Manufacturing the Horns of Dilemma: A Theory of Operational Initiative

A Monograph

by

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Initiative is a long debated aspect of warfare and most practitioners of warfare agree that it is better to have the initiative than not. How then does an army get the initiative during a campaign? Theory and doctrine do not offer holistic theories about initiative. This monograph proposes a theory of initiative that states that an army can seize, retain, and exploit the operational initiative by constant reorientation that fosters aligning its operational concept against its opponent's limitations and weaknesses, and limits an opponent's freedom of action through the arrangement of tactical actions to reduce key opponent capabilities. Three case studies will be utilized to support this theory. The first, Grant's 18-64 Overland Campaign will demonstrate how an army seized and retained the initiative throughout the duration of the campaign. The second case study will detail Eighth Army in Korea, and highlight an army that re-seized the operational initiative in the midst of a campaign. The final case study, the Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006, will show a technologically superior army failing to seize the operational initiative throughout the course of a campaign. The conclusion of this monograph argues that the two most significant implications of this theory are that an army's ability to reorient during combat operations is just as critical, if not more so than its operating concept. Secondly, political considerations can be just as detrimental to an army's freedom of action as the loss of tactical capabilities through engagements.

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Abstract

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Initiative is a long debated aspect of warfare and most practitioners of warfare agree that it is better to have the initiative than not. How then does an army get the initiative during a campaign? Theory and doctrine do not offer holistic theories about initiative but rather varying definitions of what it is and why it is important to have it.

This monograph proposes a theory of initiative that states that an army can seize, retain, and exploit the operational initiative by constant reorientation that fosters aligning its operational concept against its opponent's limitations and weaknesses, and limits an opponent's freedom of action through the arrangement of tactical actions to reduce key opponent capabilities.

Three case studies will be utilized to support this theory. The first, Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign will demonstrate how an army seized and retained the initiative throughout the duration of the campaign. The second case study will detail Eighth Army in Korea, and highlight an army that re-seized the operational initiative in the midst of a campaign. The final case study, the Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006, will show a technologically superior army failing to seize the operational initiative throughout the course of a campaign.

The conclusion of this monograph argues that the two most significant implications of this theory are that an army's ability to reorient during combat operations is just as critical, if not more so than its operating concept. Secondly, political considerations can be just as detrimental to an army's freedom of action as the loss of tactical capabilities through engagements.

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Introduction

I want to put my opponent to a decision *for all his chips*.

- Poker legend Doyle Brunson

Of the many analogies Carl Von Clausewitz used to describe the nature of war, it is fascinating that he chose a game of cards as the most similar to warfare in human nature.[1] The game of poker embodies many elements of war Clausewitz described in *On War* such as probability, chance, courage, and luck. As such, armies that can best adjust to this constantly shifting combination have the best chance of success on the battlefield. World Series of Poker Champion Dan Harrington explains a similar phenomenon in tournament poker. As the blinds and antes of the tournament continue to rise in relation to the amount of chips a player has accumulated, the types of cards and style of play must constantly be evaluated and change. Harrington termed these critical moments "inflection points." Harrington further argues "that playing correctly around inflection points is the most important single skill of no-limit hold'em tournaments."[2]

A skilled player recognizes changes in the dynamics of the tournament structure to best develop the correct style of play for future hands. Furthermore, the size of a player's chip stack determines the playing style options for future hands. A player with more chips has more options available, and a greater ability to influence the play of opponents. The player with a small amount of chips has very few options remaining, and their ability to influence the play and decisions of larger stacked opponents is limited.[3] Perhaps Clausewitz was on to something when describing

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[1] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 86.

[2] Dan Harrington and Bill Robertie, *Harrington on Hold'em: Expert Strategy for No-Limit Tournaments,* vol. 2, *The Endgame* (Las Vegas, NV: Two Plus Two Publishing, 2005), 123.

