feeding the Dutch for 5 months in the winter and spring of 1945.²⁵ Though the need to alleviate starvation is a valid concern, it is not enough, and the operational doctrine needs to cover a far broader range civil matters then just starvation.

As General Hiller himself said " The goal of intervention is no longer simply a cessation of violence... military campaigns must assist with creating the conditions for a durable and lasting peace..."²⁶ The operational doctrine needs to also focus on rebuilding and development of the area they are operating in. Making issues such as civil, governmental, economic, and environmental is as important a factor for the operational commander as military issues. This would include forming well thought out plans on what the operational commander's role is and problems he will face in a PCE before the conventional fighting is over. Colonel Flavin lays out some of the

²⁵ *Conduct of Land Operations-Operational Level doctrine for the Canadian Army (1998)*

²⁶ Combs, Howard. Hiller, Rick. " Planning for success: The Operational Art in post-conflict Afghanistan" *Canadian Military Journal* (Vol. 6, No. 3 2005). P.6

fundamental goals: “conducting early interagency planning, establishing workable objectives, goals and end states; harmonizing the civil with the military effort; and establishing the appropriate post conflict organization.”²⁷ This raises the issue of center of gravity. The Canadian Forces’ views on the center of gravity needs to be revisited.

In the operational doctrine the center of gravity is seen as: “That aspect of the enemy’s total capability, which if attacked and eliminated or neutralized, will lead either to his inevitable defeat or sue for peace.”²⁸ This obviously is very effective in the traditional sense of military actions when the goal is to defeat the enemy on the battlefield. However, as Afghanistan and Iraq are demonstrating, the Canadian Forces and American Army center of gravity being on a military objective is not always effective. Clausewitz wrote: “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.” The focus for the center of gravity in the operational doctrine should not always be seen as military. In an operation where a regime change is called for, (as Afghanistan and Iraq are,) the destruction of the old system should not be the goal but the creation of a new one should be. The creation of a new regime would need the operational commander to focus on other areas such as reconstruction, renewal and development of the state as well as the military aspects.

²⁷ Flavin, William. “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success” *Parameters*. Autumn 2003 P.97

²⁸ *Conduct of Land Operations-Operational Level doctrine for the Canadian Army (1998)*

A major concern with the Canadian Forces' center of gravity (and by extension the operational doctrine) as mentioned above is that it is centered on defeating the enemy. The definition should be malleable for situations like Afghanistan to include matters of a non-military nature to aid the goal of rebuilding a state. One of the issues facing a force working in a PSO environment is the need for rebuilding the areas once they are secured to help the newly placed government gain the support of its people.

One of the issues that should be addressed is the rehabilitation of people who have been displaced by the conflict. In Afghanistan, which has many different ethnic groups with as many different issues, the operational commander will need guidelines on how to address these various situations. What is needed in an operational doctrine is a focus and understanding that the area will have to be occupied and rebuilt after the traditional fighting is over. One of the crucial needs is to minimize the displacement of populations, especially if they were mixed ethnically before. As Colonel Craig King wrote: "Reconstructing mixed communities would exploit a potential vulnerability of the ethnic "hardliners" by denying them homogeneous regions in which to influence behaviour."²⁹ The operational doctrine needs to stress lessons on what an occupying force's role is, and to put these lessons into context that would be useful. Examining military operations that turned into PSO like Afghanistan and the Balkans, analyzing what needed to be done, what worked, and why would be an invaluable section of a new operational doctrine.

²⁹ Various Authors. *The Operational Art: Canadian Perspectives Context and Concepts*. Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2005 P.315

This idea of “population stability” needs to go further to insure that there is a secure environment for the local populace. Though this does happen in a PSO environment with groups such as United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and local security forces, (such as police,) the main responsibility in protecting and disarming these areas are left to the military. The military assumes the lead role in patrolling, weapon collections and seizures to help make these communities safe. Defining what is needed and how to go about accomplishing these goals is the responsibility of the operational commander. The Canadian operational doctrine however does not offer guidelines on these issues. Where the operational doctrine discusses campaigning and theater organization, it should also raise these issues of dealing with populations, as this, as seen in Afghanistan, is a major issue for operational commanders.

