Terminating the Ground War in the Persian Gulf: A Clausewitzian Examination

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Terminating the Ground War in the Persian Gulf: A Clausewitzian Examination

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Foreword

This paper presents a descriptive methodology for analyzing military missions. More specifically, it identifies shortcomings of U.S. doctrine relating to the establishment of criteria for measuring operational success on the battlefield.

Major Caraccilo explores the 19th century principles associated with Clausewitzian theory and offers a method for dealing with the theoretical concepts of the Principle of Continuity and the Principle of Culmination. He explores the Clausewitzian contradictory nature of war and concludes that regardless of the revolution in technology and the changing face of battle, the Clausewitzian theories are still practical today.

Caraccilo emphasizes that the task placed on the operational commander should not be to recognize or sense the culminating point during battle; rather, he should plan for it in advance! He claims that a commander must schematically plan for the culminating point of his own forces as well as for that of the enemy. Waiting until the battle commences is leaving it far too late.

According to Clausewitzian theory, no one starts a war (or no one should) without first having clear in his mind what he intends to achieve when he succeeds. In the same sense, a war’s culminating point is easier to identify if it is benchmarked prior to battle. Caraccilo uses the Clausewitzian concept of the contradictory nature of war to assess the decision to end the Persian Gulf ground war after 100 hours. Using his methodology for measuring objectives at the operational level, he provides a rationale for the decision.

JACK N. MERRITT
General, U.S. Army Retired
President

September 1997
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Introduction

The 1991 Persian Gulf War, while extremely successful, is a prime example of allied failure to take a holistic view of battle and develop a hierarchical set of objectives and associated measurable criteria to denote the level of success. More importantly, an explicit set of objectives was not developed prior to the onset of hostilities. In short, there is no theory of victory associated with the Persian Gulf War. This void has motivated many analysts to ponder why the ground war ended in 100 hours. As a result, much has been written and lectured as to why the ENDEX (end of exercise) occurred “so soon.”

Arguments as to why ground operations ceased in only 100 hours range from an allied inability to provide for a continued level of logistics support to whether the political-military objectives had indeed been fulfilled. Did the war end when it did because the allied coalition had met a set of definitive objectives or was it simply based on an ad hoc decision made by our nation’s leadership who felt that the allied forces had met a point of culmination?

This paper presents a descriptive methodology for analyzing military missions such as Desert Storm. More specifically, it identifies the disregard of current U.S. doctrine for the establishment of criteria that measure operational success on the battlefield. Considering this void, this paper attempts to offer a rationale for measuring success within the framework of the Clausewitzian “contradictory nature of war.”

The Theoretical Point of Culmination

The Principle of the Point of Culmination tells us that “sooner or later [and for whatever reason], every offensive will lose momentum even as it succeeds. The commander must therefore know when to stop his advance, pursuit, or exploitation of continuity and move over to the defensive.” Clausewitzian theory leaves it to the military genius, the person whose intuition will elicit the best solution, to properly identify and utilize the counterforces represented by the Principle of the Point of Culmination in concert with the Principle of Continuity.

The Principle of Continuity is “the commander’s natural desire to exploit an advantage by keeping the enemy under relentless pressure, thereby denying him to respite or time to regain his equilibrium.” The relentless 250-kilometer VII Corps attack on and subsequent pursuit of the Iraqi Republican Guard Forces (RGF) during Desert Storm is an example of the Principle of Continuity in action. In the same light, if the VII Corps commander, General Frederick M. Franks, Jr., had pursued his enemy further into
Iraq, thereby outranging his force’s capacity to refuel, then the principle stipulates that the commander must sense that his force was reaching a point of culmination, even though he preferred to relentlessly pursue the enemy.

This example oversimplifies the theory behind what Clausewitz offers as the contradictory nature of war. Nonetheless, it is an example of how military commanders can use Clausewitzian theories of war to their benefit while conducting combat operations. Expanding on this theoretical example and others like it is the purpose of this paper.

