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14. ABSTRACT As a foundational methodology, the Joint Operations Planning Process (JOPP) remains relevant but is in great need of refinements for US military efforts to be more effective in complex operating environments. One of the most critical aspects missing in the JOPP is the element of problem framing. This effort not only supports initial planning, but is also critical in the follow-on assessment role. Additionally, the dynamics of irregular warfare through historical and recent lessons learned illustrate the critical nature the commander plays throughout the planning continuum. As such, the role of the commander in doctrine must reflect a more direct and specified manner than the current implied language. The key ingredient enabling the joint force to achieve objectives in the complex operating environments of the 21 st century is the commanders' proactive involvement throughout the planning process. The underlining purpose of this paper is to incite an effort by the Joint Planning and Execution Committee (JPEC) to reassess JOPP and the foundational publications (JP 3-0 and JP 5-0) to more effectively meet the challenges of future contingencies across the spectrum of conflict.					
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Where and how must JOPP change to meet the challenges of the 21st Century Operating Environment?

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

As a foundational methodology, the Joint Operations Planning Process (JOPP) remains relevant but is in great need of refinements for US military efforts to be more effective in complex operating environments. One of the most critical aspects missing in the JOPP is the element of problem framing. This effort not only supports initial planning, but also critical in the follow-on assessment role. Additionally, the dynamics of irregular warfare through historical and recent lessons learned illustrate the critical nature the commander plays throughout the planning continuum. As such, the role of the commander in doctrine must reflect a more direct and specified manner than the current implied language. The key ingredient enabling the joint force to achieve objectives in the complex operating environment of the 21st century is the commanders' proactive involvement throughout the planning process. The underlining purpose of this paper is to incite an effort by the Joint Planning and Execution Committee (JPEC) to reassess JOPP and the foundational publications (JP 3-0 and JP 5-0) to more effectively meet the challenges of future contingencies across the spectrum of conflict.

Introduction

The advent of the 21st Century has presented some unique challenges to the United States (US) Military that in some respects are more daunting than we have faced throughout our history. The impact of globalization related to the economy, to information, and to the changing nature of the modern battlefield forms the foundation of contemporary challenges to the US military. As the sole super power, the enemies of the US are more diverse and in some respects, more creative than those previously faced. It is safe to say, that these same adversaries have also studied Sun Tzu and understand the core strengths and weakness of the U.S. Government. Operation Desert Storm demonstrated to the entire world, both state and non-state actors, that standing toe-to-toe with the US in a conventional conflict was not, is not, and will not be an option for years to come. As such, our adversaries have adopted irregular warfare in an effort to complicate and magnify the complexity associated with achieving objectives on the contemporary battlefield.

From a military perspective, we develop plans to integrate and synchronize our efforts in the pursuit of achieving objectives in support of a desired endstate. By doctrine, at the operational level, we use a methodology known as the Joint Operations Planning Process (JOPP) to enable the joint force commander to structure and communicate his vision in pursuit of the stated objectives. As we continually reflect and assess the military's abilities as an element of national power, we must ask ourselves; is the JOPP, in its current form, the most efficient and effective construct to enable the joint force to meet the complex and ever-changing operating environment of the 21st century? The short answer is yes, as a foundational construct the JOPP remains a relevant planning construct. The longer answer on the other hand, is that the JOPP is in need of several refinements to enable the military to

maximize and leverage the full degree of capabilities available in support of political aims.

The question then becomes, where and how do we refine the JOPP?

All military operations span the continuum of planning, execution, and transition. Using the factor of time as a metric, direction and planning initiate the start point of the continuum while transition (effort responsibility) shifts to another element or agency signifying an end. I address this point only to highlight that the JOPP plays a very distinct and critical role in the entire mission accomplishment continuum. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus my efforts on the planning aspect of this continuum. Specifically, the emphasis will be on crisis action planning rather than contingency planning. Again, I pose the question; where and how do we refine the JOPP to enable the joint force to meet the complex and ever changing operating environments of the 21st century?

JOPP

What is the JOPP? Joint doctrine defines the JOPP as “an orderly, analytical planning process, which consists of a set of logical steps to analyze a mission, develop, analyze, and compare alternative COAs, select the best COA, and produce a plan or order.”¹ The key being that this is a logical process for a military staff to utilize in communicating the commanders vision in the form of a plan or order for subordinate efforts to implement in pursuit of accomplishing objectives. The military planning process has stood the test of time and proven its worth from the turn of the 20th century (Estimate of the Situation), to the turn of the 21st century (JOPP) and utilized by all the military services with only slight deviations in the manner and steps employed.²

¹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02 (Washington, DC: April 2001), 295.

