

Fundamental Concepts in the Language of the Military Profession

1

Every profession has a language of its own—a language that must be familiar to all who wish to understand the profession. Because the vocabulary of the language changes from age to age, all professionals must understand the basic vocabulary of their own day and of previous periods if they are to succeed in the critical task of communicating with others in their chosen field. The profession of arms is no exception in this regard.

War and Peace

Because war and the deterrence of war are human activities that continue to persist, military and naval force is necessary, and leadership in war has become the special field of the professional officer. The definition of war must therefore be thoroughly understood by every student of the profession of arms. **War**¹ is the condition in the life of a political group (an alliance, a state, a nation, or an organized faction) in which violence and destruction of considerable duration or magnitude are directed against a rival political group that is powerful enough to make the outcome of the conflict uncertain for a time. The object of war is to impose the will of one group upon a rival. When the objectives of groups are in accord, war's opposite, **peace**, prevails among those groups. When the will of one group does not threaten the existence or vital interests of a rival group, compromise through diplomacy, or **peaceful coexistence**, usually results. When rival groups are unable to resolve vital issues through diplomacy, war, which is sometimes called **diplomacy by force**, often results.

Levels of War

War and peace are not clearly delimited conditions. Rather, they form a spectrum of conditions between absolutes that

rarely exist. Absolute peace is the extreme condition of harmony between a group and all its like groups. In times of absolute peace, diplomacy is sufficient to solve every difference. Relative peace is the condition in which groups compete economically, culturally, or politically; alliances develop along ideological lines; and the threat of or potential for war is an important element in diplomacy. When relative peace exists among major powers, **cold war** will often exist as well. This situation is characterized by hostile propaganda, international boycotts, seizures of property and personnel, subversion, border clashes, sabotage, and assassinations. In a cold war there is no overt armed conflict between the major powers, but the role of the military profession is nevertheless significant. In addition to the **show of force**, defined as an exhibition intended to demonstrate military might to a potential belligerent, the military forces function as a deterrent against hot war or general war, and may even be involved in a hot war with lesser powers. A **hot war**—or simply a war, as it is commonly called—occurs when the territory of one group is occupied by a rival, or when naval or air elements attack a rival's territory. An **invasion**, or an entering of a rival's territory by a hostile armed force, is often the initial act of violence in a hot war. States and nations engaged in hot war are referred to as **belligerents**. Belligerents are protected by and subject to the laws of war—even though enforcement of the laws of war is not always possible. When the belligerents in a hot war are recognized states or nations, **international war** results.

Hot wars can be divided into limited wars and general wars. When the term **limited war** is used to describe wars such as those fought between European states in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it refers to a war in which the principal objectives of the societies involved differ from the objectives of the combatants that presumably represent the societies. For example, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the great majority of the people

represented by opposing armies were principally concerned with economic, religious, and cultural issues, while the armies were principally concerned with the outcome of the war. The second definition of limited war is more contemporary and refers to wars in which conscious restraints are placed on the use of available and militarily significant weapons, methods, manpower, time, or geographical area by at least one of the principal belligerents. For example, the United States, one of the principal belligerents in the Korean War, neither used nuclear weapons nor extended the war beyond Korea. Hence, for the United States, the Korean War was a limited war. The term does not imply that the war is limited for all participants. Furthermore, it does not imply a small war in regard to the number of participants and casualties or the extent of the geographical area. Finally, it does not imply that the results are necessarily of minor consequence at a national or international level.

Major powers can fight limited wars, but when national survival is at stake, a general war ensues. A **general war** is a war in which the survival of a major power is in jeopardy and the societies involved share common interests with the combatant forces that represent them. A **total war** is a general war in which there is an involvement not only of the rival combatants, but of all the resources of the opposing societies. A Soviet definition reveals the Russian view of total war:

TOTAL 'NAYA VOYNA (foreign) (total war)—An all-embracing imperialist war, waged by all manner of means, not only against enemy armed forces, but against the entire population of a nation, with a view to its complete destruction. Characteristic of total war are the methods by which it is waged, namely, the most perfidious and the most brutal methods, inhuman with respect to the world's population.²

An **absolute war** is a general war that has no limits. It is the most extreme form of war, and, like absolute peace, will probably never exist. On a practical level, the magnitude of destruction that is possible would threaten all civilization and the very existence of man. The nineteenth century Prussian general, Carl von Clausewitz, the dean of modern military theorists, postulated in his work, *On War*, that absolute war cannot exist in reality because “countless minor incidents—the kind you can never really foresee—combine to lower the general level of performance.”³ He explained that just as a machine is made up of many parts, an army is made up of many parts, and that just as a machine cannot be 100 percent efficient because of friction between the parts, an army cannot fight an absolute war because of friction. Friction—which is created by “countless minor incidents” such

as the weather, mud, the enemy, fear, fortune, and fate—limits war.

Nuclear war, which is any war that is fought with nuclear weapons, can be further described as being limited or general. A **limited nuclear war** is a nuclear war in which restraints are placed on such factors as weapon size, region of use, or number of weapons used. A **general nuclear war**, **strategic nuclear war**, or **strategic exchange** is a nuclear war in which major powers strike each other with nuclear weapons.

Revolutionary Warfare

Within the various levels of war discussed above, many forms of war, or warfare, can exist.* **Revolutionary warfare** is the combination of political action and violence that is directed against the population, either by a competitor who wishes to establish legitimacy in order to seize governmental power or by an incumbent who wishes to maintain legitimacy in order to retain power. **Insurgency** refers to the actions and violence of the competitor in revolutionary warfare. **Counterinsurgency** refers to the actions and violence of the incumbent in revolutionary warfare.

Another form of warfare that is often encountered in the study of revolutionary warfare is internal warfare. **Internal warfare** is a conflict that results from unsatisfied dissenters who have gone beyond their attempts to secure evolutionary change or reform in the exercise of governmental power by seeking the destruction and replacement of the government. Internal warfare includes such subcategories as putsches; coups, or *coup d' états*; revolutions; revolts; jacqueries; insurrections; rebellions; and civil war. A **putsch** is a secretly plotted and suddenly executed attempt to overthrow an existing government. A **coup**, or *coup d' état*, is a violent act, generally of short duration, by an elite movement that attacks the power base of an incumbent government. It seeks to replace one elite with another, and is often referred to as a “revolution from above.” A **revolution** is a mass movement that attempts to remove the government by replacing the decision-making element of governmental power with a popularly based government. A revolution is often referred to

*Distinctions are sometimes made between “war” and “warfare,” but it is not possible to both be precise and stay within the limits of general usage with these two words. In some reference works, “war” refers to the periods of violence, while other authors refer to “warfare” as the periods of violence. Similarly, some authors use the term “history of war” to describe the study of military organizations in peace and war, while other authors use the term “history of warfare” for the same purpose. Be aware that although distinctions are sometimes made (for example, revolutionary warfare and revolutionary war connote different phenomena), “war” and “warfare” are often used interchangeably as they are in this text.

as “revolution from below.” A **revolt** is a revolution of relatively short duration. **Jacqueries**, **insurrections**, and **rebellions** are mass movements aimed at the resolution of a specific local grievance, and not at the governing power. A **jacquerie** generally refers to a rebellion by peasants. An **insurrection** is generally conducted by a very weak internal group. A **civil war** is a combined mass and elite movement in which one group attempts to wrest control of a region or state from its existing government. A **revolutionary war** is a covert civil war in which the elites remain hidden; hence, the conflict appears to be a revolution. A revolutionary war can occur either with or without the support of outside nations or states.

Other Forms of Conflict

Since wars must, by definition, involve rivals of sufficiently equal strength to render the outcome uncertain for a time, many conflicts between armed forces occur that do not fit comfortably in the spectrum between peace and war. For example, when one group is so much stronger than a rival that the outcome of an armed conflict is never seriously in doubt, neither war nor peace prevails, according to the definitions above. Such a condition occurs when a powerful nation’s military force is directed against a primitive people. These activities are referred to as **pacifications** when the conflict occurs within the political domain of the greater power, as **expeditions** when the conflict occurs within the empire of a power, or simply as **explorations** when the conflict occurs in an area that is neither claimed nor defended by a major power. Another example of an armed conflict that is not a war occurs when a great power fights a much smaller state. Such conflicts are called **interventions** when the conflict arises over any issue, exclusive of issues arising from acts directed against the great power. When a great power responds to an act committed against its government, its people, or its properties, the conflict is referred to as a **reprisal**. A **massacre** occurs when a considerable number of combatants or noncombatants are killed under circumstances of cruelty or atrocity. Massacres can occur either within the context of war or outside the context of war. A **liberation** occurs when violent means are used to free the people of a region or state from the control of an oppressive government and to grant them a greater degree of participation in government and a greater degree of individual, humanitarian rights.

The Nature of War

Leadership in war is the special province of the professional soldier. Even though he is sometimes called upon to serve in

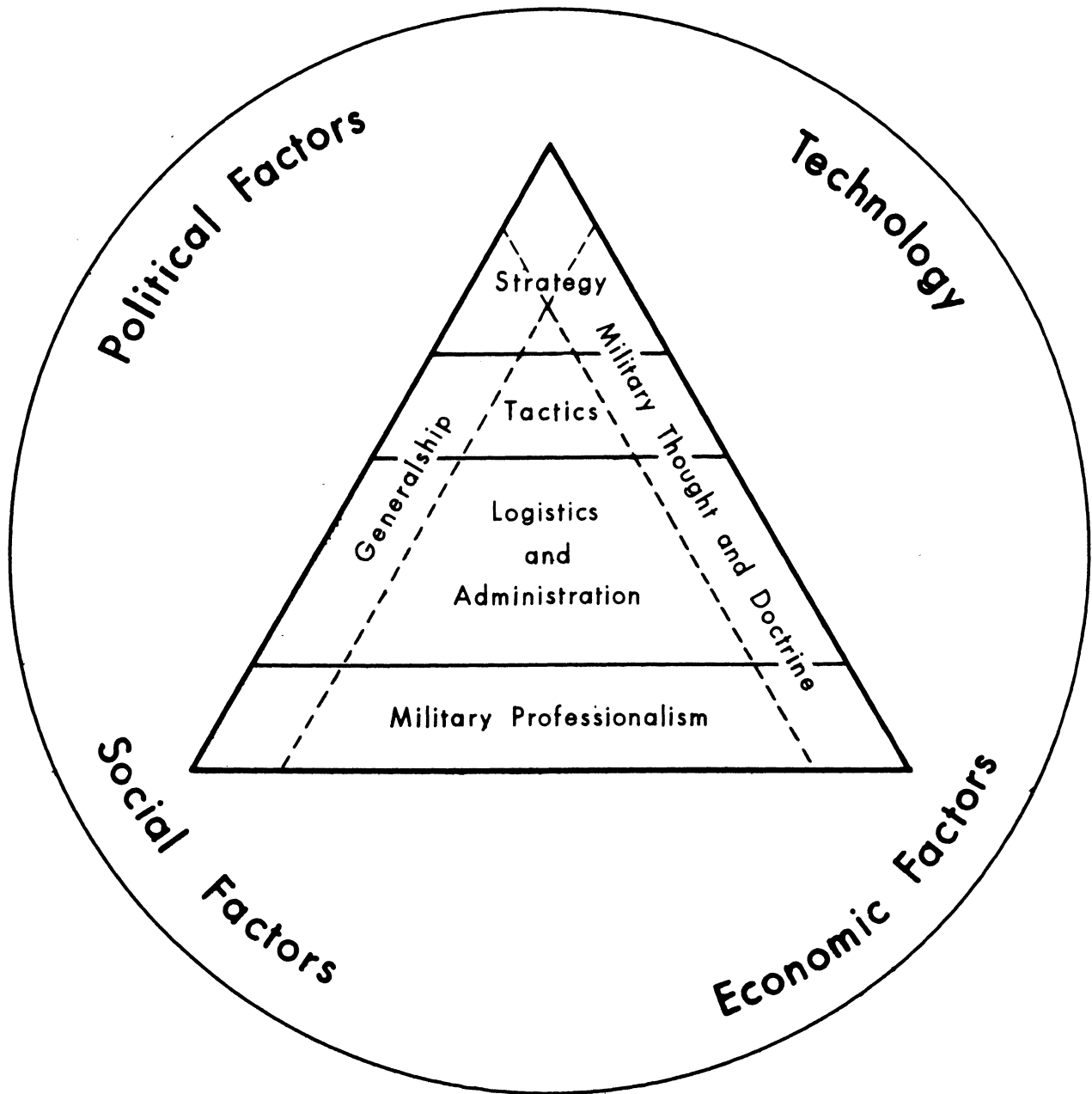
conflicts that lie outside the formal definition of war, he is charged to know the heavy responsibility that rests with him in war and in his preparation for war. The Prussian military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, observed:

War is no pastime; it is no mere joy in daring and winning, no place for irresponsible enthusiasts. It is a serious means to a serious end, and all its colorful resemblance to a game of chance, all the vicissitudes of passion, courage, imagination, and enthusiasm it includes are merely its special characteristics.⁴

War is not a blind struggle between mobs lacking guidance and coherence. To the contrary, it is a conflict of well organized masses, moving in concert with other masses and acting under the impulse of a single will and purpose. Each mass seeks to impose its will on other masses that are capably led, comparably equipped, and possessing unknown resolve.⁵

*The Threads of Continuity*⁶

One of the most obvious aspects of military history is that warfare changes. Each war has been different from the preceding one. Sometimes the changes have been small, involving, for example, minor improvements in individual weapons; sometimes the changes have been major, involving entirely new systems of tactics and strategy. The rate of change has often been gradual, although at times it has been abrupt and revolutionary. Soldiers, leaders, and generals have always had to adapt to these changes, often under the pressure of command in battle or supreme command in a major war. Failure to recognize the impact of the changes, often because of an obsession with imagined similarities, has resulted in loss of life, loss of wars, and the defeat of armies and nations. On the other hand, there are brilliant examples of professional soldiers who have recognized the impact of changes, reacted forcefully and in time, and thus changed the course of battles, campaigns, and sometimes history. In the hope of joining the latter category, rather than the former, professional soldiers study the process of change in history. The student’s problem is to discover a way to analyze the process of change in warfare systematically. In the past, there have been common factors that either were a part of the military profession or affected that profession. By focusing on these factors in different ages, the student can perceive the changes that have occurred more clearly, and can thus understand the meaning of the past more perfectly. These factors can be called the “threads of continuity.” While the threads



The Threads of Continuity

have no inherent worth, they can provide students with a way of obtaining information, and serve as a lens through which events can be examined and placed in perspective. The military past can be envisioned as a carpet that is woven from strands representing the threads. The carpet is a complex one, showing man's activities, ideas, and discoveries. Moreover, it is in a constant state of subtle change. The importance of individual threads vary from one era to another—that is, the strands in the tapestry of the military past fluctuate in size as their importance to the tapestry as a whole undergoes change. The threads do not change in importance at the same rate.