**Filling a Void**

The inability to benchmark the point of culmination is an operational void that commanders must overcome. Even Clausewitz has been unable to fill this void; what he has done, however, is to make commanders aware of and provide insights into an area that he claims “cannot be determined in advance.” Clausewitz claims that the culmination point depends on the circumstances in battle. Above all, it is dependent on whether the attacker has already achieved, or can still be expected to achieve, his objective. The relative strength — his as compared with that of his enemies — is what is important, and Clausewitz asserts that unless battle occurs and events unfold one cannot tell when that relative strength will begin to shift to the side of the enemy.

A better understanding of how battle is conducted theoretically allows commanders to better prepare for combat operations and, in turn, develop a more definitive set of conditions for terminating war. If these Clausewitzian tools were championed and consequently explored by military commanders in their day-to-day operations, there arguably would be no question about when ground operations during the Persian Gulf War should have ended. If a commander considered the Clausewitzian contradictory nature of war and developed a hierarchical set of objectives that measures both mission success and the point of culmination, the questions about the end of the Gulf War could easily be answered.

**What is Lacking in Our Current Understanding of Battle?**

Currently there exists a plethora of literature describing the different levels of war and their associated missions. Furthermore, there exists a myriad of ideas considering the definitions of the culminating point and Clausewitz’s contradictory nature of war. Accordingly, numerous studies exist describing how to identify a culmination point (in real time) so that one knows when to bring the battle to fruition. What is lacking in our doctrine, however, is the matching prior to battle of criteria with objectives at every level of war to determine the measurement that ultimately defines victory. Hence, there is no doctrinal method for establishing a way to measure the point of culmination that could directly impact on the ability to achieve such a victory.

According to Clausewitzian theory, no one starts a war (or no one should) without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve when he succeeds. In the same sense, a war’s culminating point is easier to identify if it is benchmarked prior to battle.
This paper uses the Persian Gulf War and other military operations as a backdrop to explore the Clausewitzian contradictory nature of war and (1) establish a methodology for defining measurable objectives at the operational level of war and (2) correspondingly define guidelines for establishing discernible criteria that will benchmark not only the success of the objectives but also the point of culmination.

In reality, to dogmatically define exact measures is difficult, if not impossible. Nonetheless, if commanders do nothing more than relieve themselves of some of the fog and friction associated with Clausewitz's contradictory nature of war, they will surely benefit.

The Contradictory Nature of War

A vital consideration for an operational commander during a major operation or campaign is to sense his own culminating point so he can defeat the enemy before reaching it. However, anticipating the culmination point is one of the most difficult problems facing any operational commander.

Dr. Milan Vego

Most leaders accept the presupposed "fact" that the culminating point is not defined prior to battle. Instead, they strive to recognize it during the execution phase of the operation. Even Clausewitz states that "the culminating point of the attack/victory cannot be determined in advance." Furthermore, he writes that "what matters therefore is to detect [emphasis added] the culminating point with discriminative judgment." However, in most instances, recognizing the culminating point during battle and attempting to avoid it is a futile if not impossible endeavor. Likewise, if the enemy is reaching his culminating point and no method exists to detect it, we may lose the opportunity to exploit his weakening posture.

My proposal to change this attitude is simple: The task placed on the operational commander should not be to recognize or sense the culminating point during battle; rather, he should plan for it in advance! A commander must schematically plan for the culminating point of his own forces as well as that of the enemy. Waiting until the battle commences to make this determination is leaving it until far too late. Therefore, it is essential during the planning phase of an operation for the operational commander to (1) establish a method to determine the factors that measure the point of culmination and (2) specifically identify the factor(s) that requires such a measurement.

Additionally, this need indicates a requirement for establishing a criterion to measure the factor's success. This presumption and associated activities are by no means trivial. Identifying specific objectives and their associated criteria to measure the culminating point requires a methodical framework that supports the operation's objective hierarchy.

Many authors simply identify general factors or "recurring characteristics and common indicators" such as logistics, command and control systems, casualties and public opinion as measurable factors that help indicate when the culminating point is coming. While these factors may generally denote the measurement of most culminating points, their feasibility as measurable criteria is questionable unless they are framed in a methodology that is consistent with the specific objectives that pertain to the operational mission.
Establishing Measurable Criteria

The many contradictions associated with war are difficult enough to manage without the general labeling of ways to identify the realization of the point of culmination. Therefore, it is critical to identify this criterion in the planning phase. At a cursory look one may imagine that the establishment of criteria is an elementary process. It simply involves using the current doctrine that stipulates the method for establishing measurements to gauge the success of established objectives. Unfortunately, no such doctrine exists.