² U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Planning and Orders Production*. FM 5-0 (Fort Monroe, VA: January 2005), vii.

The process is straightforward, flexible, and generates the products necessary to enable planning at subordinate levels. Commonality, familiarity, and effectiveness are the three most critical aspects of the JOPP, enabling it to become the preferred process to facilitate solutions in pursuit of military problems. As with any coordinating process, if not continuously assessed and adjusted, there is a strong likelihood that the process will not be as effective for the purpose for which it was designed. The irregular warfare campaign we have waged for the past seven years has highlighted several shortcomings in the JOPP that need attention. I believe that these shortcomings can easily be addressed preserving the relevance and utility of the JOPP.

As a foundational methodology, the JOPP is the right process in support of contingency and crisis action planning to enable joint forces success on future battlefields. However, to maximize efficiencies across the range of military operations, several critical elements must be incorporated; problem framing, continuous assessment and adaption, and lastly, renewed emphasis stressing the importance of proactive senior leader involvement throughout the process.

Problem Framing

According to joint doctrine, the JOPP supports planning for missions across the range of military operations applying to both contingency and crisis action planning.³ It is during the second step of the methodology (mission analysis) that the JOPP claim of supporting the entire operational spectrum comes into question. By its nature, the military planning process is designed to analyze an assigned task, assess the factors of time, space, and force, and derive a solution intended to achieve a stated objective. Essentially, the JOPP is a problem solving methodology. Continuing on that line of thought, problems fall into two broad

³ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, DC: December 2006), III-19.

categories. Well-structured problems are those where most information is available and possess a clearly defined start point and achievable goal.⁴ In an effort to simplify the matter, conflicts in which state actors engage other states actors conventionally, may well fall into the well-structured problem category. Force organization, employment, and objectives to a greater degree are more refined and involve less complex second and third order effects that the Joint Force Commander (JFC) and his staff must mitigate. Conversely, ill-structured problems are those where information is incomplete and where the factors and root causes are intertwined and complex due to social networks: operationally, these problems take form in the communal domain often taking the shape of counter-insurgencies and humanitarian assistance efforts.⁵

The purpose of the mission analysis, according to joint doctrine, is to “understand the problem and purpose of the operation and issue appropriate guidance to drive the rest of the planning process.”⁶ The purpose is clearly stated but the steps used to conduct the mission analysis fail to sufficiently identify and frame the nature of the problem. Knowing how and why an insurgent movement gained support is critical in the prosecution of a counter-insurgency campaign.⁷ In addressing a well-structured problem, the current mission analysis step of the JOPP would allow the staff and commander to understand the problem at hand. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the JOPP and ill-structured problems.

This dilemma is clearly visible in our recent experiences during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) where the JOPP worked relatively well through Phase III (the attack and seizure of Baghdad) but not for the stabilization and enabling civil authorities’ phases of the

⁴ William J. Hartig, *Problem Solving and the Military Professional*, (Newport, RI: 2007), 4.

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, DC: December 2006), III-21.

⁷ William J. Hartig, *Problem Solving Lecture*, (NWC, Newport, RI: 20 August 2009).

operation. Why? I would offer two reasons, first that at the strategic level; we failed to adhere to the Clausewitzian adage of understanding the nature of the conflict.⁸ Secondly, at the operational level, we failed to understand the scope of the problem and associated second and third order effects related to the rise of other problems in pursuit of the operational objectives.

What the JOPP lacks is a rudimentary consideration of operational design that FM 3-24 (Counter-Insurgency Manual) describes as the ability “to achieve a greater understanding, a proposed solution based on that understanding, and a means to adapt and learn.”⁹ Planning and design are complementary and linked processes enabling commanders and staffs to assess the size, scope, and magnitude of a given situation. The COIN Manual refers to “planning as problem solving” but design “as problem setting.”¹⁰ In order to maximize planning efforts, JOPP must incorporate an element of problem framing throughout or the process will continue to fall short.

Commanders Role

When all is said and done, it really is the commander's coup d'oeil, his ability to see things simply, to identify the whole business of war completely with himself that is the essence of good generalship. Only if the mind works in this comprehensive fashion can it achieve the freedom it needs to dominate the events and not be dominated by them.