Another issue that operational commanders are dealing with in Afghanistan that is not covered in the operational doctrine is rebuilding communities in a hostile environment. Building and supporting institutions such as banks, schools, hospitals and law courts and other necessary institutions is critical for conflict resolution. First, it shows the enemy or hardliners that there is a functioning system in place, which will undermine the power and influence that the enemies can bring to bear on a local population. Also, these institutions will help to create economic development.³⁰ The operational leader vis a vis the military obviously will not be building and aiding these institutions on their own. They will have the support of a

³⁰ Flavin, William. “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success” *Parameters*. Autumn 2003 P.106

multitude of government and non-government organizations. However, the operational commander will need to provide security and co-ordinations for these groups and projects. They will have to have guidelines on how to achieve these; something that a more focused operational doctrine would be able to offer.

Though not every mission that the Canadian Forces will be deployed on will be similar to Afghanistan, having civil issues raised in the operational doctrine would be useful in a variety of roles that the Canadian military may be deployed in. An example of a different type of operation that Canadian Forces would take part in is disaster relief in a developing country. The emphasis here is not on destroying the enemy but having the skills and historical background to act appropriately in this situation. Having a doctrine that explains issues such as: civil, governmental, religious, judicial, economic, and environmental will help with rebuilding and stabilizing an area and should be a fundamental part of the operational doctrine.

Though there may be missions in the future where a traditionally military mission is required, there is also a possibility that the missions will take on a more peace-building slant where civil issues like the ones listed above would be the focus of the mission. The Canadian operational doctrine is not preparing commanders for the myriad of decisions and responsibilities that these missions require.

As PSO missions can last years, the initial strategic goals will change as the reality of the conflict changes. Having broad workable goals and objectives included in the doctrine that deal specifically with roles the operational commander may encounter in the civil sphere is a necessity that the operational doctrine is missing. To include

broad objectives will allow the operational commander to have some knowledge of what is expected and how to carry it out, all the while providing flexibility in achieving them. Also if they are not rigid then there will be a better chance of modifying them to a realistic goal as situations change. Having a doctrine that covers issues that deal with the PCE will be invaluable for when the next operational commander will take over, as they will be able to work off the same guidelines for how to move forward in this PCE. With missions lasting for years, there will be different operating commanders working on the same operations. Having similar guiding principles in the doctrine will help keep a consistency that would be useful not only to the personnel working under the new operational commander but also to the allies that the Canadian Forces may be working with.

As mentioned earlier, the operational commander will be working with various nonmilitary groups. The current operational doctrine does not provide direction or historical perspectives to the operating commander on how to interact with these non-military groups. The operational commander, in the words of Colonel Flavin, "... should establish mechanisms at the combatant command and the operational task force levels to support harmonization"³¹ Examples of where the operational doctrine needs to focus on is areas such as using extensive liaisons, establishing joint commissions and civil military operating centers, and using civil affairs assets. These should be outlined in the operational doctrine so that there is once again a general consensus on how it should be achieved. Though this has not yet been done. At the same time the operational doctrine should be broad enough that the

³¹ Ibid. 106

operating commander can use his discretion to gain the maximum benefit depending on the type of environment that he is operating in.

Canada's operational doctrine for the land forces was created to deal within the confines of what was viewed as the classical approach to warfare. However, missions such as Afghanistan show that this traditional approach is not conducive to how all the Canadian missions will be fought. The idea of maneuver warfare where Canadian Forces are rapidly launched and incapacitate the enemy in a coalition force is now just one important aspect that the operational commanders will have to deal with. The operations will not necessarily be short term and the theater commander will have to deal with rebuilding the area that they so recently secured. The operational doctrine must offer guidelines so that time and resources are not wasted, and that the operational commander will not just be reacting to these new situations, but have plans in place to troubleshoot. Canadian Army's operational doctrine dealing with PSO would help the operational commander plan for conflict resolution in addition to their goal of conflict termination. An operational doctrine for Canada should not just deal with the military aspect, but deliver guidelines for a variety of missions that an officer will encounter.

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