In U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, there are 33 subheadings under the word “objective” and 12 additional headings for related topics. This reference demonstrates that the word “objective” is obviously an important expression in U.S. military doctrine. However, the FM does not discuss the need for a measure of effectiveness (MOE), which translates into a measure of success. This void can result in an inability to reach the actual goals, not knowing when the goals set forth by our leaders are achieved, and a lack of a proper hierarchy that defines the commanders’ objectives and criteria. As a result, this void may have an extremely negative impact on the commander’s operation and leave soldiers at every level searching for success.

To properly define the criteria necessary to measure the point of culmination, we must first establish a sound hierarchy of goals and objectives. This hierarchy will help to delineate the conditions for victory before seeking battle and to measure the objectives set forth by the commander. By establishing a goals hierarchy and then matching respective objectives, the operational commander can intuitively and analytically interject a paralleling means for measuring the culminating point of victory.

A Method for Planning Instead of Sensing

Once operations begin, the attacking commander must sense when he has reached or is about to reach his culminating point, whether intended or not, and revert to the defense at a time and place of his own choosing.

Colonel George M. Hall

As stated above, most commanders attempt to sense the culminating point instead of planning for it in advance. Much research involved with the study of the point of culmination poses the question, “How, on the field of battle, does one know if he has won, and when does he know it?” Both elements of the question are relative to the culmination of ground operations in the Persian Gulf War and will be explored in detail later in the paper. One way to overcome the need to recognize a point of culmination during battle rather than having to identify it in advance is the proper establishment of what the business and systems engineering world calls a “goals and objectives tree” (see figure 1).

Objectives trees are nothing more than visual representations of the objectives structured in a hierarchy. The proper development of these trees establishes a linkage on a continuum between levels of war. The structure assists the commander in organizing his tasks by
matching operational missions to those at the strategic level and, in turn, providing a framework by which the tactical commanders can assist in attaining the operational goals.  

Fig. 1. Objectives Tree Example of the 1994 U.S. Haiti Operation

Goals or mission statements are important aspects of military decisionmaking, and goal development is the most critical function for defining what a commander wants to accomplish. However, there is a tendency, especially at the highest level of the decisionmaking establishment, to define a mission in overly specific terms and in an ad hoc manner without researching and generalizing what the commander proposes to do. Without a definitive method for establishing a set of goals and their related objectives and criteria, a commander has no other choice but to wait until the battle begins to sense when he has reached, or is about to reach, his culminating point.
Historical Models Involving the Point of Culmination

Early in the afternoon of 3 July 1863, General Robert E. Lee’s Confederate forces approached Cemetery Ridge to engage in battle with the Union forces of Lieutenant General James Longstreet. Longstreet had recognized the futility of attacking uphill, across an open field and against an entrenched defender who was fighting on his own soil and had the advantage of interior lines and reinforcements from reserves without interdiction. Nonetheless, Lee proceeded and at some point during his approach his unit had passed its culminating point of victory. The Confederates’ offensive strength no longer significantly exceeded that of the defenders and, therefore, further operations would risk overextension and defeat.

Most theorists chastise Lee for not having sensed his point of culmination at Gettysburg. However, if he had planned for it properly he would not have had to sense it — he would have seen it coming. Examining the Persian Gulf War may relate better to the way operational leaders plan for and execute combat operations today and in the future (see figure 2).

After Desert Storm, many critics insisted that when the 28 February 1991 cease-fire occurred the U.S.-led ground forces had reached a culminating point. Moreover, Clausewitz might have viewed the allied cease-fire as an example of his contradictory nature of war since the allies, in their attempt to pursue and cut off the Iraqis, had displayed the Principle of Continuity (the natural tendency to pursue an enemy) that was in tension with the culmination of their offensive capability. For the purpose of this analysis, let us assume that the activities at the end of the Gulf War did not suggest a Clausewitzian contradictory nature of war.