Clausewitz, On War

In any military planning process, the hub from which all actions resonate is the commander and the critical role-played in shaping and guiding the planning effort. It is the commanders' unique understanding of the situation coupled with his experience and intuition

⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans, Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88-89.

⁹ Department of the Army, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Counterinsurgency*. FM 3-24 / MCWP 3-33.5 (Washington, DC: 15 December 2006), 4-1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-2.

that form the manner in which the organization moves planning forward to capture that vision. Clausewitz commonly referred to this vision or innate ability to instantly size, scope, and grasp solution sets when confronted with complex problems as *coup d'oeil*.¹¹ This unique skill also known as intuition is defined as the “quick perception of truth or knowledge without conscious attention or reasoning.”¹² Throughout history, few commanders have demonstrated the innate ability to utilize such talents to achieve decisive results on the battlefield. Those that come to mind would read like names in the hall of fame for generalship; Napoleon, Rommel, Patton, and MacArthur. The point is that it generally takes the collective brainpower of the organization (commander and staff) to see the full magnitude of the problem and develop solutions to achieve the stated objective.

The JOPP, like all military planning processes, clearly addresses the role of the commander throughout the mission continuum but falls well short of emphasizing this critical requirement as problems increase in complexity. The issue with the JOPP falls into two distinct areas: emphasis and language. An example of this shortfall is clear in JP 5-0 during the Initiating Directive step in support of Crisis Action Planning (CAP). “The JFC typically will provide initial guidance (not to be confused with the JFC’s planning guidance that is a product of mission analysis), which could specify time constraints, outline initial coordination requirements, authorize movement of key capabilities within the JFC’s authority, and direct other actions as necessary.”¹³ Reading this, one may be led to believe that the commander is in the receive mode through mission analysis as the staff attempts to

¹¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 102.

¹² J.G. Ferguson, *Webster Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Ferguson Publishing Company, 1987), 378.

¹³ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, DC: December 2006), III-20.

identify, define, and scope the problem. Steven Hardesty, in his assessment of the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP), asserts that commanders and staffs conduct “cursory mission analysis” – move rapidly to Course of Action (COA) Development, wargaming, and issuance of orders, “all without giving the conflict they face the in-depth study needed to promote mission success.”¹⁴

The JOPP appears to fall into this trap as the first time the commander truly engages his planners in a constructive manner is that point when specific direction and guidance is delivered following the mission analysis brief. According to the JOPP, the outputs of the mission analysis are the re-stated mission, commanders’ initial intent, planning guidance, and Commanders Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs).¹⁵ The process described in joint doctrine fails to stress the importance of the commander to shape the planning effort from the very beginning of the process. The commanders’ knowledge, experience, and intuition feed and support the problem solution rather than the precursor – the problem set. The critical requirement of the problem set defers to the knowledge and experience of the staff and most commonly, those with the loudest voices in the room.

Missing in the JOPP is one of the key tenets of the Marine Corps process; *top down planning* as specifically outlined in the Commanders Battlespace Area Evaluation (CBAE). CBAE is the commanders’ “personal vision based on his understanding of the mission, the battlespace, and the enemy which may be as simple as the commander’s initial thoughts or it may be as complex as the product of his detailed analysis.”¹⁶ Unlike the JOPP, CBAE is an

¹⁴ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Thoughts on the Operational Art* (Quantico, VA: 11 October 2006), 58-59.

¹⁵ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, DC: December 2006), III-23.

¹⁶ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Marine Corps Planning Process*, MCWP 5-1 (Quantico, VA: 24 September 2001), 2-2.

input to the mission analysis step whereby the commander draws from his knowledge, experience, and intuition to frame the problem and shape the subsequent planning efforts. Of note, this particular tool is utilized at the outset of planning to ensure the greatest impact.

The key aspect is not the steps of the CBAE as addressed in MCPP, but formalizing the requirement in the overarching construct. The recent effort by TRADOC entitled *Commanders Appreciation and Campaign Design* reinforces the essence of this concept.