[3] Harrington, *Harrington on Hold'em,* 129-131. Harrington describes a zone system of green, yellow, orange, red, and dead zones where each zone corresponds to the number of options

poker as an analogy for war as these skill sets Harrington describes are similar to skill required in war. The ability of a commander to realize the subtle changes in the nature of a campaign presents a tremendous advantage, one that would allow an army to continually pressure and force its opponent to react and thereby dominate the execution of a campaign. This idea of controlling the engagement seems to parallel the ability of a combatant to effectively seize, exploit, and retain the initiative throughout a tactical engagement, and during a campaign. The theory of initiative and how an army seizes, retains, and exploits it will be the subject of this monograph.

There have been various authors and sources that have attempted to describe the role of initiative in combat operations. The first category is military doctrine. The 1982 publication of Field Manual (FM) 100-5 *Operations* included initiative as an operational concept of the Army's AirLand Battle doctrine, and states that, "Initiative implies an offensive spirit in the conduct of all operations."[4] One of the principle authors of FM 100-5, Colonel Huba Wass de Czega further reinforced the importance of initiative, "AirLand Battle doctrine identifies initiative, the ability to set the terms of battle by action, as the greatest advantage in war."[5] The 1986 update to FM 100-5 expanded the definition of initiative to include discussion of the role of initiative in the offense, defense, and the importance of individual initiative to retaining the operational initiative over time.[6] This update introduced a much more developed concept of how initiative contributes to combat success in its the specification of operational initiative, and individual initiative. This

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and style of play open to a player. The green zone is where a player has a large amount of chips, offering the player maximum flexibility and options for play. Conversely, in the dead zone, a player is reduced to one all-in move, as they do not posses sufficient chips to continue play beyond the next hand. Harrington argues that a skilled player in the green zone is "a fully functional poker player, and it's worth taking some risks to stay here."

[4] Field Manual, (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 2-2.

[5] Huba Wass de Czega, "Towards a New American Approach to Warfare," *The Art of War Quarterly, Volume II* (September 1983): 53.

[6] Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), 15.

definition of initiative has remained relatively unchanged in the Army's *Operations* manual,

including the recent publication of Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land*

Operations in 2011. ADP 3-0, maintains the distinction between operational and individual

initiative, incorporates initiative into the definition of the Army's core competencies of combined

arms maneuver and wide area security, and categorizes initiative as one of the two foundations of

unified land operations. It states, "unified land operations is the Army's war fighting doctrine. It

is based on the central idea that Army units seize, retain, and exploit the initiative to gain a

position of relative advantage over the enemy."[7] Through the recent evolution of Army operating

doctrine, the role of initiative has remains relatively unchanged and does not address what is

required to successfully seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.

The second category that attempts to distill initiative definitions into warfare is military

theorists. The classic theorists do not offer much on the concept of initiative. Baron Henri de

Jomini argued, "If the offensive is but an attack upon the enemy's position, and is confined to a

single operation, it is called taking the *initiative*."[8] Jomini's description while familiar, is

narrowly defined to single offensive operations, and fails to give a broader understanding of

initiative's role in operations. Clausewitz expands slightly on the idea of initiative by discussing it

within the context of a larger conversation of the utility of defensive operations over offensive

operations, but does not offer much insight to initiative's application to operations.[9]

As the nature of warfare changed through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,

and the operational level of war became more accepted, theorists began to develop and integrate

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[7] Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2011), 5.

[8] Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War,* trans. G.H. Medell and W.P. Craighill (West Point, NY: 1862), 72, accessed September 3, 2014, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13549/13549-h/13549-h.htm.

[9] Clausewitz, *On War*, 84.

the application of initiative into their concepts of warfare. Shimon Naveh references the Soviet Deep Battle concept of *initsiativa* in his work *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* as a fundamental requirement at the tactical level that enables success at the operational level of war.[10] Robert Leonhard argues in *The Principles of War for the Information Age* that the term initiative is incomplete, and that what initiative really drives towards is, "freedom to act, or, to put it another way – opportunity…. If future commanders instead shift their focus to the real issue – opportunity – they will be free to develop more varied approaches toward sustained freedom of action."[11] Naveh and Leonhard's modern theories shed substantially more light onto the role on initiative in the conduct of operations, but still fall short in describing what factors are required for the successful implementation of initiative.

