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JFQ Dialogue

Open Letter to *JFQ* Readers

Joint Force Quarterly receives and greatly benefits from a large volume of unsolicited manuscripts on a broad range of national security topics. Moreover, authors submit relevant articles to the journal well in advance of these topics' debut or recognition by the wider defense community. Even when manuscripts focus on technical or specialized aspects of security research, *JFQ* can usually find a way to incorporate the work and sometimes refers an author's study to outside institutes and centers, such as the Center for Technology and National Security Policy. The editors not only desire that authors and research groups continue submitting the array of articles and thoughtful critiques unfettered but also would like to solicit manuscripts on specific subject areas in concert with future thematic focus.

The following are areas of interest to which *JFQ* expects to return frequently, with no submission deadline:

- adaptive planning and execution
- coalition operations
- employing the economic instrument of power
- future of naval power
- humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
- industry collaboration for national security
- integrated operations subsets (new partners, interoperability, and transformational approaches)
- joint air and space power
- just war theory
- maneuver warfare
- proliferation and weapons of mass destruction
- prosecuting the war on terror within sovereign countries
- military and diplomatic history

The following topics are tied to submission deadlines for specific upcoming issues:

September 1, 2006 (Issue 44, 1st quarter 2007):
Lessons from the War on Terror (the "Long War")
U.S. Joint Forces Command

March 1, 2007 (Issue 46, 3rd quarter 2007):
Intelligence and Technology
U.S. Strategic Command

December 1, 2006 (Issue 45, 2nd quarter 2007):
U.S. European Command
(including security issues in Africa)
International Relations and Coalition Operations

June 1, 2007 (Issue 47, 4th quarter 2007):
U.S. Pacific Command
U.S. Transportation Command

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor—Professor Milan Vego’s article, “Effects-Based Operations: A Critique,” unleashed a scathing attack on effects-based operations (Issue 41, 2^d quarter 2006). Professor Vego is both a colleague of mine at the U.S. Naval War College and one of the greatest living experts on operational art; many of his criticisms do expose critical weaknesses in effects-based operations (EBO) as it is currently conceived, and we should do well to take them seriously. At the same time, his article significantly misrepresents several key aspects of EBO—particularly in asserting its incompatibility with operational art and the enduring principles of war.

Granted, some EBO advocates—in their enthusiasm for the more accurate modeling of complex phenomena that a systems approach enables—seem to disregard the centuries of accumulated knowledge of how battlefield systems (under any other name) actually operate. Dr. Vego’s critique astutely skewers a few more egregious examples that seem to violate enduring truths learned from countless battles throughout the ages.

On the other hand, what EBO proposes—analyzing skillfully the interdependencies underlying an opponent’s military power and dismantling the sources of that power by eliminating critical strengths and exploiting critical vulnerabilities—also has been at the heart of warfare for centuries. In fact, this description sounds surprisingly similar to good operational art. This is a critical point: As Ralph Peters (another outspoken EBO critic) notes, the concepts and theories underlying EBO are not new. Yet history shows that they are not always the abject failures that Peters depicts; the difference is their application in accordance with—rather than in ignorance or defiance of—the enduring principles of war and precepts of operational art. What EBO adds is guidance for applying these concepts to facilitate military victory by incorporating critical supporting nonmilitary system components into our concept of the operational environment.

We must resist the urge to condemn EBO for its current roughness or for the occasionally conflicting visions among its proponents. No successful combat doctrine has ever emerged coherent and flawless from the outset: “first drafts” tend to be “80 percent solutions” (consider German armored doctrine in the interwar years) that appear ill defined and improbable to the masters of the old ways. Only after a few iterations of executing operations, analyzing the results, and adjusting as necessary do they

emerge as the blitzkrieg of World War II (much less the AirLand Battle doctrine of the 1980s). The rise of carrier warfare from its early days as “heresy” among the “battleship admirals” offers another powerful example of this evolution.

The added emphasis EBO gives to ensuring that results (effects) produce the desired impact—facilitating accomplishment of the designated objective at each level of war—potentially offers another crucial benefit. As Professor Vego notes, nothing in traditional operational art prevents an emphasis on results. In the heat of battle, however, leaders too often lose sight of this and assume that accomplishment of their assigned objectives (perhaps up to and including the strategic level) has in fact attained the goals for which higher authorities set them out. Provided that EBO does not become an excuse (as Professor Vego aptly cautions) for abandoning the rigorous pursuit and application of operational art, this explicit focus on effects may provide an additional safeguard against the very fog and friction about which he is concerned.