Appreciation is the act of estimating the qualities of things and giving them their proper value. It is essentially an understanding of the nature or meaning or quality or magnitude of the situation before you. For the purposes of military operations, an “appreciation” allows the commander to design, plan, execute, and—most importantly—adapt his actions within the operational environment, through learning about the nature and context of the problem as the campaign unfolds. Achieving understanding requires two activities: framing the problem and mission analysis.¹⁷

The JOPP, as all military planning methodologies, recognizes the central nature of the commander’s role throughout the military planning continuum but in its current form, falls well short of leveraging all that commanders bring to the planning dynamic. Specifically, this is a timing issue related to where, when, and how commanders play the most significant role in shaping the planning efforts.

Adaption and Assessment

Critical analysis being the application of theoretical truths to actual events, it not only reduces the gap between the two but also accustoms the mind to these truths through their repeated application. We have established a criterion for theory, and must now establish one for critical analysis as well.

Carl von Clausewitz, On War

Clausewitz adopted a *critical approach* establishing linkages between three intellectual activities (facts, causes, and means employed) to manage battlefield events as they

¹⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *Commanders Appreciation and Campaign Design*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 (Fort Monroe, VA, 28 January 2008), 20.

progressed rather than adopting the logic of the period that digested information sound bites one after another without considering the aspects of connectivity.¹⁸ This linkage reinforces that the great theorist not only realized the importance of understanding the problem but also the central role that assessment and adaption play in achieving a desired endstate. Joint doctrine generally defines assessment as a process to measure effectiveness in pursuit of a designated effect or in the accomplishment of a desired objective.¹⁹ Virtually all military professionals fully understand and embrace the critical nature that assessment and adaption play in both the planning and execution functions associated with a military operation. Without some metric or methodology to measure progress in pursuit of a goal, the complexity of the tasks and time to achieve the desired endstate could significantly increase.

In pursuit of supporting plans aimed at national strategic and theater strategic objectives, the Joint Force Commander (JFC) develops “operational-level effects and assessment indicators.”²⁰ The primary tools of the JOPP utilized to support this assessment, are Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) and Measures of Performance (MOPs). Joint doctrine defines MOP as “criterion used to assess friendly actions that is tied to measuring task accomplishment” and MOE as “criterion used to assess changes in system behavior, capability, or operational environment that is tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect.”²¹

Specifically, MOEs and MOPs are outputs of mission analysis introduced during the JFCs Planning Guidance in support of mission success criteria and refined as the remainder

¹⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 156.

¹⁹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02 (Washington, DC: April 2001), 48.

²⁰ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, DC: December 2006), xv.

²¹ *Ibid.*, GL-17.

of the planning process unfolds.²² Analyzing the JOPP, the issue that rises to the forefront is not the type of tools utilized but rather the timing and prerequisites for using such methods. As noted earlier, a key question remains; has the planning organization properly framed the problem? If the depth and scope of the problem is not clear and understood in detail, then there is little value in developing arbitrary MOEs and MOPs. Recent US Army doctrinal efforts clearly reinforce this point when stated:

*The initial framing of the problem establishes only a starting hypothesis and a baseline for learning about the problem as the force operates. It sets the parameters for reframing—readjusting the commander’s appreciation of the problem—as the commander’s understanding expands and the situation changes over time. The requirement for campaigning commanders to act in order to learn and the expectation that the situation will change in response to human activity makes continuous assessment and rapid recognition of the changing conditions essential.*²³

The challenge to planners in the contemporary environment is not strictly related to the factors of problem framing and assessment but the ability to know when, where, and how to adapt the effort. Too often organizations will continue to execute a plan when the situation on the ground has changed from the point at which planning originated. This reluctance to re-group, re-think, and move off in a different direction is a pitfall in virtually all military planning processes, to include the JOPP. From a planners perspective, most would refute the comment above citing the purpose behind branch and sequel planning.

More important than the philosophical debate of change and timings related to follow-on adjustments, is the factor of appreciation. In the U.S. Army’s *Commanders Appreciation and Campaign Design*, the ability to appreciate and embrace the operating environment far greater than any other characteristic allowing “the commander to design,

²² Ibid., III 27.

²³ U.S. Department of the Army, *Commanders Appreciation and Campaign Design*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 (Fort Monroe, VA: 28 January 2008), 18.

plan, execute, and most importantly adapt his actions within the operational environment through learning about the nature of the problem as the campaign unfolds.”²⁴ At the end of the day, the Commander is ultimately responsible for recognizing operational environment changes and adjusting the planning efforts accordingly, even if it requires a total overhaul of the existing plan.