The commander’s desire to pursue the escaping Republican Guard Forces was not in contradiction with the culminating point of victory in Desert Storm. The U.S. goal at the operational level was to destroy the operational capability of the RGF in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO). Referring to the Desert Storm objectives tree (figure 2) one can see that the objective “to destroy the RGF” clearly supports the strategic-operational objective calling for an “immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait.” What is lacking in this tree, however, is the clearly defined lower-level criterion (designated in this example as “A”) used to measure this objective. Arguably, this measurement was not the total destruction of the RGF as many analysts claim, but the destruction of a proportioned number of Republican Guards that would clearly render that force incapable of fighting.

If one considers that the United States destroyed a proportioned number of the RGF and that it achieved all other objectives as indicated in the tree, then it follows that the U.S. forces accomplished their proposed objectives prior to reaching their point of culmination. Therefore, to pursue further into Iraq to destroy the RGF was not a suitable option; thus the United States did not prematurely achieve its point of culmination. In short, there was not a contradiction in the nature of war at the end of Desert Storm.
Fig. 2. Desert Storm Objectives Tree

To restore the legitimate government of Kuwait and prevent Iraq from further aggression in the Persian Gulf area

- To ensure immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait
- To restore Kuwait's legitimate government
- To provide security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf
- To provide for safety and protection of the lives of American citizens abroad

- To liberate Kuwait City from Iraqi control
- To assist in the establishment of law and order and infrastructure redevelopment
- To maximize the protection of U.S. citizens in the region
- To destroy political and military leadership C³
- To gain and maintain air superiority
- To destroy RGF as an operational unit in the KTO
- To destroy Iraqi supply lines
- To minimize the destruction of Iraq as a viable nation
- To provide the conditions for the balance of power in the region

Lower-level objectives and their respective criteria

Key: ▲ = will assist
It is difficult to determine what could have been the U.S. point of culmination in the Gulf War. Some analysts conclude that at the strategic level it was the American public’s threshold to accept a protracted war with heavy casualties, and some argue that it was the coalition’s volatility. Others, including Lieutenant General William G. Pagonis, the Army logistician for this war, insisted that the United States was operationally on the “edge of the logistics envelope.” Still others, including General Franks, were taken by “total surprise” by the cessation of hostilities.

FM 100-5 provides for numerous examples of various operations that reached their culminating point prior to achieving their objectives. Many of these historical examples illustrate General Pagonis’s analysis that logistics limitations are the first area to explore when examining a possible point of culmination. Ironically, some analysts claim the need to plan for logistics requirements in advance in the same analysis that indicates that commanders must sense the point that the ability to supply the force culminates. Regardless, the argument is that if logistics was a critical vulnerability or “Achilles heel” for the allies during Desert Storm, it should have been recognized as such prior to the commencement of battle.

With that stated, how could one establish an anticipatory method that foretells the point of culmination? The Desert Storm objectives tree (figure 2) provides some insight into the answer since the completeness of this hierarchy should enable the commander to foresee how the ensuing battle unfolds.

For instance, a subordinate objective that supports the operational goal to “destroy the RGF as an operational unit in the KTO” may include, among many other objectives, the subordinate objective “to maximize the force that is brought to bear on the RGF.” Additionally, a subordinate objective to that subordinate objective may read “to maximize the U.S. logistical capability that will directly support the amount of force brought to bear on the RGF.” The impact of these two lower-level objectives on the operational goals should now become apparent.

Considering these lower-level objectives, a commander is now able to identify critical weaknesses inherent in the operation. For instance, the critical weaknesses identified in this operation may include the ability to maintain the force “brought to bear” and the various characteristics of the force’s logistical tether. Both are examples of criteria used to measure the aforementioned objectives.