Professor Vego’s critique also takes serious issue with the achievability of the kind of metrics foreseen in the effects-based assessment process; this is an area of particular interest in my research as well. My work, however, has concluded that while validly and usefully assessing some types of effects is going to be exceptionally difficult, this is different from saying it is impossible. We have a long history of overcoming such difficulties, and I have explored some possible ways forward elsewhere. One could even say that operational art itself—and the themes and principles taught in the U.S. Naval War College’s Strategy and Policy course and others like it—is just such a means for coping with the uncertainty of war, recognizing that our business will never be reduced to the predictability of science yet that we can and must use our growing scientific acumen to provide insights and processes through which the operational artist’s judgment is applied.

EBO has value if and only if it is applied in accordance with war’s fundamental nature and the precepts of operational art (to include recognizing that if we are at war, that will always involve killing people and breaking things). Moreover, it will take time and effort, and a generous dose of experience, before a valid and unambiguous EBO doctrine sits on our shelf. The staunchest opponents of effects-based thinking would have us throw the baby (EBO) out with the bathwater just as we are starting to get it clean. Some of its more wild-eyed advocates would have us throw out the washbasin

(operational art and the principles of war) instead. Both extremes are folly. I urge the great minds on both sides to suspend their disbelief and focus on ensuring that our evolving effects-based doctrine incorporates and builds upon sound operational art as its foundation—and that operational art does not become an excuse for ceasing to adapt.

—James B. Ellsworth, PhD
Professor, U.S. Naval War College

To The Editor—Christopher L. Naler’s article, “Are We Ready for an Interagency Combatant Command?” (Issue 41, 2^d Quarter 2006), was interesting not only for the accuracy of the analysis that correctly identifies a problem but also for the proposed solution. This solution, unfortunately, is on the wrong track.

As Colonel Naler points out, the conditions of the current environment cry out for a qualitatively higher degree of interagency coordination, if not integration. The traditional elements of national power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME)—need to be more effectively fused and managed. Even though this observation has become conventional wisdom, it remains pertinent given that implementation of a solution has not matched understanding of the challenge.

But the author’s proposal to solve the problem by turning it over to a military organization—a combatant command—merely exacerbates the problem itself. The military tool is only one of the instruments of national power—and, in many respects, the most limited, except in terms of resources. Money and manpower are not solutions but applications. Why should we, then, consider handing overall direction of the whole governmental enterprise to the most limited of the players? Should we not instead follow the logic of operational integration of DIME and more sensibly place it in the hands of civilian managers with a broader perspective and a political mandate?

A review of the history of how we got to where we are organizationally in the foreign affairs and security arenas helps to understand the problem. The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a new and challenging national security and foreign policy environment. Even though some traditional concerns remain, such as the spread of weapons of mass destruction, they compete for attention with a growing list of transnational and nontraditional concerns, such as terrorism.

The U.S. Government, organizationally and bureaucratically, remains organized to fight the Cold War. In the 1980s, however, one significant change was made in the military component of the national security structure. The Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 rationalized the military command structure by concentrating operational authority in the regional combatant commands and providing a direct chain of command relationship with the President. This reform has proved to be remarkably effective with respect to military operations. But the ongoing situation in Iraq should make it abundantly clear that the military instrument has serious limitations in dealing with situations only partially military in character. This is not a criticism, merely an

observation about the inherent limitations of any instrumentality.

All of the studies of 9/11 make it clear that lack of effective coordination continues to be prevalent throughout the U.S. Government. Unity of effort is crucial for successful inter-agency operations, just as jointness is crucial for successful military operations. But unity of effort and jointness are not the same thing. What may work organizationally in the comparatively restricted area of military operations still pales as a recommendation when compared with the complexity of considerations faced by the total Government.

Piecemeal reform is less attractive and, truthfully, not always productive. Nevertheless, a reform in the operational area involving the combatant commands might be worthwhile

considering, as Colonel Naler suggests, but not by attempting to cram the whole Government into a uniform. Instead, perhaps, we should consider whether they should remain purely military commands at all.

Yes, let us integrate the instruments of national power, but let us do so under the direction of appropriate leadership, which logically must be civilian in character and political in authority.

—Ambassador Edward Marks
Former Department of State Representative
USPACOM/JIACG

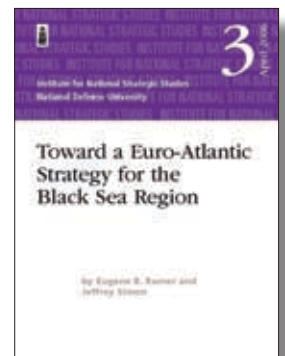
—William J. Olson, PhD
Professor, Near East and South Asia Center
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