A Different Approach

One may argue that due to the evolving character of warfare, there is a great need to make drastic changes in the manner in which we approach and resolve challenges on the contemporary battlefield. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) wrestled with this very issue and adopted new methodologies just prior to their 2006 conflict with Hezbollah essentially, combining the concepts of Systemic Operational Design (SDO) with Effects Based Operations (EBO).²⁵ The results and lessons learned were not as positive as proponents had hoped for, but the effort deserves further analysis.

An assessment of the problems encountered by the IDF during the conflict with Hezbollah in 2006 suggests that the combination of adopting the poorly understood warfighting theories of EBO and SOD coupled with an overreliance on air power were the root causes of their significant difficulties.²⁶ Assuming the former (poorly understood warfighting theories) to be correct, then the combined concepts of EBO and SOD applied in concert have not been afforded the opportunity to prove their worth in an irregular warfare operating environment. Why is this important and what is the relevance to the JOPP one

²⁴ Ibid., 20.

²⁵ Matt M. Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*, The long War Series Occasional Paper 26 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 23-26.

²⁶ Ibid., iii.

might ask? Adopting the warfighting theories of EBO and SOD will fundamentally change the manner in which we utilize the JOPP.

The effects based approach gives a commander more options by focusing and improving the joint forces ability “to affect an adversary’s behavior and or capabilities” at “the strategic and operational levels.”²⁷ Compatible with the JOPP, the effects based approach uses “desired and undesired effects to steer both mission analysis and course of action (COA) determination processes.”²⁸ Essentially, EBO was designed to improve the joint process in four areas by; 1) unifying action between the military, interagency, multi-national, and non-governmental agencies, 2) expanding understanding of the operating environment, 3) using effects to clarify the desired endstate conditions and, 4) enhancing the assessment process using effects rather than task accomplishment.²⁹

Complementing the effects based approach is the methodology of Systemic Operational Design (SOD) developed by Israeli BGen (Retired) Shimon Naveh. Essentially, SOD is “an application of systems theory to operational art” focusing on “the relationships between entities within a system to develop rationale for systemic behaviors that accounts for the logic of the system.”³⁰ SOD is a tool designed to define a problem and further explore the nature, scope, and associated factors in an attempt to support efforts resulting in resolution of the given issue.

The two methodologies naturally complement one another enabling the joint force commander to gain a better understanding related to the nature of the problem, and

²⁷ Joint Warfighting Center. *Commander’s Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations*. Joint Concept Development and Experimentation Directorate (Washington, DC: 24 February, 2006), I-1.

²⁸ Ibid., viii.

²⁹ Joint Warfighting Center. “An Effects-Based Approach: Refining How We Think about Joint Operations”. *Joint Force Quarterly* (Washington, D.C: Issue 44, 1st Quarter 2007), 2.

³⁰ Sorrels, William T. *Systemic Operational Design: An Introduction*. *School of Advanced Military Studies* (USA Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Academic Year 2004-2005), 15.

subsequently to develop plans that exploit seams in pursuit of desired effects. Incorporating these methodologies into the JOPP would require substantial refinements not necessarily in the flow but most definitely in the framework of the process. The combination of the two warfighting theories would move the JOPP from an objective oriented to an effects oriented structure and incorporate a formalized process of problem assessment throughout.³¹

Adopting this option would require a concerted effort to re-train joint planners not related to the process but more oriented on the unique aspects of integrating and synchronizing the two methodologies within the existing planning construct.

In an era of global economic difficulties, decreasing defense budgets and complex military challenges, it appears many European nations have embraced these philosophies not only because they focus on the critical nature of the problem, but also because they are the most cost effective in achieving the desired endstate. Several NATO nations (Denmark, Finland, and United Kingdom) see Effects Based Approaches to Operations (EBAO) as a comprehensive approach in an effort to use all elements of national power – the “whole of government.”³²

Tim Bird, a lecturer in the Defense Studies Department supporting the British Joint Services Command and Staff College states, “EBAO is here to stay, for the foreseeable future, as the main conceptual framework within which the operational level military planning will be conducted in the UK.”³³ Mr. Bird makes this claim not for military, but primarily for political reasons. From the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the British

³¹ Milan N. Vego, “Effects Based Operations: A Critique”, *Joint Force Quarterly* (Washington, DC: 1st Quarter 2009, Issue 41), 52.

³² Frederic Labarre, Editor, *Selected Contributions from the Proceedings of the Effects-Based Approach to Operations Seminar 13-14 March 2008* (Baltic Defense College, Estonia: September 2008), 5, 41, 47.