Taken together, the threads further the student's understanding of the past.

The Internal Threads

The threads of continuity that are entirely, or almost entirely, a part of the military profession are military professionalism, tactics, strategy, logistics and administration, military theory and doctrine, and generalship.

Military Professionalism

A **profession** is an occupation or calling that requires specialized knowledge of a given field of human activity and long and intensive training. A profession maintains high standards of achievement and conduct through force of education or concerted opinion, commits its members to continued study, and has the rendering of a public service as its prime purpose. **Military professionalism** encompasses activities practiced by those whose goal is the preservation of peace through deterrence or, should deterrence fail, the restoration of peace through combat. Military professionals are experts in the management of violence, and are characterized by their dedication to improvement and their sense of responsibility to subordinates and the state. Attitude distinguishes the professional members of the military services from those who are not professionals. Those who seek to create or strive to perfect a profession of arms are military professionals. Those who think about or practice the conduct of war solely for personal glory or material gain are not military professionals. Mercenaries and pirates are of the latter category.

Tactics

The second thread of continuity that is strictly a part of the military profession is tactics. **Tactics** is the planning, training, and control of the ordered arrangements (formations) used by military organizations when engagement between opposing forces is imminent or underway. The word tactics is derived from the Greek *taktos*, which means ordered or arranged. In effect, tactics, which includes the use of supporting weapons, is the art of fighting battles. In the nineteenth century, the term was further refined by adding the adjectives "grand" and "minor." While neither refinement is any longer used, **grand tactics** was the tactics of large organizations, and **minor tactics** was the tactics of small organizations or of organizations consisting entirely of one arm (infantry, cavalry, or artillery). In recent years, the United States Army has added to its doctrine the **operational level of war** to distinguish the theory of larger unit operations from that of smaller units. It is defined as the activity concerned with using available military resources to attain strategic ends in a theater of war. As the link between tactics and strategy, it governs the manner in which operations are designed to meet strategic ends and the way in which campaigns are conducted. The term **applied tactics** refers to the application of tactical doctrine to practical problems.

Strategy

The third internal thread of continuity, strategy, no longer

belongs entirely to the military professional, for today's military leaders generally work closely with civilian officials in the field of strategy. The term is derived from the Greek *strategos*, which is the art or skill of the general. This definition of the ancient Greeks remains useful in understanding modern definitions of the term. Until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the specific tasks of generals differed little from the tasks of subordinate commanders or politicians, and no specific term was used to describe the art or skill of the general. Political and military leadership of a group was often vested in the same individual, and the resources of small unit leaders on the battlefield differed little from the resources of the general in overall command.

By the late eighteenth century, the existence of a resource available to higher ranking leaders was recognized and given the name **stratagem**: a ruse or a trick that gives an advantage to one side in battle or war. By the early nineteenth century, strategy referred to the use of resources or the tasks of war that were particular to the high-ranking officer. It was defined as the preparation for war that took place on the map,⁷ or the use of battles to win campaigns.⁸ Since the modern appearance of the term, no precise definition has received universal acceptance. Yet the term continues to be widely used, and is among the principal concepts employed to examine and describe the evolution of the profession of arms. Although other thoughtful definitions exist, here we will define **strategy** as the planning for, coordination of, and concerted use of the multiple means and resources available to an alliance, a nation, a political group, or a commander, for the purpose of gaining an advantage over a rival. Strategy allows the achievement of adopted goals in war or peace, and if it is to be successful, those goals must be clearly defined and attainable. However, because conditions in war and peace are constantly changing, strategy must be modified as it is being executed, and at times even the goals of strategy must be altered.

Although tactics, strategy, and the operational level of war are not clearly separable activities, distinctions between their characteristics can be made. Tactics (the planning, training, and control of ordered arrangements of troops just before and during battle) is the primary concern of battalion, company, and platoon officers, because they immediately control the dispositions of the fighting forces. Strategy (the planning for and concerting of various means and resources available to gain an advantage over a rival) lies primarily within the province of national leaders and commanders of divisions, corps, and armies, because they control the multitude of available means and resources. The operational level encompasses the planning of campaigns within a given theater of operations. Tactics is generally prescribed by regulations, field manuals, or convention. Strategy and the operational

level are dependent upon the conditions of a given time and are rarely prescribed by regulation or convention. The operational level is guided by the tenets of **AirLand Battle**, United States doctrine that calls for the integration and coordination of air and land combat resources against close and distant targets.

The adjectives “tactical” and “strategic” are also distinguishable. Tactical refers to aspects of battle where the ordered arrangements are employed, while strategic refers to matters or goals that are the concerns of national leaders and division, corps, or army commanders. In contrast to tactical operations, strategic operations have a long-range effect on opposing forces rather than an immediate one.

Strategy, like tactics, is further refined by restrictive modifiers. For example, **grand strategy** is the strategy of a nation or an alliance. The goal of grand strategy is the attainment of the political objective of a war. Grand strategy is formulated by heads of state and their principal civilian and military advisers. Grand strategy is more accurately called **national strategy** when the goals of a single nation are of primary consideration. A third refinement or level of strategy is **military strategy**, in which the means and resources are those of the armed forces of a nation and the goal of strategy is the securing of objectives consistent with national policy through the application or threat of force. Although military strategy can be formulated by military commanders at all levels, commanders below general officer rank are rarely involved in strategy that affects national policy. A fourth level of strategy, **campaign strategy**, is the strategy of a commander of a force of considerable size that is acting independently. Its immediate goal is generally the occupation of territory or the defeat of all or a significant part of the enemy armed forces; its long-term goal is the support of political goals.

The four levels of strategy can be illustrated by examining Anglo-American experiences in World War II. Grand strategy was the responsibility of Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, their civilian advisers, and the British and American chiefs of staff. Two of the goals agreed upon were: (1) Germany would be defeated before the principal effort would be directed against Japan, and (2) the German surrender would be “unconditional.” During World War II, the national strategy of both Great Britain and the United States was nearly synonymous with grand strategy, but the British goal to remain in the war might be more accurately described as a national strategy. The national goal was supported by Churchill, the Cabinet, British military leaders, and the Parliament. Military strategy was determined primarily by the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff, who established goals and allocated resources

to various theaters of operations. Based on their assigned goals and allocated resources, theater commanders, like General Dwight D. Eisenhower in Europe and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz in the Central Pacific, formulated campaign strategy at the operational level.

In addition to the levels of strategy, strategy can be further defined by its purpose. Two of the latter forms, the strategy of annihilation and the strategy of exhaustion, were referred to extensively by the late nineteenth century theorist, Hans Delbruck. He claimed that the **strategy of annihilation** seeks the complete destruction of the enemy army, and that the operations of Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Napoleon best illustrate such a strategy. In contrast, the **strategy of exhaustion** seeks to gradually destroy the enemy’s will and capacity to resist. Delbruck labeled Pericles, Gustavus Adolphus, and Frederick the Great as strategists of exhaustion. A third form of strategy, the **strategy of attrition**, sometimes is loosely used as a synonym for the strategy of exhaustion. However, attrition more accurately connotes that the enemy force is slowly being destroyed. Exhaustion seeks to erode the will and resources of the enemy; attrition erodes the force itself.

Military literature refers to still other descriptive forms of strategy. For example, an army that reacts to, rather than dominates, the activities of its enemy follows a **strategy of survival**. One strategy retains the name of the man who is credited with having devised it. During the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.), the Roman general, Fabius, strongly believed that combat against Hannibal’s Carthaginians would result in a battle of annihilation for Rome. (In a **battle of annihilation**, one side is physically unable to continue the fight.) Fabius therefore chose to conduct a campaign of delays in an effort to exhaust the Carthaginians. This strategy, which intentionally avoids battle for fear of its outcome, is referred to as **Fabian strategy**, the **Fabian way of war**, or a **strategy of evasion**.

Logistics and Administration

The fourth thread of continuity, logistics and administration, is much like strategy in the sense that even though most of its functions are a part of the profession of arms, many functions are dependent upon and interact closely with civilian-controlled activities. In addition to having this similarity to strategy, logistics and administration provide many of the resources that strategy puts to work. **Logistics** is the provision, movement, and maintenance of all services and resources necessary to sustain military forces. Most of these services and resources originate in the civilian sector; hence, logistics involves the nation’s economic capacity and the

closely related capability of the nation to support its military forces. It includes the design, development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposal of materiel; the movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel; the acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; the acquisition of civilian labor; and the acquisition or provision of services such as baths, laundry, libraries, and recreation. **Administration** is the management of all services and resources necessary to sustain military forces. Since administration applies to the management of the functions of logistics, it is inseparable from logistics.

Military Theory and Doctrine

Military theory is the body of ideas that concern war, especially those concerning the organization for, training for, and fighting war. **Doctrine** is the *accepted* body of ideas concerning war. The acceptance of ideas can be the result of either long usage or official sanction by the appropriate military authorities of a particular service, nation, or political group. Those men who have thought deeply about war or whose thoughts about war have influenced considerable numbers of soldiers are known as military theorists. After examination and acceptance by highly experienced professionals, theory becomes doctrine. The battlefield leader can employ this accepted theory, or doctrine, with a reasonable assurance of positive results. Doctrine does not, however, alleviate the requirement for sound judgment, for the best solutions to every critical problem are not always found in doctrine. Doctrine in modern armies is generally disseminated through manuals, regulations, circulars, and handbooks that prescribe standardized procedures and organizations.

Generalship

Generalship is the art of command at high levels. It involves strategy, tactics, and logistics, and is heavily laced with administration—the management of all available logistical resources. It also involves military theory and doctrine, and connotes a deep understanding of the conduct, aims, and qualities of members of the military profession; a high degree of personal courage; complete dedication to the profession; and an acute awareness of the value of morale and esprit.

The External Threads

In addition to the important role played by those factors

within the military profession, there are external threads of continuity that exercise considerable influence on the preparation for and the practice of war. The most significant of these external threads are political factors, social factors, economic factors, and technology.

Political Factors

Those ideas and actions of governments or organized groups that affect the preparation for war are termed **political factors**. Political factors determine the composition and strength of military organizations, often establish the goals and policies for which wars are fought, and affect the way in which wars are fought. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the political chiefs, or heads of state or government, were usually the commanders of the military forces as well. Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon are prime examples of such leaders. In each of these cases, political policy and military goals were nearly synonymous. However, in modern democratic societies, such as Great Britain and the United States, national security policy lies more in the domain of civilian leaders. Regardless of the conditions, political factors maintain a major influence upon the military profession. In modern democratic societies, political factors have a double function. At one level, they involve the activities of the military profession that influence legislative and administrative decisions regarding national security. At another level, they involve the consequences of military actions on the international balance of power and the behavior of foreign states.⁹

Social Factors

The activities of or ideas emanating from human groups and group relationships that affect the preparation for and conduct of war are **social factors**. These factors involve such diverse concepts as popular attitudes, roles of religious institutions, levels of education, functions of educational institutions, psychological warfare, reactions to and actions of mass media, interracial and minority rights questions, combat psychology, standards of morality and justice, and—ultimately—the will of a people to fight.¹⁰ In total war, social factors can be as important as terrain objectives or the destruction of the military forces in the field.

Economic Factors

Those activities and ideas that influence the production,

distribution, and consumption of the material resources of the state are **economic factors**. Different types of economies—for example, capitalist, Communist, laissez faire, industrial, agrarian, commercial, subsistence, or common market—affect warfare differently. Economic war, which takes such forms as blockade or boycott, can occur both in times of war and in peacetime.

The interrelationship of political, economic, and social factors is complex, especially in modern societies, and a complete understanding based on the detailed study of one alone is not possible. Together, these factors provide the foundation of national power. Without them, there would be no armies. Without their influence, there would be no wars.