By deriving this information, the operational commander can perform an identical process for each of his higher level goals until he establishes a measurable term for each of his lowest level objectives. As a result, the commander can analyze the criteria and develop constraints that prevent him from reaching his point of culmination prior to achieving his objectives. For instance, if a lower level objective is “to maximize the U.S. logistical capability that will directly support the amount of force brought to bear on the RGF,” then the criterion used to measure this objective may be “the amount of fuel required in gallons per day to support the forces engaged with the RGF.”
Determining this criterion and then establishing the proper units of measure, the commander can now establish a benchmark for the amount of fuel consumed during the battle. If he violates this benchmark, which in this case is the amount of fuel required to accomplish the mission, he is able to now sense the point of culmination, because he has properly planned for it in advance.

To properly paint the battlefield in terms of MOEs and areas of potential points of culmination, the commander should repeat this process for every branch of the objectives tree. The synergy that evolves from combining all of the mission criteria will not only lead to an ability to properly measure success, but also provide for a method to overcome the contradictory nature of war.

The Precise Nature of Establishing Criteria

*The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purposes.*

Carl von Clausewitz

It is absolutely essential that commanders be precise when issuing orders as mission statements. However, most decisionmakers do not go through a painstaking methodology of defining easily understood criteria that measure the goals and objectives supporting a mission. Given this lack of precision and coupling it with the nature of limited wars, which appear to be the wave of the near future, our task to define precise MOEs becomes all the more difficult.

FM 100-5 states that even in military operations other than war (MOOTW), defining clear objectives may be difficult; nonetheless, it is absolutely essential. The question now becomes, “Does the ambiguity of MOOTW stem from ill-defined objectives or does it come from the inability to circumscribe the criteria that will measure the objective’s success?”

“Limited wars are by their very nature political wars,” and the Clausewitzian theory of the point of culmination is a total war-based concept in which the point of culmination is a military-based criterion. Therefore, it is imperative that the operational commander understands the fact that during MOOTW politicians will most likely establish a set of *a priori* criteria, including, for example, “time to complete the operation.”

These politically imposed criteria often define the acceptable terms of the operation and thereby impose on the military commander a benchmark for success before the operation begins. The operational commander should not confuse this benchmark with the establishment of military-based criteria since, in most cases, the political-based criterion is politically and not analytically derived. Therefore it is beneficial, even in MOOTW, to determine a method of establishing criteria to assist the commander in measuring his success.

In order to clearly determine criteria that gauge the success of an objective, two simple rules must be met. First, criteria must be measurable. A commander must ask himself, “Do the criteria sufficiently describe the success of the objective?” For example, if the objective is “to maximize the number of refugees fed in the camps along the Rwandan-
Zairian [now the People's Republic of Congo] border,” a criterion that measures this objective may be “the number of refugees fed a recommended daily allowance of a specific caloric intake in a 24-hour day.”

In this example, we might attempt to measure the same objective with the criterion “the number of meals distributed a day to the refugees.” However, does this criterion accurately measure the degree of success in meeting the stated objective? The amount of food distributed does not directly measure the number of refugees fed. We may want to first determine the number of refugees in each camp and measure the success in attaining the objective by measuring the percentage of refugees per camp fed on a periodic basis.

The next rule the criteria must follow is that each objective is measured by only one criterion. There must be a one-to-one correspondence between the criterion and the objective it measures. By following these two rules, commanders can clearly define objectives and then measure the success of each objective with clearly identifiable criteria.

Referring back to the Haiti objectives tree (figure 1), we can measure the success of “maximizing the disarmament of Cedras supporters” with the criterion “the number of organized elements he has remaining under his control.” The objective “to minimize enemy casualties” is measurable with the criterion “the number of enemy combatants and noncombatants injured by hostile fire or by other means.” “The number of military engagements between the two factions in Haiti” will measure the objective “to minimize the violence between the two factions,” and “the vulnerability of Aristide as a leader or his perceived risk while in power” can be the measurable criterion for the objective “to maximize the protection of Aristide.”

At this point, the commander has established the objectives hierarchy and has determined a set of criteria to help him measure success. Derived from these criteria are the established benchmarks to describe the potential points of culmination based on the characteristic limitations of the critical weaknesses in the operation. However, there still may exist a potential culminating point in an area not yet defined. By interjecting a paralleling objective(s) into the objectives hierarchy, the commander can ensure he has exhausted the determination of all possible points of culmination.