³³ Tim Bird, “UK Effects-Based Planning and Center of Gravity Analysis: An Increasingly Dysfunctional Relationship?” *RUSI Journal* (London: April 2008, Volume 153, Issue 2), 46.

Government committed to strategic and operational objectives that were beyond the ability of their military to achieve alone as demonstrated by the planning and execution failures of Phase IV Stability Operations.³⁴ Based on recent lessons learned and declining defense budgets, many nations will continue to assess and search out the most effective and efficient options for employing military their forces. Both SOD and EBO not only offer opportunities to more effectively understand the nature of the problem but also to more efficiently leverage the total capacity of a nation's power to achieve stated objectives.

Conclusion

Is the manner in which we plan and execute operations across the spectrum of conflict in such need of repair that we must adopt emerging and complex methodologies to achieve our stated objectives? I believe the answer is no. We have used a regressive approach to planning for well over a century. We obtain political guidance (strategic objectives and desired endstate) and execute a simple straightforward planning approach to achieve the desired results. The only dynamic that has recently changed are the unique challenges associated with the complex operating environment of irregular warfare. Why take an easily understood and applied process like the JOPP, and infuse it with the complexities of EBO and SOD?

In a critique of EBO, Milan Vego points out several areas where compatibility with the evolving construct and current military planning are at odds. The area with the highest degree of consternation is that of *effects versus objectives*. The objective based approach “is the principle factor in determining combat force employment” and the “mutual relationships among, individual elements of operational warfare” which drive the manner in which we

³⁴ Ibid., 47.

integrate and synchronize efforts to achieve the stated objective.³⁵ Conversely, Vego sees effects as being “far less specific; thus like aims and goals they cannot serve as the basis for military planning and execution.”³⁶ The predictive nature associated with EBO would make it extremely difficult to incorporate this methodology into the JOPP without a massive overhaul of the existing process adding a level of complexity and friction that is unnecessary.

General James N. Mattis (US Joint Forces Command) was so taken with the complexity and flawed logic of EBO he articulated clear guidance and direction related to the concept to his staff. In an article published in *Joint Force Quarterly* in 2008, the General directed that the “underlying principles” be removed from lexicon, training and operations stating that taking a “systems approach to warfare where second and third order consequences of actions can be predicted, let alone managed” is thus an illusion.³⁷

Recommendations

Although a time-tested and proven planning process, the JOPP requires refinement in three key areas: 1) problem framing 2) commanders’ role, and, 3) assessment and adaption. Under the current construct, the JOPP claims to address problem solving during the mission analysis step. For well-structured problems, this may suffice, but for ill-structured problems, this is inadequate and requires attention. The intent would be to initially define and subsequently scope the breadth and depth of the problem continuously throughout the planning continuum.

“The art of framing the problem is the art of seeing the essential and relevant among the trivial and irrelevant; penetrating the logic of the broad received mission and its messy

³⁵ Milan N. Vego, “Effects Based Operations: A Critique”, *Joint Force Quarterly* (Washington, DC: 1st Quarter 2009, Issue 41), 52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁷ Justin Kelly and David Kilcullen, “Chaos Versus Predictability: A Critique of Effects Based Operation,” *Australian Army Journal* 2, (Winter 2004), 97.

contextual situation; and reshaping it into a well-enough structured hypothesis.”³⁸ This could take the form of a Commanders Battlespace Area Evaluation like effort by the commander or a dedicated design workgroup that begins analysis at the first sign of a pending mission and carries the effort through the remainder of the planning continuum. The key to this effort is two-fold: first, it must occur from the outset planning (JOPP Initiation Phase) and secondly must continue throughout the remainder of planning and the subsequent execution and mission transition.

Due to the complexity and evolving nature of contemporary and future operating environments, this analysis would lead to timely initiation of branch plans, sequels, and or the re-generation of planning efforts due to unforeseen events, circumstances, or conditions. Specifically, every step of the JOPP must incorporate a problem-framing element to ensure the subsequent planning efforts are focused and relevant to the current operating environment. Incorporating problem framing can be as unique as SOD or as simple as a straightforward re-assessment after each step of the planning process. What cannot remain is a singular attempt to understand the problem during mission analysis.