Technology

While political, social, and economic factors provide the foundation of power, technology often provides the limits to power. **Technology** is the use of knowledge to create or improve practical objects or methods. In modern times, technology has become the application of science to war. Within the military profession, it leads to progress in such important areas as transportation, weapons, communications, construction, food production, metallurgy, and medicine. Technology has an undeniable influence on strategy, tactics, logistics, military theory and doctrine, and generalship. When a nation is technologically superior to its enemy, its probability of success in military endeavors is greatly improved.

The ten threads of continuity discussed above do not provide an infallible means for learning about every aspect and innuendo of the military past. Rather, they form a conceptual framework on which the student can reconstruct a general outline of the tapestry of the military past. The full meaning and magnitude of that tapestry can be appreciated only after long study or long years of military service and significant contribution to the profession of arms.

The Principles of War

Many theorists have tried to glean the essential components of success in war from a study of the campaigns of the greatest commanders. Physical components, such as the size of armies and the relative lethality of weapons, were known to be important. In addition, intangible components, such as methods, training, morale, and leadership, were recognized as potentially decisive factors that often brought victory to the physically inferior adversary. Among those who thought deeply about the components of success in war was Antoine-

Henri Jomini, the Swiss theorist whose study of Frederick the Great and whose personal experiences with and study of Napoleon gave him considerable insight into the art of war.¹¹

Throughout his writings, Jomini stressed the importance of unchanging principles that influence the conduct of war. For years, the existence of such principles was questioned by many theorists, but in the aftermath of World War I, both the American and British Armies included definitive lists of principles in their regulations for the conduct of war. These lists—made up of a series of from 8 to 11 brief titles that represent the most critical of the nonphysical elements regulating the conduct of war—have been called the **principles of war**. Critics of the lists argued that the circumstances that a commander might face in war were so diverse that these principles could be neither applicable in every situation nor useful in many situations, and might even be detrimental in certain situations. Other critics claimed that the accepted principles were in some cases contradictory, that some principles were redundant, and that certain important principles had been omitted from the official lists. The British list differed from the United States list, and by 1930, criticism was strong enough to cause the lists—and even the term “principles of war”—to be deleted from the doctrine of both nations. After World War II, however, new lists of principles of war appeared in British and United States doctrine. The principles were again referred to by title, but fuller explanations of their meaning and application were included. These two lists differed both from the previous doctrinal lists and from each other. (*See Table on page 9.*) Not only have the titles differed, but as British and United States doctrines have been revised since the late 1940s, the explanations of each principle have been modified. Other nations have adopted different titles and explanations, and still other nations have steadfastly denied that a brief list of fundamental principles is valid or meaningful.

As with any given compendium of principles formulated after much reflection and study, each individual principle can be used as a criterion for the evaluation of campaigns and battles. When used for this purpose, however, it must be remembered that many commanders lived and led armies before the acceptance of such lists or served when applicable doctrine did not present such lists. These professionals may have been guided by valid considerations that were not included in a given list of principles of war or even contradicted principles that have appeared in such lists. For example, the principle of unity of command was violated by the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Louis, the Margrave of Baden, in the Campaign of 1704 when they agreed that each would command on alternate days; the value of the coalition was greater than the concept known to the twentieth century

British (1920)	United States (1921)	British (1948)	United States (1949)
Maintenance of the Objective	Objective	Selection and Maintenance of the Aim	Objective
Offensive Action	Offensive	Offensive Action	The Offensive
Surprise	Surprise	Surprise	Surprise
Concentration	Mass	Concentration of Force	Mass
Economy of Force	Economy of Force	Economy of Effort	Economy of Force
Security	Security	Security	Security
Cooperation	Cooperation	Cooperation	Unity of Command
Mobility	Movement	Flexibility	Maneuver
—	Simplicity	—	Simplicity
—	—	Maintenance of Morale	—
—	—	Administration	—

British and American Principles of War

American Army as the principle of unity of command. Neither Marlborough nor Louis had a doctrinal list of principles to guide or direct him—even though most, if not all, of the concepts now embodied as principles were known to experienced leaders throughout the centuries. But Marlborough and Louis wielded a much simpler administrative and tactical system than those that prevail in the twentieth century, enabling command to be alternated more easily and effectively than would be possible today. The concept of unity of command, therefore, probably meant far less at that time than it does now.

In addition to the value of the lists of principles of war as a tool of analysis, and in spite of the risk of imposing a standard on a commander justly ignorant of the standard, the principles provide further benefits. They give names to complex concepts; and hence facilitate discussions of important considerations in the study, planning, and conduct of war. They are also a ready source of important and often decisive considerations for the planners and commanders of military operations. The principles, however, must never be thought of as a substitute for sound, rational thinking. Rather, they should be viewed as a stimulus and a point of departure for discussions between military professionals.

In 1978, the list of principles of war that appeared in United States Army doctrine from 1949 to 1976 reappeared in a new manual entitled *The Army*. In August 1982, the principles of war were again listed in the successor to the manuals in which they had appeared from 1949 to 1976.

The principles of war that follow have been entitled in accordance with the Army manuals that have presented these listings since 1949. Through the years, the explanation of each principle has changed, and there is good reason to believe that the place of the principles in doctrine and their interpretation will continue to change in the future. The explanations given below provide a concise definition and a brief discussion of each concept. Although these descriptions are not necessarily verbatim accounts of the most recent Army doctrine, they are true to the spirit of the doctrine. Even if these principles are again altered or expunged from future doctrine, the current list will serve the purpose that led to its exposition by providing a useful tool for the serious student of war and delineating significant concepts in the history of military thought.

The order in which the principles are listed below suggests their relative importance, but that order has not always been followed in the various doctrinal publications in which they have appeared. In explaining some of the principles, imperatives are used that suggest an authoritativeness that prescribes rather than describes. The explanations of most of the principles, however, tend to be more descriptive than dogmatic. The introduction to some lists states that “depending on the circumstances” the separate principles “may tend to reinforce . . . or to be in conflict” with one another and that “the emphasis on any particular principle or group of principles will vary with the situation.” They are not inviolable, nor are they a panacea. Rather, they are offered in

the hope of being a boon to the study and consideration of past military operations, and as a guide to the study of and reflection on future military operations.¹²

Objective

Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. The ultimate military objective of war is the defeat of the enemy's armed forces. Correspondingly, each operation must contribute to the ultimate objective. Intermediate objectives must directly, quickly, and economically contribute to the purpose of the ultimate objective. The selection of objectives is based on consideration of the mission, the means and time available, the enemy, and the operational area. *Every commander must understand and clearly define his objective and consider each contemplated action in light thereof.*

Offensive

Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Offensive action is necessary to achieve decisive results and to maintain freedom of action. It permits the commander to exercise initiative and impose his will on the enemy, to set the terms and select the place of battle, to exploit enemy weaknesses and rapidly changing situations, and to react to unexpected developments. The defensive may be forced on the commander as a temporary expedient while awaiting an opportunity for offensive action, or may be adopted deliberately for the purpose of economizing forces on a front where a decision is not sought. Even on the defensive, the commander must seek opportunities to seize the initiative and achieve decisive results through offensive action. The defense must be active, not passive.

Mass

Concentrate combat power at the decisive place and time. Superiority results from the proper combination of the elements of combat power. Proper application of this principle, in conjunction with other principles of war, may permit numerically inferior forces to achieve decisive combat superiority at the point of decision.

Economy of Force

Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts. This principle is the corollary of the principle of mass. Minimum essential means must be employed at points other

than that of the main effort. Economy of force requires the acceptance of prudent risks in selected areas to achieve superiority at the point of decision, and places a premium on flexibility of thought and action. Economy-of-force missions may require limited attack, defense, cover and deception, or retrograde actions.

Maneuver

Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power. Maneuver is an essential ingredient of combat power. It contributes materially to the exploitation of success, the preservation of freedom of action, and the reduction of vulnerability. The object of maneuver is to concentrate (or disperse) forces in a manner that will place the enemy in a position of disadvantage, and thus achieve results that would otherwise be more costly in men and materiel.

Unity of Command

For every objective, insure unity of effort under one responsible commander. The decisive application of full combat power requires unity of command. Unity of command results in unity of effort by coordinating the actions of all forces and directing them toward a common goal. While coordination may be achieved through cooperation, it is best achieved by vesting a single commander with the requisite authority.

Security

Never permit the enemy to acquire an advantage. Security is essential to the preservation of combat power. Security results from the measures taken by a command to protect itself from espionage, observation, sabotage, harassment, or surprise. It is a condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures against hostile acts or influences. Since risk is inherent in war, application of the principle of security does not imply undue caution or the avoidance of calculated risk.

Surprise

Strike the enemy at a time and/or place and in a manner for which he is unprepared. Surprise can decisively shift the balance of combat power. With surprise, success out of proportion to the effort expended may be obtained. Surprise

results from striking an enemy at a time and/or place and in a manner for which he is unprepared. It is not essential that the enemy be taken unaware, but only that he becomes aware too late to react effectively. Factors contributing to surprise include speed, cover and deception, application of unexpected combat power, effective intelligence, variations of tactics and methods of operation, and operations security (OPSEC). OPSEC consists of signals and electronic security, physical security, and counterintelligence to deny enemy forces knowledge or forewarning of intent.

Simplicity

Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders to insure thorough understanding. Simplicity contributes to successful operations by reducing the possibility of misunderstanding and confusion. Other factors being equal, the simplest plan executed promptly is preferable to the complex plan executed later.

Rudiments of Military Organization

The Anatomy of an Army

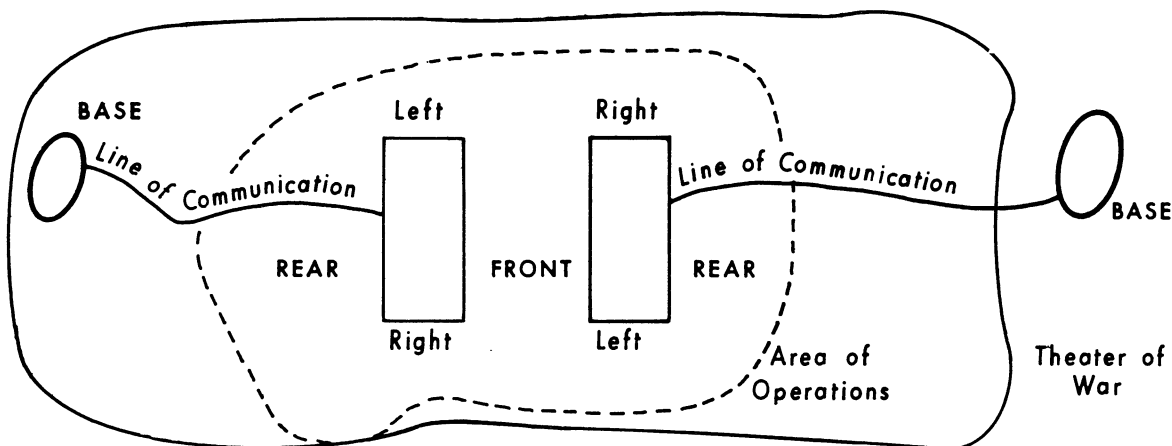
The term **army** refers to an organization of individuals who have a common purpose to serve. In a strictly military sense, an army is composed of the organized forces that represent a significant political group and have as their principal task the conduct of war on land. The United States Army is a complex organization. **Combat units** or **combat arms**, such as the infantry, armor, and artillery, do the fighting. Units whose

primary function is to render support to other organizations rather than to engage in combat, such as the Finance Corps, the Quartermaster Corps, and the Medical Service Corps, are called **combat service support units**. Units that function at times as combat units and at times as combat service support units are **combat support units**. Examples of such units are the Military Police Corps, the Corps of Engineers, and the Signal Corps.

No army can function or even exist without reinforcement from combat support and combat service support units. **Support** refers to those activities that aid, protect, complement, create, administer, manage, and sustain other forces. Supporting activities are directed toward the improvement of the effectiveness of the command. Combat units themselves are often called upon to support other units in the command. A combat unit that can come to the aid of another in a timely manner is said to be in **mutual support** or **mutually supporting**. As war has become more complex, supporting activities have played an increasingly critical role in the profession of arms.

When a unit of any size or type is confronted by an enemy force, that portion of the unit nearest to the enemy is called the **front**. If there is no confrontation with an enemy force or if the location of the enemy force is not known, the direction that a unit is facing is called the **front**. A **rank** refers to a line of soldiers standing side by side; a **file** is a line of soldiers standing front to rear. The left or right portion of the unit is termed the **flank**. The left flank is the portion on the left as you face the front. The portion between the flanks is the **center**. The **rear** of a unit is that portion farthest from the front.

When units are designated by a block, as in the figure on page 11, the outline of the block represents the geographical limits of concentration of the subunits of the organization. Blue figures generally represent friendly forces, but in a



Standard Terminology

historical context, they often represent the force that is the major object of the study. Sometimes the choice is arbitrary. Red represents those forces opposing the blue.

The Army Environment

A **theater of war** comprises all those regions in which combat is likely to occur. In wars of considerable magnitude, there are often several designated theaters. For example, in literature of the American Civil War, the terms Eastern Theater and Western Theater are often used; in World War II texts, the terms European Theater and Pacific Theater are frequently encountered. In more modern usage, a theater is a geographical area outside of the continental United States for which a senior commander has been assigned military responsibility.