**Paralleling Objectives**

Referring to the modified Haiti objectives tree (figure 3), the commander may determine that his operational objectives have neglected an area in which a potential point of culmination exists. These criteria may include the historically defined parameters many analyses describe as “traits and events” that influence the culminating point.

In accordance with the Weinberger and Powell doctrines developed in the late 1980s, if the United States decides to use its military it will attempt to employ a credible force. However, in the past decade or so the issue of a credible force is suffused with the fear of casualties and inhibited by strictures developed within the higher level of the Department of Defense. As a result, the operational commander may decide that the need “to
minimize U.S. casualties" supports an evolving military desire to maintain the public's support. One can argue that this objective is not inherent in the true objectives of the mission; accordingly, it is one of the "unarticulated but apparent conditions of the new military writ as developed in PDD 25." Therefore, it is clearly a measurable criterion that if violated could instigate an operational point of culmination.

Fig. 3. Modified Haiti Objectives Tree

Introduce this portion of the tree, a branch, that denotes a culminating point and possible measurable objectives. By defining the criteria that will measure these objectives and then placing constraints on this portion, we can identify the criteria that will measure the point of culmination prior to the start of an operation. Commanders would not consciously attempt an operation without identifying the objectives at each level; in the same light they should identify the point of culmination before the operation begins.
As depicted in the modified objectives tree (figure 3), the additional strategic goal "to maintain public support" is a paralleling objective in the mission's hierarchical structure. By so including it the operational commander indicates, early on in the planning process, that he can support this paralleling strategic objective by "minimizing U.S. casualties" and by "minimizing collateral damage."

Contradicting the Contradictory Nature of War

When one considers the premise that the commander should determine the point of culmination in advance, it would appear that the Clausewitzian contradictory nature of war is, in fact, not so contradictory. The Principle of Continuity implies that an attacking force does not meet an objective at a certain point in an operation and is thereby compelled to pursue relentlessly in order to achieve that objective. Perhaps the pursuit ensues because the measure of success is not properly defined or, as in our Desert Storm example, a continuation of the ground campaign would have meant a change in U.S. objectives.

While some argue that the attack should have continued until Saddam Hussein was removed from power, it is clear from the tree constructed previously that it would have been in clear violation of the U.S. objective "to provide the conditions for the balance of power in the region." A coalition removal of Saddam Hussein could have led to an imbalanced state in the Persian Gulf — the direct opposite of the result that the United States and its allies desired.

The Principle of Culmination, in the same light, is a dubious theorem only because, in the past, commanders had no means to properly plan for it. Therefore, it follows logically that if the commander properly develops his hierarchy of objectives prior to battle and then appropriately matches his criteria, he will have some means for benchmarking the possible points of culmination. Therefore, he can see them coming and not have to rely on sensing them, making the Principle of Culmination much less dubious than before.

Conclusion

_The future is not the 'Son of Desert Storm,' but the 'Stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya.'_  

Lieutenant General Martin Steele, USMC

_The Changing Face of Conflict._ One of the most challenging threats to an operational warfighter in the next millennium is what many analysts have termed the "changing face of conflict." Even if not in agreement with the common "clash of civilizations" theories or the "sky is falling" anarchist attitudes that seem to be prevalent among many strategists, one must agree that conflict and wars have changed.

These changes, some of which have been identified in the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), will have lasting effects on how the military fights in future wars. While the QDR has indicated a need for sufficient forces to fight in two major theaters of war (MTWs) nearly simultaneously, it also postulates the need for the capability to conduct a
series of simultaneous smaller-scaled contingencies (SSCs). Even as the United States continues to prepare for the MTWs, the Army has deployed no less than a dozen times in the past decade in support of humanitarian crises and other SSCs, and there is no indication that the need to do so in the future will abate.

This paper has already indicated that limited wars and especially MOOTW are by their very nature political wars and that the Clausewitzian theory of the point of culmination is a total war-based concept in which the point of culmination is a military-based criterion. Accordingly, while difficult to accomplish, many of Clausewitz’s theories — such as those associated with the contradictory nature of war — must take into account the political and social criteria related to operations such as ethnic conflict, peacekeeping, peacemaking and humanitarian assistance. Therefore, commanders can still use the framework presented in this paper to explore how the different types of conflict affect their effort to plan for the point of culmination and develop a proper objectives hierarchy to assist in accomplishing on conventional missions.