The JOPP addresses the role of the commander, but the nature of the language reflects more of a matter-of-fact approach rather than stressing the absolute criticality of direct and proactive involvement. As problems slide along the graduated scale of complexity into the ill-structured realm, this requirement takes on greater importance. I recommend that the JOPP expand the first step of the process to include an element of problem framing stressing the ever-increasing role of the commander as problems become more complex. Specifically, the commanders planning guidance currently reflected as an “output” of mission

³⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Commanders Appreciation and Campaign Design*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 (Fort Monroe, VA: 28 January 2008), 21.

analysis should be an “input.” Issuing specific guidance to the staff on the front end of the process enables the commander to shape the effort from the outset giving specificity to the less experienced and educated staff.

Per the previous recommendation related to adding an element of problem framing or design to the JOPP, the commander would have a foot in both camps (problem setting and problem solving) enabling much clearer insight and the ability to give meaningful and well thought out direction. An additional benefit of this approach would likely affect the Commanders Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs). CCIRs being that critical information that a commander requires about the enemy, operating environment or friendly forces that may require a decision.³⁹ All too often, CCIRs are all over the map and read more like information requirements than decision enablers. Why is that? I would venture to say that it is a symptom of the disassociation of the commander in the planning process. Additional emphasis related to the focus, brevity, and linkage (information to decision) of CCIRs is in need of review and incorporation in the military planning and execution process.

I have focused my efforts on the front end of the JOPP because this is where I see the greatest gains in efficiency. Due to the “fog, friction, and chaos” of warfare magnified by current and future complex operating environments, it is critical to reflect proactive commanders involvement throughout the entire military planning continuum.⁴⁰ Additional assessment is required to determine just where and how the commander would best support the subsequent planning efforts (inputs or outputs). Most importantly, this recommendation would formalize the construct and feed expectation management for all involved. The result

³⁹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, DC: December 2006), III-27.

⁴⁰ James N. Mattis, “USJFCOM Commanders Guidance for Effects Based Operations”, *Joint Force Quarterly* (Washington, DC: 4th Quarter 2008, Issue 51), 108.

would be a better-integrated and synchronized product leveraging the critical aspect of time, not only in support of subordinate efforts, but also related to exploiting time-sensitive opportunities in the operating environment. Making changes of this nature enables the joint force to gain and maintain the initiative allowing the commander to keep one-step ahead of his adversary's decision-making cycle that Col (Ret) John Boyd referred to as OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide and Act) loop.⁴¹

Lastly, assessment and adaption must be formalized and structurally implemented into the planning process. The JOPP refers to the importance of assessment and adaption but the language is written very similar to that of commanders involvement; loosely, sporadic and as required. By infusing problem framing and formalizing the role of the commander in the planning process, incorporating a more structured assessment and adaption approach is a logical step. Although assessment and adaption are implied tasks of problem framing and commanders involvement, there is risk of falling short if not specifically outlined. The fix here is simple and straightforward; assessment should be included as an *input* deliverable and adaption should be included as an *output* for each step in the planning process. This level of specificity is required to ensure the planning effort addresses the entirety of the situation and the flexible capacity to adjust to the evolving dynamics of the operating environment.

Designed to be non-descriptive, doctrine serves as a foundation, a common perspective, and a point of departure in pursuit of further advancement of a goal or aim. Adopting a new process and or complicated methodology via emerging and largely unproven warfighting theories, is unnecessary and extremely risky at this point in our history. Simplicity and flexibility have been, and will continue to be the staple of US military employment, and it all starts with the element of planning.

⁴¹ Headquarters Marine Corps, *Command and Control*, MCDP 6 (Quantico, VA: 4 October 1996), 65.

In closing, General Mattis captures the essence of this clearly; “we must return clarity to our planning processes and operational concepts, especially if we want to break down cross governmental barriers. This clarity will better enable us to link ends to policy, strategy, campaigns, and operations through clear ways and means.”⁴² Addressing these areas not only reinforces the relevance of the JOPP but also ensures joint force planning can meet, leverage, and overcome the most diverse challenges associated with the nature of war regardless of composition of the Clausewitzian Triangle - *the government, the army, or the people*.⁴³

⁴² James N. Mattis, “USJFCOM Commanders Guidance for Effects Based Operations”, *Joint Force Quarterly* (Washington, DC: 4th Quarter 2008, Issue 51), 107.

⁴³ Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War – Classic Strategic Thought*, Third Revised and Expanded Version, (New York and London: Routledge,, 2001), 102-104

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