A **base** refers to a geographical area from which an army obtains its reinforcements and resources, and from which an army initiates its actions when it takes the offensive. If the activities and movements of combat and combat support units originate in an area far removed from the combat service support units, the area is referred to as the **base of operations**. In such a case, the area in which the combat service support units are based is referred to as the **base of supply**. For example, the base for the Normandy invasion in June 1944 was England. An **area of operations** is a geographical region within a theater of war wherein either offensive or defensive military operations are expected to occur.* **Lines of communication**, also known simply as **LOCs**, are those air, water, and land routes that connect an operating military force with its base of operations. The term **SLOC (sea line of communication)** and **ALOC (air line of communication)** are also used.

The Activities of an Army

In the course of providing services for modern societies, armies become involved in certain functionally defined activities. **Garrison duty** describes the condition of units that are assigned to an area—generally for a significant period of time—for the purpose of maintaining equipment and facilities and conducting small-unit and small-scale training. **Garrison troops** are those that rarely leave the garrison environment. **Field duty**, which contrasts with garrison duty, describes the activities of units conducting or simulating operations essential to the conduct of war. When war appears imminent, ar-

Some dictionaries treat "theater of operations" and "area of operations" as synonymous terms. The same may be said of "theater of war" and "area of war." The distinctions made in this text, however, are widely accepted.

mies, as well as societies, often mobilize. To **mobilize** is to prepare for war by assembling and organizing the military resources and, at times, the societal and economic resources of a nation or other political group. When an offensive is undertaken in war, armies conduct campaigns. A **campaign** comprises a series of operations designed to accomplish certain military objectives, or a series of operations that occur within a defined period of time. Until the present century, a campaign generally lasted less than one calendar year—that is, the period from an army's departure from its garrisons in the spring until its return in the late fall.

During a campaign, an army conducts offensive, defensive, or retrograde operations. An **offensive operation** is one in which an army is attacking, ready to attack, or simply moving toward the enemy or his expected location. The purposes of the offensive are to destroy enemy resources (including his will to continue the fight), to secure important terrain, and to gain information about the enemy. No significant movement toward or away from the enemy is contemplated in the course of a **defensive operation**. The defensive also serves to preserve forces for future offensive operations or for offensives in other areas, to gain time to refit and reinforce, to retain important terrain, or to force the enemy to mass so that he is more vulnerable to friendly firepower. The **retrograde**, or **retrograde operation**, describes the action of an army that is moving away from the enemy. The retrograde is undertaken when there are insufficient forces to attack or defend successfully, when units can be employed to better advantage in other locations, or when the purpose of a campaign has been achieved.

In the course of offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations, armies are called upon to maneuver, to fight battles, and occasionally to besiege enemy positions. **Maneuver** refers to movement intended to place an army, units, troops, ships, materiel, or fire in a better position with respect to the enemy. Maneuver is generally directed against the flanks or rear of the enemy, and often aims at posing a threat to or disrupting the enemy's line of communication. A **battle** is a violent and prolonged confrontation of opposing military organizations. Significant casualties generally accrue to one or both sides in a battle. Violent confrontations of lesser magnitude are called **engagements**, a term that connotes an accidental meeting when information about the enemy is being sought, or **actions**, which generally are sharp, but brief, encounters. In addition to maneuver and battle as means of successfully achieving the objectives of war, armies are also called upon to **besiege** or to **lay siege**, that is, to place an army or part of an army around a fortified place, which is generally heavily and strongly defended, in order to compel its surrender through negotiation, exhaustion, or military action. Sieges rarely last less than a few weeks, and, depending on the strength and

size of the fortified place, can continue for months before the outcome is resolved. When the forces conducting a siege are needed elsewhere, are defeated, or voluntarily leave the area of the besieged position, perhaps because of negotiations, the siege is said to be **lifted** or **raised**.

The Purpose of an Army

Every major political organization establishes objectives that, if attained, guarantee the survival of the organization, the protection of its members from external harm, and recognition of the organization by like organizations. Different organizations rarely have precisely the same objectives. When objectives conflict, political organizations must seek to resolve their differences. Policy translates the objectives into actions. Policy also determines the size and composition of military forces, the resources with which the forces are to be supported, the manner in which the forces may be employed, and the boundaries within which the forces must operate. One fundamental tenet of American policy is that objectives should be obtained through peaceful measures; military forces exist primarily as a deterrent to war. Should deterrence fail, United States military forces must be capable of gaining political objectives through the use of force. For example, they may destroy enemy forces, secure and hold important geographic objectives, or compel the enemy to submit to terms—regardless of the level of conflict. While reflecting on the seriousness of these means to the political end, every military professional should recognize that his particular goal is to develop the combat power of American forces to the maximum extent possible in order to insure the successful accomplishment of assigned tasks.

The Art and Science of War

In studying the military past, students will encounter some courses of instruction and some references that claim to be about military science, while other courses and references, seemingly covering similar material, will claim to be works on military art. In fact, many theorists have debated this question since science first shed its light on the Dark Ages and, as a result, a variety of explanations and conclusions have been offered. When the theory and doctrine of war are being examined, some think of war in scientific terms—that is, war represents a discipline that requires the systematic study of theories that have been validated through application. In advocating a science of war, some theorists further insist that theory and doctrine are based upon unchanging principles that have been derived from the scrutiny of past wars. Those who maintain that the conduct of war is essentially an art claim that each commander is called upon to express himself creatively and uniquely; theory and doctrine lose the quality of science and become guides to artful execution. Of course, whether the conduct of war is an art or a science also depends on accepted definitions. If the art of war refers to the trade or skill needed in war, then few could successfully argue that war is not an art. If the science of war means that unbreakable laws established by hypothesis, test, observation, comparison, and conclusion regulate the outcome of battle, then few could argue successfully that war is a science. When unique situations and relatively constant changes are the object of study, a belief in an art of war prevails. When standardization and attention to the details of established procedures are the object of study, a belief in the science of war prevails. Regardless of the perspective or emphasis, these two dimensions of war exist. It is of far greater importance, however, to recognize that, whether art or science, military topics demand intense and rigorous study by all members of the profession.

Selected Bibliography

A practical bibliography intended for anyone who might have an interest in current United States Army doctrine should begin with a reference to Department of the Army Pamphlet 310-1, *Consolidated Index of Army Publications and Blank Forms*. This reference work—it is no longer a pamphlet since it is available only on microfiche—lists all current Army publications, and is updated quarterly. Its many lists include, for example, the numbers, titles, dates, changes, and proponent (sponsoring) agencies of all field manuals (FMs), training circulars (TCs), Army Training Programs (ATPs), Tables of Organization and Equipment (TOEs), and Tables of Allowances (TAs).

Army doctrine is primarily contained in the publications that are cataloged in Department of the Army Pamphlet 310-1, which lists over 400 field manuals. These field manuals constitute the primary reference work on doctrine for land warfare. The capstone manual on United States Army doctrine is FM 100-5, *Operations*. Since 1939, when the numbering of field manuals was adopted by the Army, FM 100-5 has been the manual to which all doctrine is subordinate and the manual that all others must complement. Until the 1968 revision of FM 100-5, the title *Field Service Regulations* was given to this manual. In fact, *Field Service Regulations*, which was first prepared in 1904, was the capstone

manual of United States Army doctrine long before the numbering system was initiated. Prior to the publication of *Field Service Regulations*, doctrine was promulgated through general orders and regulations, including such works as the *United States Army Regulations of 1861*, and through commercially published books that included the phrase “as authorized by the War Department” on their title pages. An example of the latter is Lieutenant Reed’s *Elements of Military Science and Tactics*, which was used in the 1880s and 1890s. The doctrine of other nations is found in publications similar to those of the United States, and in many nations, such as Great Britain, France, and Japan, *Field Service Regulations* serve as the principal manual. Some Soviet doctrine is available to English readers through translations of a series called “The Officers’ Library.” English titles in this series include A.A. Sidorenko’s *The Offensive* and Radziyevskiy’s *Dictionary of Basic Military Terms: A Soviet View*.

Other contemporary doctrinal sources of a very general nature include the first chapter of Maurice Matloff’s *American Military History*, the introduction to David Chandler’s *The Art of Warfare on Land*, and John Quick’s *Dictionary of Weapons and Military Terms*.

Notes

¹Unless quotation marks are used, definitions have not been taken verbatim from any single source. Rather, each definition is consistent with widely accepted usages of the word. The author has frequently consulted and heavily relied upon definitions appearing in such general works as *Webster’s International Dictionary*, various editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and different editions of the *Dictionary of Army Terms* and *Field Service Regulations*.

²*Dictionary of Basic Military Terms: A Soviet View*, trans. by Secretary of State Department, Ottawa, Canada (Washington, D.C., United States Air Force [originally published in Moscow in 1965]), p. 223.

³Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, 1976), p. 119.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵Adapted from G.F.R. Henderson, “War,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1911, XXVIII, 305.

⁶The “threads of continuity” is a concept that was developed by Brigadier General (Ret.) Thomas E. Griess for use in the History of the Military Art course at the United States Military

Academy at West Point. The second section of this chapter relies heavily on his essay, “The Threads of Continuity,” which introduced this concept to students in the course prior to its inclusion in the first edition of *Definitions and Doctrine of the Military Art*. This section also appears in General Griess’ “Introduction to the West Point Military History Series,” in the first volume of the series, *Ancient and Medieval Warfare*.

⁷Antoine-Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. by G. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill (Westport, CT, 1971), p. 69.

⁸Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 177.

⁹Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York, 1971), p. 12.

¹⁰See Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1981) for an excellent appraisal of the role of popular will in the Vietnam War.

¹¹See John I. Alger, *The Quest for Victory: The History of the Principles of War* (Westport, CT 1982).

¹²The Principles of War are from FM 100-1, *The Army*, September 29 1978, and FM 100-5, *Operations*, August 20, 1982.

Notes on Offensive, 2 Defensive and Retrograde Operations

One means of learning the language of the military profession is to start at the beginning of recorded history and analyze the developing concepts of the profession, especially those that strongly influenced later terms and doctrine. While this method may seem logical, the historian soon discovers that in discussing ancient civilizations, he must use modern language and concepts in order to communicate with his readers. Accordingly, even ancient military history is laced with modern concepts. The timeliness of the concepts, however, transcends the chronology of sample selection and emphasizes their importance to an understanding of military operations of any period. Thus, in the following commentary on offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations, concepts are drawn from different periods of the military past, always with the view of selecting the most illustrative examples. These three types of operations deserve the complete coverage that a chapter provides because they are elemental to most military activities. During combat, armies engage in actions that involve one or more of these operations. In peacetime, armies are trained and equipped in preparation for these operations.

Offensive Operations

The Designation of Forces

In modern doctrine, the forces that participate in offensive operations have been designated by titles that help to explain the function that each part of the force performs. Although these descriptive titles (such as skirmish, main attack, secondary attack, and supporting attack) are used today, they have at times not appeared in contemporary doctrinal sources. Past commanders often designated a main attack in the **operation order**—the instructions that set forth the situation, the mission, the plan of action, and those details that insure

the coordinated, efficient, and effective execution necessary to obtain maximal performance from the command. In other eras, the commander merely assigned missions to subordinate elements. One element of the force could, however, be favored by being given more artillery or airpower in support, or by enjoying the advantages of having the reserve positioned where it could most readily benefit that element.

The **reserve** is any force that is not committed at the start of an attack and is available for the commander to commit at the decisive time and place—that is, the time and place that will exploit success and insure the accomplishment of the mission. A force that receives the benefit of the favorable positioning of the reserve, the bulk of the air support, and the artillery assets is the **main attack**, even though the words “main attack” might not be used in the operation order. The **supporting attack** is that portion of the attacking force that contributes to the success of the main attack by controlling terrain, destroying enemy forces, or deceiving the enemy. In the United States doctrine of the 1960s, the term “supporting attack” replaced the term **secondary attack**, which had been officially defined as “any attack whose importance is secondary to that of the main effort” and is “characterized by lack of depth, reduction of reserves to the minimum, maximum firepower in the attacking echelon, wide zones of action, and usually limited objectives.”¹ During the conduct of an attack, a commander must be prepared to change his initial concept. It is conceivable that the reserve could be committed in the zone of the secondary or supporting attack and that, together, these united forces would become the main attack. Often, the determination of which forces compose the main attack and which compose the supporting attack can be made only in retrospect. Nevertheless, they remain useful terms for not only the historian of war, but also the practitioner.

Other terms used to designate forces involved in offensive operations are skirmishers, security forces, and strategic reserve forces. **Skirmishers** are those soldiers who precede the

main force in order to discover, interrupt, confuse, or delay enemy forces. Skirmishers can be part of a **security force**, which consists of all those elements that provide protection against surprise, observation, or interference by the enemy. A **screening force** is a security force that lacks sufficient combat power to risk voluntary engagement with any but the very smallest of enemy units. When a force is not **deployed for combat** (anticipating imminent engagement by a major enemy force), its security forces closest to the front are often called the **van**, **vanguard**, or **advance guard**. Those security forces in the rear are called the **rear**, **rearguard**, or **rear security forces**. The bulk of forces, the **main body**, is comprised of those found between the van and rear. When the force deploys for combat, the extremities of the main body are called the **wings**. **Mobile reserve forces** are those forces in the rear that are prepared for immediate commitment and that are almost always **mounted**, on horses or vehicles. **Strategic reserve forces** are those forces that are withheld from commitment until required to influence a battle that could decide the outcome of an individual campaign or the entire war. Modern airborne forces are often part of a strategic reserve.