A method of establishing parallel objectives that indicates the need to respect the social and political ramifications of each SSC has already been offered in this paper. By using this framework the commander can develop a measurable set of criteria that will assist him in accomplishing his mission.

A Warfighting Revolution. The evolution of the manner in which our military fights is driven by both the information resolution and the changing nature of conflict. Battlespace dominance and seamless information-sharing platforms offer commanders a real-time feel of the battlefield. Application of advances in information technology will foster a form of warfare that is extremely lethal and fast-paced. Likely changes in the conduct of warfare include improved situational awareness, decreased time from detection to identification to engagement, improved precision and rates of fires, greater dispersion of forces, enhanced integration of fires and maneuver, and better campaign analysis and planning. In short, as the military evolves from a platform-centric type warfare mentality to a network-centric framework, a commander’s ability to see the battlefield will increase and, consequently, he will be able to make decisions quicker and more effectively.

Force XXI for the Army is a vision for the next century that is based on digitizing the battlefield. The technology-driven vision, coupled with the significant platforms associated with other services, has received funding approval in the procurement process. These forward-looking platforms will be integrated into our force structure over the next decade.

The QDR has accepted the fact that the next military and the military after next will be smaller but much more capable. The capabilities-based force structure will be dependent upon an integrated assemblage of information-based platforms. These platforms are envisioned to provide for a high level of sustainable situational awareness on the battlefield which, in turn, will enhance the speed of command, lower the level of situational ambiguity, enhance the clarity of a commander’s mission and intent, and reduce the questions associated with the fog and friction of war. In short, while the changing face of battle will complicate a commander’s ability to plan for the point of culmination prior to
battle, the evolution of information-based technology will clearly assist the commander in his ability to foresee those constraints associated with the contradictory nature of war and, consequently, to act upon them accordingly.

**Culminating This Paper.** Establishing MOEs and then modeling them to gain usable output is not a new process for the Army. Battle labs and simulation centers throughout the military conduct these types of analyses on a routine basis. This paper has demonstrated that establishing a hierarchical structure for displaying a commander’s objectives enables him to identify measurable criteria. From this process, it has also shown that identifying the criteria that measure success will also assist in developing a benchmark for the point of culmination.

The ability to properly benchmark the culminating point prior to battle will directly impact on the operational commander’s capability to measure his success in accordance with his stated mission. Additionally, the criteria established to benchmark the various points of culmination will benefit the commander immensely in designing his war-termination strategy (linking objectives with desired end-state). A secondary benefit derived from the established methodology presented here is the visual display of the established objectives.

In short, this process allows the operational commander to devise a methodology to determine measurable criteria to identify the point of culmination prior to battle. The development of such criteria will provide the commander a method for establishing a linkage between the hierarchical nature of objectives and their clearly defined criteria and help to delineate the conditions for victory before seeking battle.

With any theory it is essential to recall, as Clausewitz says, that “if we remember how many factors contribute to an equation of force we will understand how difficult [it is to determine] . . . which side has the upper hand.”45 Therefore, it follows that even if every fact is known and the commander acts in concert with his military genius to arrive at a proper course of action, if he disregards the actions of the enemy, then his operation may still reach a point of culmination. This is true regardless of how well one plans in advance for the culminating point.46

Finally, there exist many extraneous factors that may impede any plan and obviously prevent the commander from succeeding. However, if the commander establishes a set of objectives and matching criteria early on, the possibility of overcoming the fog and friction of war increases dramatically. After all, if he can do nothing more than to limit the effects of battlefield uncertainty, he will surely benefit.
Endnotes

1. Arguably there has been a set of strategic-level objectives stemming from the 1990 “aggression will not stand” statement made by President George Bush. However, there has not been a definitive set of objectives connecting the tactical to the operational and, in the same light, the operational to the strategic levels of command. If such a developed hierarchy existed, a theory of victory could be formed which links measurable criteria associated with the lower-level objectives to the strategic goals imposed by the National Command Authority. Additionally, if such a hierarchy existed, the questions of whether the allied objectives were met and when the war should end would have been answered — possibly without controversy.