The Purpose of Offensive Operations

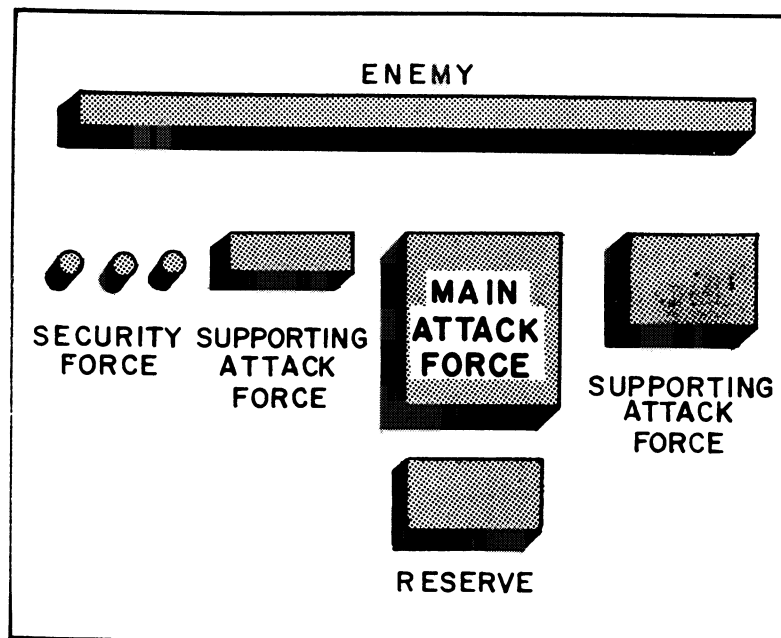
Even though national policy might dictate that military forces initially adopt a defensive posture, it is virtually impossible to conceive of victory without offensive operations. To obtain decisive results, a force that is outnumbered must attack or outflank the enemy in order to destroy his support elements, his command and control apparatus, and, eventually, his

combat elements. The offensive may also be undertaken to secure key terrain, to deceive and divert the enemy, or to learn more about enemy dispositions and intentions.

Categories of Offensive Operations—Current and Historical

Offensive operations have been categorized in many ways, but recent United States Army doctrine has focused on the following five: the movement to contact, hasty attack, deliberate attack, exploitation, and pursuit. The **movement to contact** is an operation with the purpose of finding and engaging the enemy. The force conducting a movement to contact, or an **advance to contact**, should be a highly mobile, well balanced force prepared to accomplish its mission well forward of the main body. When opposing forces are moving to contact and engage before either can adequately plan to attack or defend, a **meeting engagement** or **encounter battle** occurs. When one force waits in a carefully prepared position for another force, moves along a road or any other commonly traveled route, and then attacks, the encounter is called an **ambuscade**. The term **ambush** is also used to describe such a surprise attack, but ambush is properly a verb whose nounal form is ambuscade.

The **hasty attack** is a planned attack made without pause in the forward momentum of the force upon initial contact with the enemy. If momentum is lost, or if the commander decides to take time to develop the situation more carefully because he faces a strong enemy force in well prepared defensive positions, he conducts a deliberate attack. A **deliberate attack** is characterized by greater knowledge of enemy positions, more extensive preparation, greater volumes of more effectively



Distribution of Forces

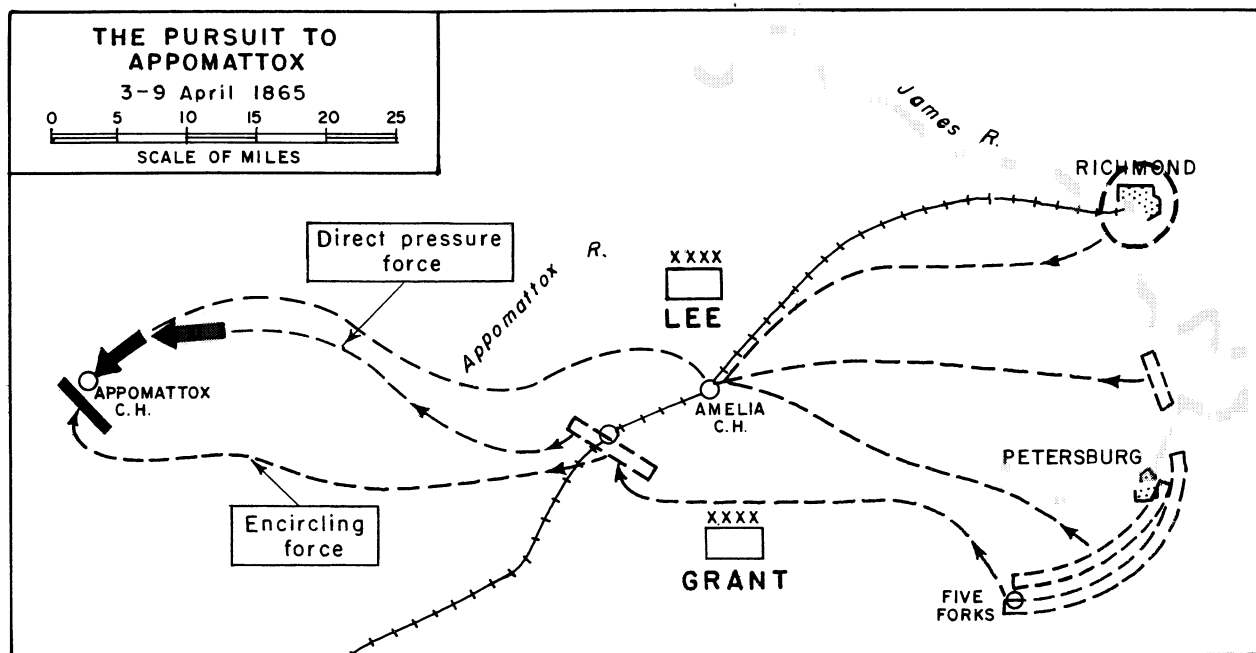
delivered supporting fires, more extensive deception, and other measures beyond the scope of those possible in a hasty attack.

The **exploitation** is an operation undertaken to capitalize on the success of an attack. Previously uncommitted forces are used to strike for deep objectives, seize command and control facilities, sever escape routes, destroy reserves, and deny the enemy a chance to reorganize.

The **pursuit** is used to intercept and annihilate a retreating enemy. A pursuit should be conducted when the enemy has lost his ability to operate effectively and attempts to flee. Pursuit requires great energy; the resolution to press on despite fatigue, dwindling supplies, or the approach of darkness; and the proper coordination of all resources, especially highly mobile forces. In addition, commanders must be positioned well forward to provide impetus, encouragement, and timely, proper judgments. In a successful pursuit, the **direct pressure force** maintains contact with the enemy main force while an **encircling force** or **blocking force** cuts the enemy line of retreat.

In addition to the categories of offensive operations just enumerated, many others have been and still are widely used, including coordinated attack, attack of an organized position, reconnaissance in force, diversion, demonstration feint, raid, defensive-offensive, counteroffensive, and counterattack. The **coordinated attack** is a carefully planned and executed operation in which the various elements of a command are employed in a way that maximizes their benefit to

the command as a whole. Chronologically speaking, before its designation as a coordinated attack, such an operation was referred to as an **attack of an organized position**. The term **deliberate attack**, which is still in use, describes similar activities. **Reconnaissance in force**, or **reconnoitering in force**, describes operations intended to test the enemy's strength and disposition. **Diversions** are operations intended to draw the attention and forces of an enemy from the area of a major operation. There are two types of diversions: demonstrations and feints. **Demonstrations** seek to divert the enemy without engagement, while **feints** seek to divert the enemy by the taking of a shallow objective. Although **raids** also divert the enemy, they are primarily sudden attacks intended to destroy resources or disrupt lines of communication. In raids, there is no intention of holding the attacked position. The **defensive-offensive** is an operation wherein a commander intentionally takes the defensive in order to fix and exhaust the enemy before launching an offensive. Classical defensive-offensives occurred at Cannae (216 B.C.) during the Second Punic War, at Austerlitz (1805), and at Cowpens (1781) in the American Revolution. If a force has unintentionally been on the defensive for a period of weeks, months, or years, its adoption of the offensive is called a **counteroffensive**. Counteroffensives were used after the German attack through the Ardennes in December 1944, and in Vietnam after the Tet Offensive of 1968. A **counterattack** is an offensive action that occurs immediately after an enemy attack has been halted.

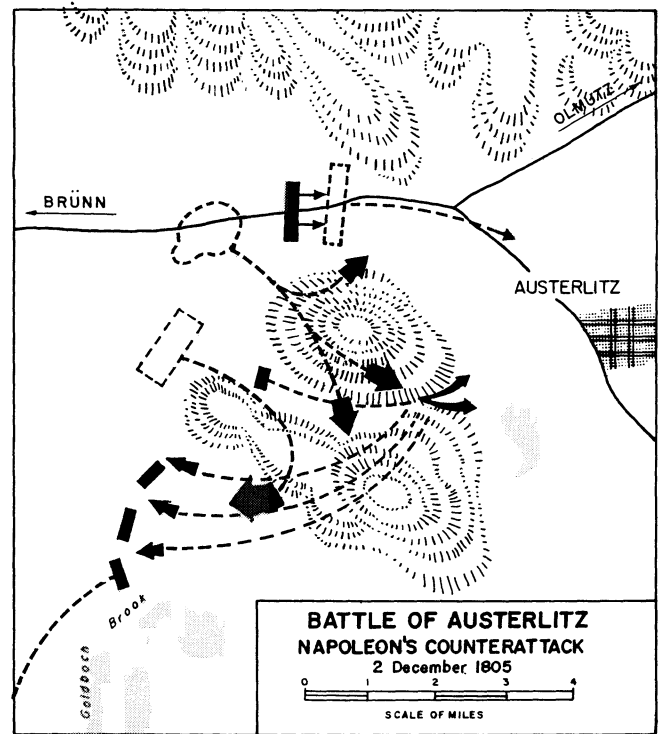


Classic Pursuit

Forms of Maneuver

In the course of conducting offensive operations, an attacking force is required to maneuver to gain an advantage over the enemy. It may attack frontally, or it may strike at the enemy's flank or rear. In a third case, the attacker uses maneuver to force the enemy from his original position to another position in which he can still be attacked.

In the period of the Greek city-states, most battles consisted of **frontal attacks**, in which phalanx moved against phalanx, hacking and slashing until one side was pushed or driven from the field of battle. The frontal attack strikes the enemy all along his front and seeks to destroy or overrun him in his position. In some cases, frontal attacks result in **penetrations**, a form of maneuver wherein an attacking force destroys or overruns a portion of the enemy's defensive position. After being thus divided, each portion of the enemy forces is subject to **defeat in detail** (the defeat of one part of a force before it can be reinforced by the other part of the force). When penetrations develop from frontal assaults or from other forms of maneuver, they are called **penetrations of opportunity**. Such a penetration was achieved by a portion of Frederick the Great's forces in the Battle of Prague in 1757; hence, the penetration of opportunity is also known as the **Prague maneuver**. Successful penetrations require the concentration of superior combat power at the point selected as the focus of the attack. Penetrations should be considered when a wealth of fire support is available, when the enemy is overextended, or when his flanks are unassailable. The penetration consists of first rupturing the enemy line, then widen-

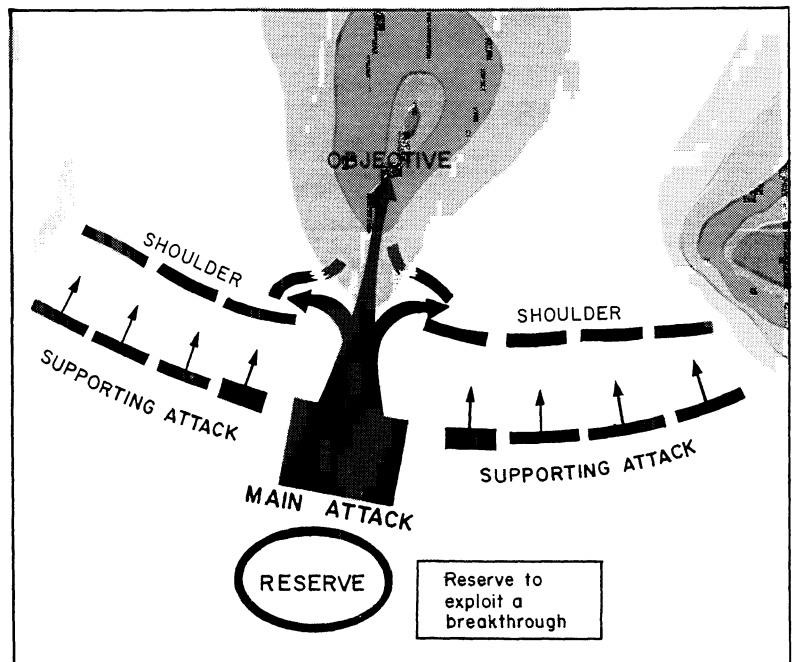


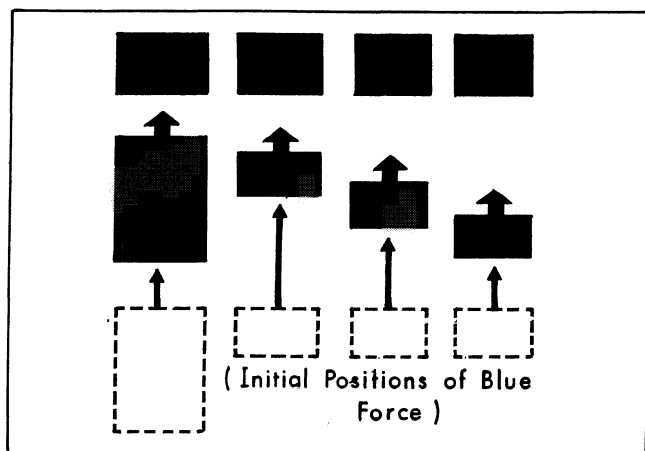
The Offensive Phase of a Classic Defensive-Offensive

ing the gap and protecting its shoulders, and finally securing objectives well to the rear of the unbroken portion of the enemy line. Penetrations, which are used during both hasty attacks and deliberate attacks, often lead to the exploitation.

Another form of maneuver directed against the enemy front is called the **oblique order**. Used by Epaminondas of

Penetration





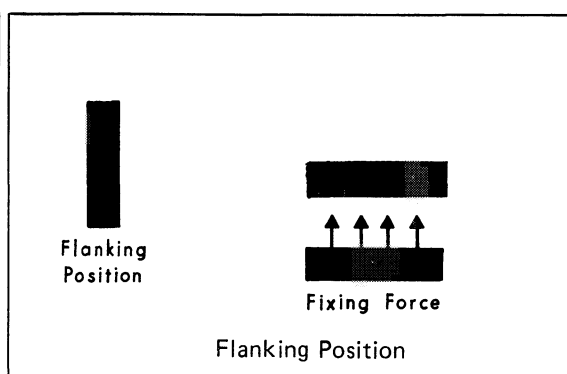
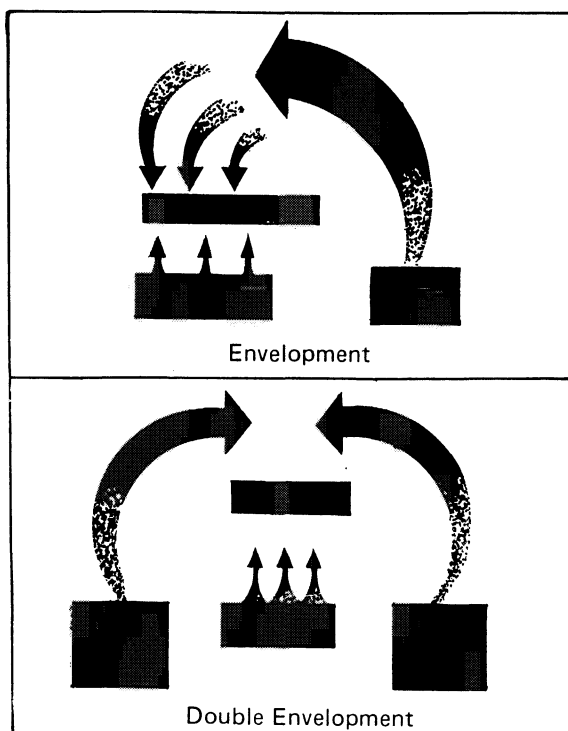
The Oblique Order

Thebes in the Battle of Leuctra (371 B.C.), it consists of an advance by the weighted wing of a force, followed by the advance of an adjacent portion of the line and, in turn, succeeding adjacent portions. By thus striking the opposing front in **echelon**, the advancing force prevents the opposing commander from shifting the uncommitted portions of his line for fear of exposing a flank to the advancing forces. Furthermore, once the wing of the advancing force defeats the subunit to its immediate front, it can threaten and maneuver against the flank of the next portion of the enemy force as it is being struck from the front. The oblique order is thus able to defeat the enemy force in detail, and even though it requires highly skilled troops and a talented commander, it is a means by which numerically inferior troops can succeed in the face

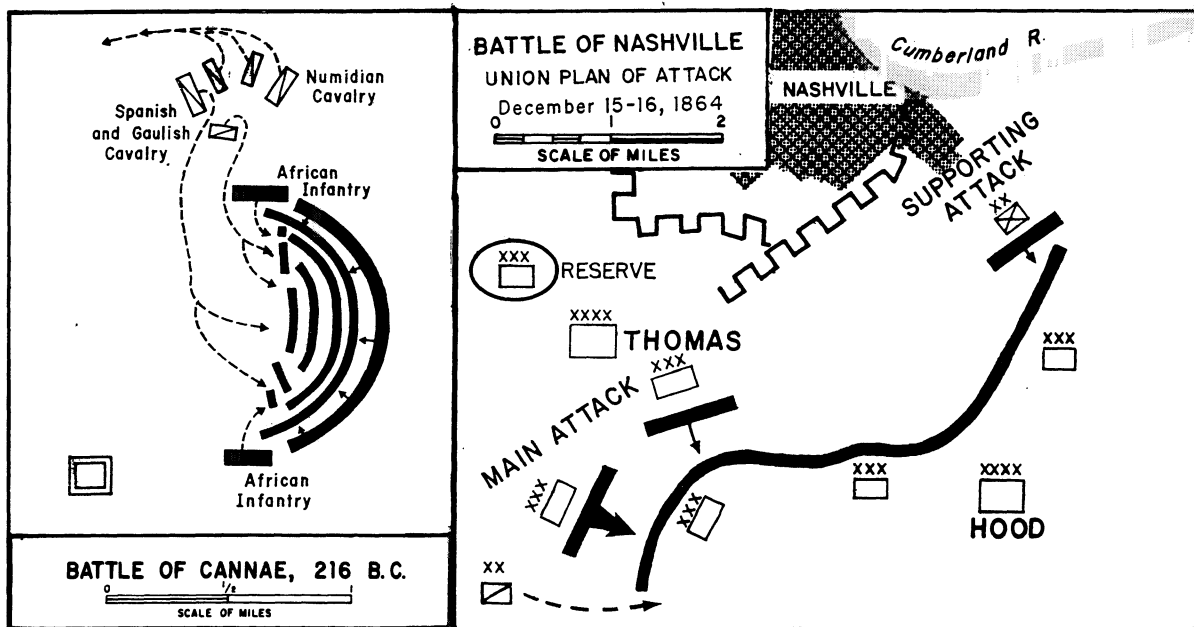
of overwhelming odds. For example, at the Battle of Leuthen in 1757, Frederick the Great, who was outnumbered 70,000 to 36,000, used the oblique order to win a decisive victory over an Austrian army.

Maneuvers that are directed against the enemy's flanks or rear are called **flanking movements** or **envelopments**. In an envelopment, the maneuvering force may either pass around one or both of the enemy's flanks in order to strike him in the flank or rear, or advance frontally from a position opposite the enemy flank (from a **flanking position**) to strike the enemy's flank or rear. When the maneuvering force passes around both of the enemy's flanks, a **double envelopment** results. A classic example of the envelopment of a single flank occurred in the Battle of Nashville on December 15, 1864; a classic double envelopment occurred at Cannae in 216 B.C., when Hannibal decisively defeated the Romans.

When a flank can be enveloped, it is called an **assailable flank**, or a **tactical flank**. When a force has positioned its flank against an obstruction, such as an unfordable river or an impassable swamp, and has thus protected itself from assault by significant numbers, that flank is unassailable, and the force is said to have **refused a flank**. In the course of an envelopment, a supporting attack called a **holding attack**, is nearly always necessary to **fix the enemy**—that is, to occupy him so that he cannot maneuver. The supporting attack can also deceive the enemy regarding the form of maneuver being employed. Since the advent of airborne forces and helicopters, a **vertical envelopment**—a maneuver against the flank or rear of an enemy force from above—is also possible.



Envelopments

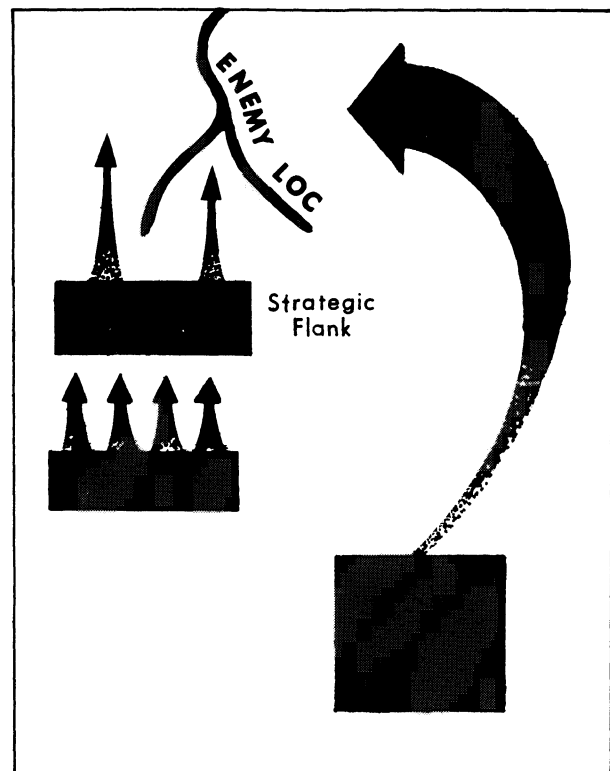


Classic Envelopments

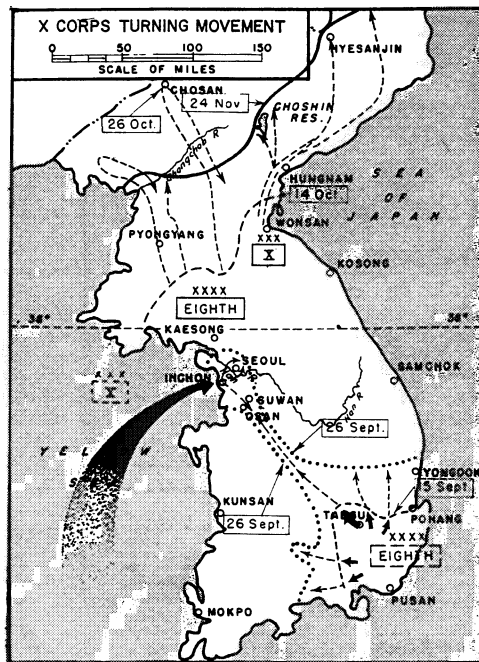
The third form of maneuver consists of feigned withdrawals and turning movements—maneuvers that seek to draw the enemy from an area that is well defended, and perhaps unassailable, to an area of the maneuvering force's choosing. The movement of both forces occurs before decisive engagement is undertaken. In the **feigned withdrawal**, a force seeks to induce its opponent to advance from a strong position "by tempting him with an apparent flight and the prospect of an easy victory."² The feigned withdrawal is a part of the defensive-offensive operation, and is also closely associated with the double envelopment. Cannae is thus a classic example of the feigned withdrawal, the defensive-offensive, and the double envelopment.

In the **turning movement**, a force attempts to induce its opponent to move from a strong position by advancing beyond the opponent's flanks to a position that makes the enemy's situation untenable—usually by threatening his line of communication. Since this maneuver, like the envelopment, requires movement around the enemy flanks, it is sometimes called a **strategic envelopment**, or, in the parlance of modern football, an **end run**. However, the distinction between the envelopment and the turning movement is important. In the former, there is an intention to hold the enemy in his position while striking him in the flank or rear. The enemy may be forced to **change his front** (face his unit in a new direction), but he does not leave the immediate area that he occupied when the maneuver began. In the turning movement, the enemy may be fixed by a supporting attack as in the envelopment, but the element that is turning him forces him to abandon both his position and the area that he occupied when the maneuver began. Also, in the turning movement, the

maneuvering force and fixing force will probably be out of **supporting distance**, the distance that separated forces must not exceed if defeat by a determined enemy of each in detail is to be avoided. When a commander feels the risks involved in turning the enemy are justified, he generally seeks to turn the enemy's **strategic flank**, the flank that when turned drives the



Turning Movement



Classic Turning Movement

enemy away from his line of communication. A classic turning movement was made in Korea in September 1950 when the United States X Corps turned the North Korean position at Pusan. Another term that is nearly synonymous with turning movement is **indirect approach**. This term is used widely in British circles because, in the present century, the theory of indirect approach has been featured in the writings of British theorist-historian Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart, and British political leader Sir Winston Churchill. Adherents of the indirect approach maintain that by striking the enemy where he is weakest and where he least expects to be struck, greater results in proportion to losses can be achieved.

If an enemy force is turned on both flanks, an encirclement may result. Encirclements also occur when the forces conducting a double envelopment meet in the rear of the opposing force. In an **encirclement**, every section of the perimeter must be occupied, preferably simultaneously. The intended result of an encirclement is the capture of large units. When encircled units attempt to maneuver, they soon recognize the futility of continued resistance. Encirclements were often referred to as **pincers movements** in World War II.

Other Operational Concepts

Three further concepts are essential to an understanding of offensive operations: the piecemeal attack, interior lines, and concentration on or off the battlefield.

A **piecemeal attack** is an attack in which the various units

of a force are employed as they become available, or an attack in which the timing breaks down and forces are committed in an uncoordinated manner. Piecemeal attacks should be deliberately undertaken only when time is of such importance that no other means of commitment will succeed, or when the commander has superiority of combat power throughout the piecemeal commitment of his units.