2. This theory contrasts the Principle of Continuity (the commander’s natural desire to exploit an advantage by keeping the enemy under relentless pressure, thereby denying him the respite or time to regain his equilibrium) with the Clausewitzian concept of the culminating point (Michael I. Handel, Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought [Portland, Oreg.: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1996], pp. 99, 114).

3. Handel, Masters of War, p. 182.

4. Ibid.


13. For instance, the Clausewitzian Principle of Continuity suggests that success must be exploited relentlessly, while the culminating point of victory tells us that sooner or later, every offensive will lose momentum even if it succeeds. Correspondingly, the commander must know when to stop his advance, pursuit or exploitation and move over to the defense (Handel, Masters of War, pp. 181-182).


19. The top-level goal is the strategic-level objective, which the subordinate goal or objective must assist in accomplishing. The next-level set of objectives pertain to the strategic-operational level of war, but they are still too broad to be measured effectively. However, these subordinate objectives are established to ensure that the top-level, or strategic, goal is accomplished. The analyst at this point must ensure all possible operational objectives have been considered to make sure the strategic goal is set. In the same sense, the lower (tactical)-level goals, are determined and exhaustively listed to ensure each operational goal is accomplished. This level provides for the measurable set of objective that will allow the mission to be measured effectively in terms of success (Barbero and Caraccilo, “Measuring Mission Success,” p. 42).


22. Ibid, p. 81.

23. More specifically, many analysts determined that the allied ground forces had reached a logistical point of culmination (Hallman, “Desert Storm vs. Desert Disaster,” p. 111).

24. This tree was deliberately left incomplete to represent the lack of criteria, or MOEs, established prior to the actual battle, thereby accurately portraying the inability of U.S. forces to measure, or benchmark, their efforts in destroying the RGF.

25. While this is an important topic, it is not the intent of this paper to explore it further. For the purpose of this analysis, which is in part a process-type analysis, it is my hope that the reader will accept this assumption.


29. FM 100-5 lists various operations in which the commanders, in pursuit of the enemy, unexpectedly achieved their points of culmination. However, considering each one of these examples—for instance, Patton’s rapid advance across France, which was bogged down for lack of supplies—the commander should have been able to foresee the respective problem prior to battle and plan for it accordingly.


31. Many analysts accept that the Achilles heel in defining the culminating point is inherent in one’s logistical ability. Supplies, casualties, and force ratios are quantitatively measurable terms that make the identification of the culminating point easier. However, just because they are easier to measure does not make them necessarily appropriate points of culmination (Heljik, "Recognizing and Controlling the Culminating Point," p. 2).


33. FM 100-5, pp. 2-4, 13-3.


35. The difference here is not between the political and military-driven criteria. It is between criteria that are developed due to political motives (partisanship, lobbying, etc.) and those that are derived by using an analytical thought process.


40. Lieutenant General Martin Steele, Director of Operations, USMC, in an address to the Naval War College, 11 June 1997.

41. Huntington, in "The Clash of Civilizations," contends that international politics will no longer be dominated by conflicts between nation states and ideologies, but instead by the clash of civilizations. Specifically, he predicts that future conflicts will occur along the cultural fault lines separating seven or eight major civilizations and that the fault lines between these civilizations (Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African) are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as flashpoints for bloodshed (Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Strategy and Force Planning*, 2d ed., edited by Strategy and Force Planning Faculty, U.S. Naval War College [Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, 1997], pp. 344-365). In a different light, Robert Kaplan, in "The Coming


44. Taken from a speech given on 10 June 1997 by Vice Admiral Arthur K. Cebrowski, USN, Director for Space, Information, Warfare, and Command and Control for the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, to the U.S. Naval War College during its annual Current Strategy Forum.


46. Regardless of how well a command plans for an operation, extraneous factors, such as the enemy’s behaving in a way not previously expected, may cause the commander to adjust to the uncertainties of the battlefield (Ibid., pp. 24, 33).
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Unpublished text