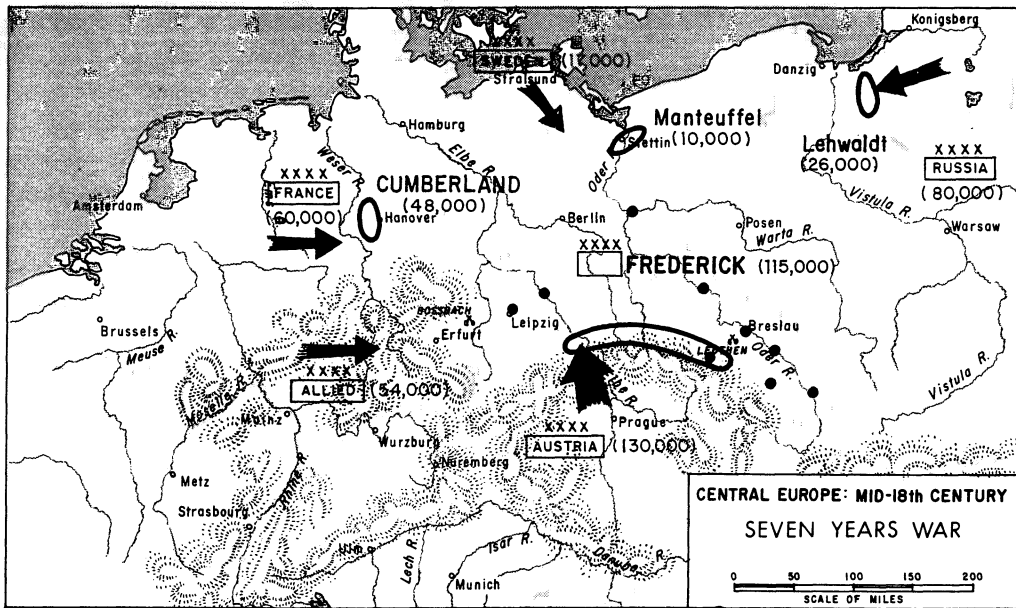
Interior lines is a concept that was prevalent in the military theory and doctrine of the nineteenth century. It describes the condition of a force that can reinforce or concentrate its separated units faster than the opposing force can reinforce or concentrate. A force has interior lines when it is in a **central position** relative to the enemy—unless the enemy can move laterally so much faster than the force with a central position that it can concentrate or reinforce faster. In the latter case, the force without a central position is said to have interior lines as a result of **superior lateral communications**. For example, because of his central position during the Seven Years' War, Frederick the Great was able to concentrate against one of the allied armies opposing him while using economy-of-force measures to prevent attacks on his rear by other allied armies. In more modern times, railroads have often provided one side with the advantage of interior lines due to superior lateral communications. Although the concept of interior lines is generally applied at the campaign or theater level, it can have meaning on the battlefield. When terrain, training, skill of the commander, communications, or mobility enable one force to reinforce along the **lines of engagement** faster than its enemy, the force is said to have **tactical interior lines**. A force that does not have interior lines is said to operate on **exterior lines**.

A military force is concentrated when all its units are within supporting distance of one another. If subordinate units are brought within supporting distance before arriving at the field of battle, they have **concentrated off the battlefield**. If they are brought within supporting distance as the battle is beginning or after the battle had begun, they have **concentrated on the battlefield**. Napoleon generally concentrated off the battlefield. Successful examples of concentrations on the battlefield include the Prussian defeat of the Austrians at Königgrätz in 1866 and the German defeat of the Russians at Tannenberg in 1914. When units concentrate on the battlefield, they risk defeat in detail.

Defensive Operations

Purpose

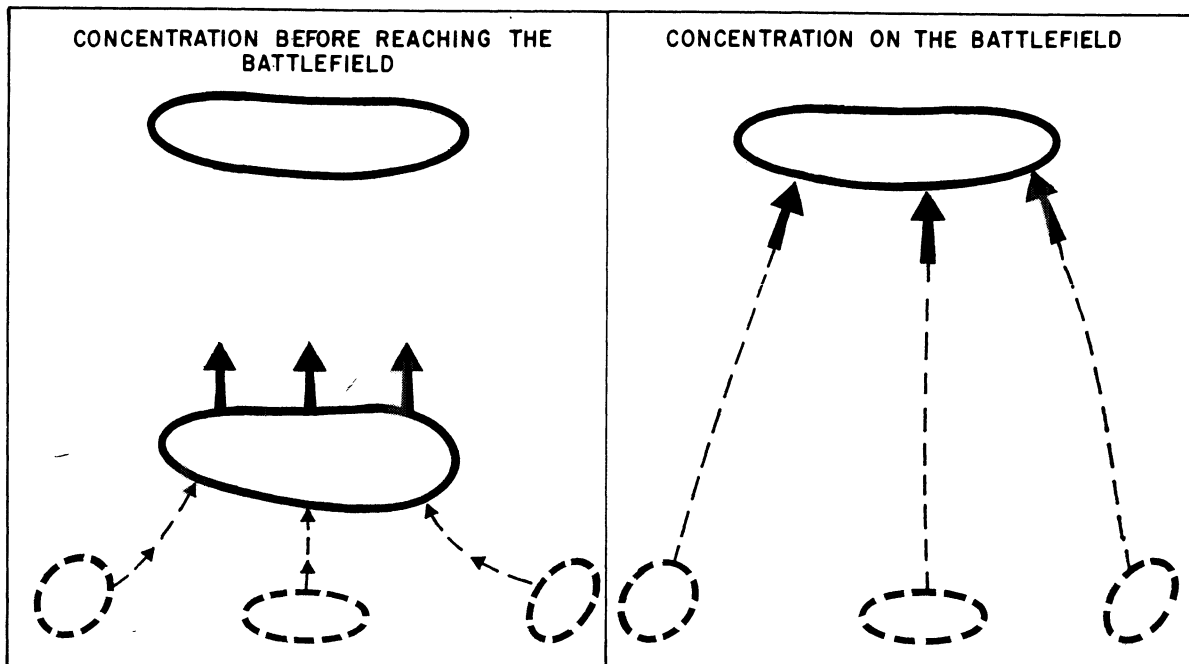
Defensive operations employ all available means and



Central Position Creates Interior Lines

methods to prevent, resist, or destroy an enemy attack. A force may assume the defensive for one or more of several purposes: to cause an enemy attack to fail; to gain time; to control essential terrain; to wear down enemy forces as a prelude to offensive operations; to retain tactical, strategic, or political objectives; or to economize forces in one area so as to allow for concentration elsewhere. Any effort employed to free troops for use in another area is called an **economy-of-force measure**.

In defensive operations, the defender seeks to seize and retain a degree of initiative by selecting the area of battle, by forcing the enemy to react in conformity with the defensive plan, and by exploiting enemy weakness and error. Defensive operations may be necessitated by an inability to attack, or they may be deliberately undertaken (in combination with deception) to destroy the enemy. The shift from offense to defense, or vice versa, may occur rapidly and with considerable frequency. Elements of a command may defend,



Concentration of Forces

delay, attack, feint, or deliver fire as part of the defense. An offensive attitude is necessary so that the defender is always ready to seize opportunities to destroy the enemy. Psychological preparation of troops and strong leadership in the defense are essential to maintain high morale, alertness, and an aggressive attitude. Troops must be made to understand that an effective defense is an opportunity to defeat the enemy.

Defensive Areas

In the defense, the battlefield is normally organized into three areas: the covering force area, the main battle area, and the rear or reserve area. The **covering force area** is made up of the **outer line of defenses**, or **outposts**, which includes the **general outpost** (security forces controlled by the division commander), the **combat outpost** (security forces controlled by the brigade commander), observation posts, **listening posts** (used when visibility is limited, and especially to detect night attacks), and patrols. The covering forces seek to halt the **spearhead**, or **lead elements**, of the enemy advance. Sometimes the covering force is able to launch a **pre-emptive attack**, or a **spoiling attack**, which occurs as the enemy is organizing for his attack. The security forces may succeed in forcing the enemy's security forces to withdraw after a brief **fire fight** (exchange of small arms fire), and thus **uncover**, or expose, the enemy's main force to observation and attack. If the enemy main force is on its **approach march**, or in **march column** (that is, not deployed for combat), the security force may be able to **carry a flank**, or **roll up a flank**, of the enemy main force. However, it is unlikely that a security force could **route**, or decisively defeat, the main body of an enemy attack, since attacking forces must generally outnumber defending forces by a margin of at least 3 to 1 to be successful.

The **main battle area**, or **forward defense area**, is the area in which the decisive battle is fought. It consists of the **main line of defense**, which is made up of the principal combat elements of the defending unit. According to modern doctrine, the **setpiece battle**, or **pitched battle**, is an anticipated battle that is to be fought in the main battle area. When the troops on both sides fight from standing, uncovered positions, the setpiece battle is referred to as an **open battle**, or **battle in the open field**.

The **forces of the rear** or **reserve area** are the primary means by which the defender regains the initiative. Retention of a relatively large reserve, consistent with the requirement for forces in other defensive areas, permits offensive action both within and forward of the main battle area. The combat power allocated to the reserve includes fire as well as maneuver elements. When nuclear fires are authorized, the

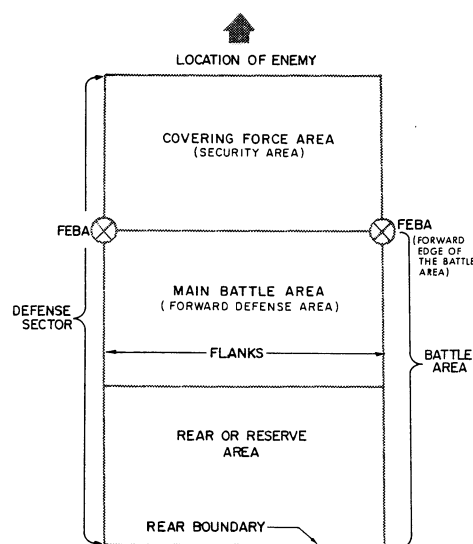
reserve can concentrate overwhelming combat power quickly in a given area. In addition, the reserve provides flexibility, and may be used to reinforce units or occupy positions; insure retention of key terrain; assist in disengagement of units; **relieve**, or replace, forward units; extend flanks; provide security against infiltration and airborne or air-landed attack; and conduct operations against irregular forces. When a relief occurs, the units involved must undergo a **passage of lines**, which refers to one unit's passage through the positions or lines of another unit. A passage of lines can result in a forward movement, a rearward movement, or a **relief in place**.

In a defensive position, the **frontline** (that is, the **forward line of troops**, or **FLOT**) can be anywhere in the covering force area or the main battle area. An occasional **probe**—a small-scale attack intended to test the strength of the enemy's line—or a **sortie**—a sudden advance intended to break or harass the enemy—is used to determine the location of the enemy's front line.

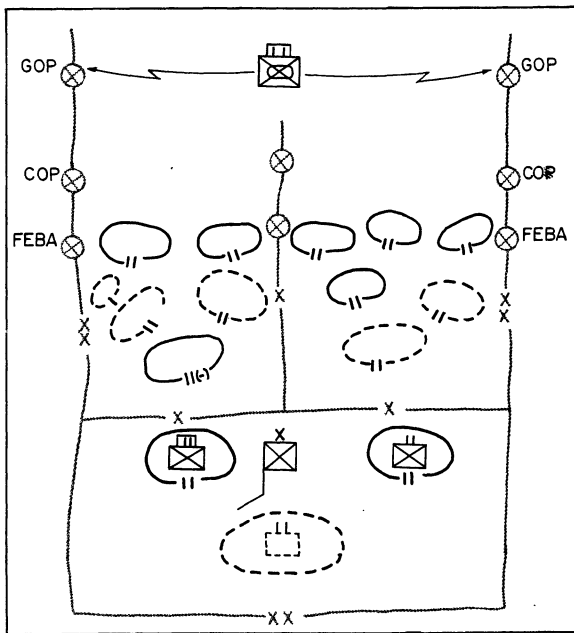
Forms of Defense

Because doctrinal sources have presented a variety of forms of defense throughout the years, many terms that are no longer in use will be encountered when studying the past. The discussion that follows deals with the most important and widely used terms of the past and the present.

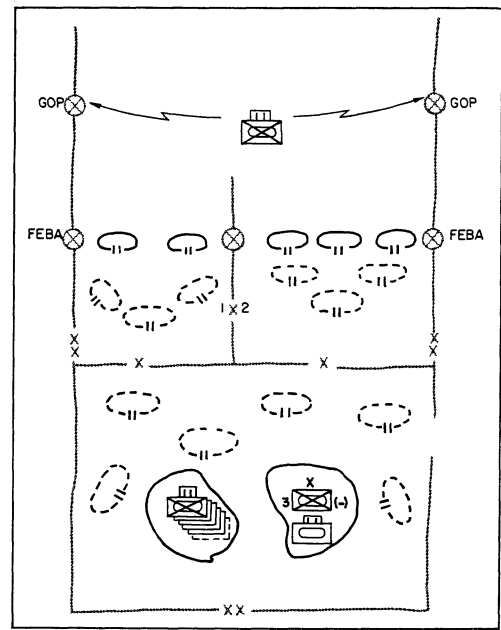
The **active defense** capitalizes on the use of ground mobility and massed firepower to engage the enemy from a series of battle positions that are **deployed in depth** (that is, arrayed



Defense Sector Areas



Division Area Defense



Division Mobile Defense

throughout the battle area). It envisions rapid movement between and within battle positions. In the **position defense**, formerly called the **zone defense**, units are placed either on line or in depth, where their weapons will be most effective against the primary threat. Zone defenses often provided **defense in depth** by utilizing successive main battle areas. A position defense can become a **static defense**, which is a defense void of offensive activities. **Strongpoint defense**, or **point defense**, is utilized to prevent a catastrophic penetration by armor or other highly mobile forces; it is essentially a strongly defended battle position that affords all-round protection. In German literature, such a defense is called the **Schwerpunkt** (military strongpoint) defense. A **perimeter defense**, also called the **cordon defense**, **all-around defense**, **box defense**, or **laager defense**, is organized when a unit must hold critical terrain in areas where there are no adjacent units. The line occupied by units in a perimeter, cordon, or laager defense is called the **perimeter**.

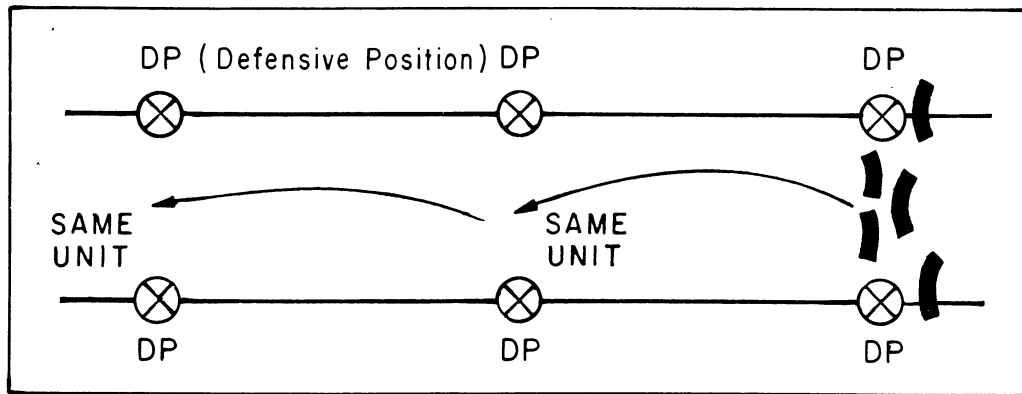
The area defense and the mobile defense were important defensive forms used for a time in the period after World War II. In the **area defense**, the primary purpose of the defending force was to hold specific terrain, and the defending commander allocated the majority of his available combat power to the forward defense area. In the **mobile defense**, the principal objective was to destroy any attacking force, and the priority of combat power was allocated to the reserve, which formed a **mobile strike force** (a force composed of mobile units whose mission was to attack on short notice to destroy enemy forces).

When defensive positions are prepared on high ground, they should be placed along the **military crest**, which is the line on the forward slope of a hill from which maximum observation of the slope can be obtained, rather than the **geographical crest**, which is the highest point on the high ground. In addition, defensive positions should not be traced so as to create **salients**, which are bulges into the enemy line, unless an objective point located within the salient is worth more than the increased number of men and weapons required to hold the salient.

Retrograde Operations

Armies of every era have conducted **retrograde operations**, a term that refers to any movement of a unit to the rear, or away from the enemy. In some sources, retrograde operations are treated as a form of defensive operation, which illustrates the fact that the operations of forces in the field are likely to be a blend of offensive, defensive, and retrograde forms. Like the terms used to describe the offensive and the defensive, those used to identify forms of retrograde operations are numerous, and include retreat, retirement, withdrawal, and delay. Only the latter three terms, however, can be found in recent United States Army doctrine.

A **retreat** is simply a movement away from the enemy. However, the term generally implies that the movement is forced by the enemy and is characterized by a high degree of disorder. The **line of retreat** is the route planned or followed

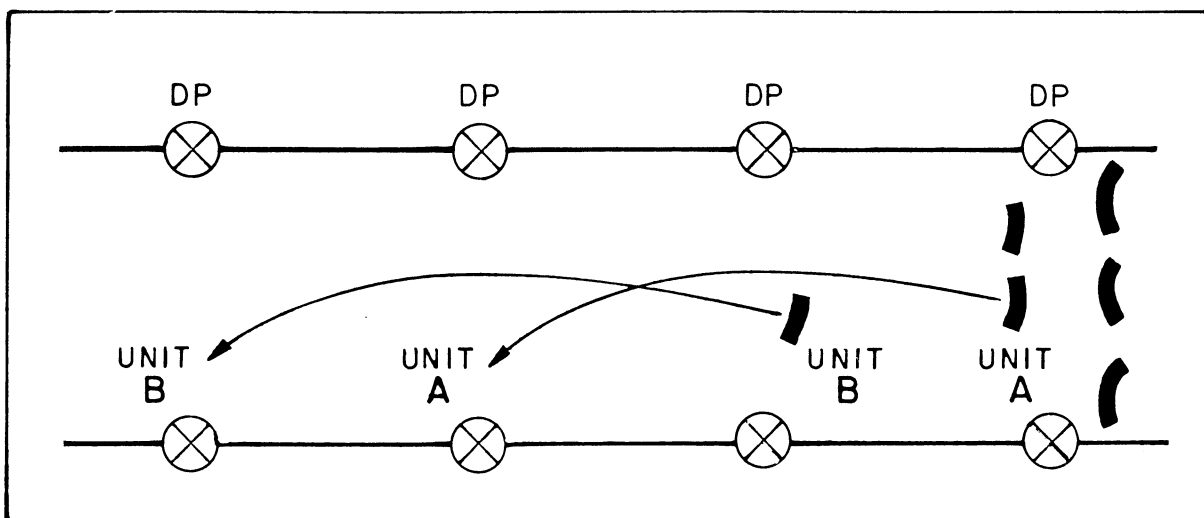


Delay on Successive Positions

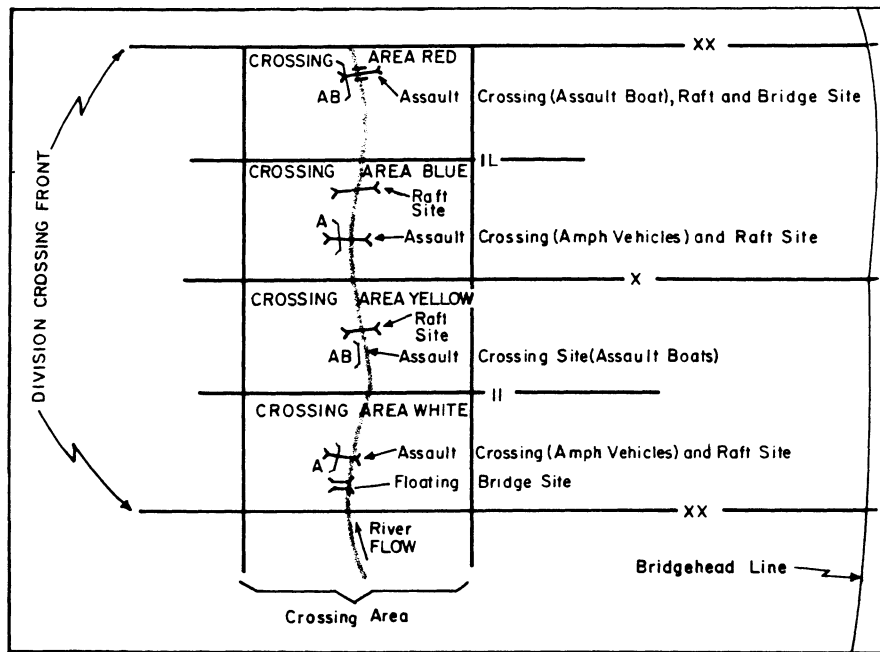
by a retreating force. A **retirement** occurs when a force that is not **engaged**, or not **in contact**, chooses to move away from the enemy. Retirements are generally orderly and well planned. **Withdrawals** occur when a force in contact with the enemy chooses to **break contact**, or **disengage**, by moving to the rear. Disengagement is a difficult task, because if a unit waits too long to disengage, it risks destruction. In some earlier Army manuals, withdrawals were further subclassified as daylight withdrawals and withdrawals not under pressure, also known as **deliberate withdrawals** or **voluntary withdrawals**. In most withdrawals, the commander designates a **covering force**, which is a mobile force strong enough to impede the advance of the enemy. A covering force often creates and occupies a series of strong positions, known as **covering posts**. One of the most demanding of all ground combat operations is the **delay**, which is a retrograde operation in which a force conducts any or all types of combat operations in order to **gain time** for something else to happen—for example, time for reinforcements to arrive, time for

forces to concentrate elsewhere, or time for other forces to withdraw. A delaying force generally seeks to maintain contact with the enemy force and to use all available means to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy. A delaying action can be accomplished from a single defensive position, successive positions, alternate positions, or a combination of these positions.

Retrograde operations are conducted when there are insufficient forces to attack or defend successfully, when a unit can be better employed elsewhere, when the strength of the enemy necessitates the use of such an operation, or when the purpose of an operation or campaign has been achieved. In large commands, many types of retrograde operations can occur simultaneously, and some units and individuals may be involved in offensive and defensive operations in the course of a larger unit's general retrograde movement. Retirements are frequently preceded by withdrawals, and both retirements and withdrawals may employ a covering force whose mission is to delay.



Delay on Alternate Positions

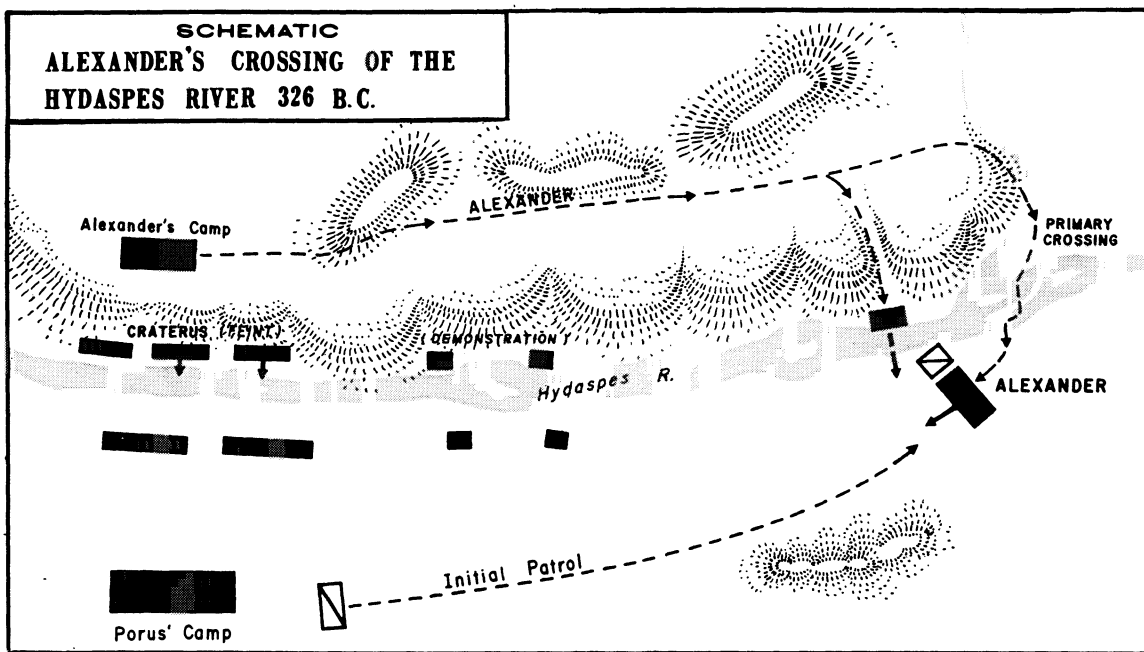


A Division River Crossing

Special Operations— River Crossings

Certain military operations that are peculiar to neither the offense nor the defense and that require special troops, equipment, or techniques are called **special operations**. An example of a special operation, and one that has played a prominent role in the military profession from earliest times to the present,

is the **river crossing operation**, an operation whose purpose is to move “a force across a river obstacle as rapidly and as efficiently as possible.”³ The **crossing force** is the entire force involved in the operation, the entire distance along the river in the zone of the crossing force is the **crossing front**. **Crossing areas** are designated within the crossing front to facilitate the flow of troops and materiel. **Crossing sites**, where bridges, rafts, amphibious vehicles, fords, or boats are



Classic Deliberate River Crossing

located, are designated within the crossing areas. The objective of the crossing force is the **bridgehead line**, an imaginary line that generally contains defensible terrain and that encompasses the **bridgehead**, an area large enough to accommodate and facilitate the maneuver of the crossing force once the crossing is completed. Although it may require some detailed planning, a **hasty river crossing** is an operation that is conducted as a continuation of the attack. It is characterized by speed, surprise, a minimal loss of momentum at the river,

and a minimal concentration of personnel and materiel. A **deliberate river crossing** occurs when a hasty crossing is unfeasible (such as when enemy defenses are very strong or when the river obstacle is severe) and is characterized by detailed planning, a deliberate buildup of personnel and materiel, a loss of momentum at the river line, the use of deception, and centralized planning and control. Alexander the Great's crossing of the Hydaspes in 326 B.C. fits the description of the deliberate river crossing.

Selected Bibliography

Operational concepts are treated in many military history texts, but the most detailed explanations are found in the library of both current and past official publications. The editions of the United States Army FM 100-5 published since 1941—a test volume appeared in 1939—and the *Field Service Regulations*, which dates

back to 1904, are invaluable starting points for an in-depth study of the American doctrine of the twentieth century. Further information on doctrinal sources can be found in the Bibliography section of Chapter 1.

Notes

¹United States Army, Special Regulation 320-5-1, *Dictionary of United States Army Terms*, November 1953.

²David Chandler, *The Art of Warfare on Land* (London,

1974), p. 16.

³United States Army, FM 31-60, *River Crossing Operations*, March 1972, pp. 1-3.

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