While doctrine and theorists generally agree that the concept of initiative is crucial to success in war, there is little discussion within theory and doctrine as to what necessary conditions, factors, or components are required for armies or organizations to successfully utilize initiative. To put it simply there is not a theory of operational initiative. Are there specific factors that are present in armies that successfully seize and retain the initiative during operations? Are one or all of these factors absent in unsuccessful armies? If there are quantifiable factors, can we develop a theory of operational initiative that guides armies and commanders to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative during campaigns?

Two theorists do offer compelling components towards a theory of initiative. The first is Colonel John Boyd. Boyd theorized in *Patterns of Conflict* that "he who is willing and able to take the initiative to exploit variety, rapidity, and harmony – survives and dominates. He who is unwilling or unable to take the initiative to exploit variety, rapidity, and harmony… goes under or

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[10] Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Military Theory* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 232-233.

[11] Robert R. Leonhard, *The Principles of War for the Information Age* (Novato, CA: Presido Press, 2000), 91.

survives to be dominated."[12] Furthermore, in the development of his Observe, Orient, Decide, Act

(OODA) Loop, the orient step becomes the most critical for the prosecution of successful

operations: "orientation is the center of gravity for command and control, the key factor – and

variable – that enables or hinders generating harmony and initiative so that on can or cannot

exploit variety/rapidity."[13] When seen from the viewpoint of an army's operating concept, an

army that orients more effectively can develop actions that according to Boyd can "gain a

favorable mismatch in friction and time."[14] For ways to exploit this mismatch, Mao Tse-Tsung

offers insight, and offers the second compelling component to a theory of initiative.

According to Mao, "Freedom of action is the very life of an army and, once it is lost, the

army is close to defeat or destruction… Initiative is inseparable from superiority in capacity to

wage war, while passivity is inseparable from inferiority in capacity to wage war."[15] Mao further

offers a way: "the method is to create local superiority and initiative in many campaigns, so

depriving the enemy of local superiority in initiative and plunging him into inferiority and

passivity."[16] By the cumulative effects of tactical actions, campaigns can reduce an opponent's

freedom of action, and thereby their ability to seize or retain the operational initiative.

This monograph attempts to develop a theory of initiative through the use of historical

case studies to identify the elements of successful and unsuccessful campaigns. The first section

will investigate Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign as an example

of an operation where an army seized, exploited, and maintained the initiative throughout the

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[12] Frans P. B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 185.

[13] Osinga, *Science Strategy, and War*, 194.

[14] Osinga, *Science Strategy, and War*, 196.

[15] Mao Tse-Tung *Selected Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Combat Studies Institute), 235-236.

[16] Tse-Tung, *Selected Writings*, 237.

duration of the campaign. This section will focus on how Grant reoriented the Union army's operating concept to conduct distributed operations to isolate the Army of Northern Virginia and Grant's use of maneuver and constant engagement to limit General Robert E. Lee's freedom of action. The second section will explore the Eighth Army in Korea from Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgway's assumption of command in December 1950, through April 1951 as an example of an army that regained the initiative at the during a course of a campaign. The focus of this section will be on Ridgway's ability to quickly reorient Eighth Army toward an American way of warfare in the midst of a sustained Chinese offensive, which severely limited the Chinese freedom of action. The final section will study Israel's 2006 war against Hezbollah as a campaign that failed to seize and exploit the initiative during the extent of the campaign, and led to perceived defeat of the superior Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in Lebanon. The focus of this section will be on the failure of the IDF to align its operating concept against Hezbollah's capabilities, and the IDF's inability to limit Hezbollah's freedom of action.

These case studies will demonstrate the key components of a theory of initiative: an army can seize, retain, and exploit the operational initiative by constant reorientation that fosters aligning its operational concept against its opponent's limitations and weaknesses, and limits an opponent's freedom of action through the arrangement of tactical actions to reduce key opponent capabilities. The final section of this monograph will discuss implications of this proposed theory of initiative.

Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign

I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.

- Ulysses S. Grant, May 11, 1864

By 1864, the Civil War had reached a critical phase. The previous summer saw Union victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga, but the Confederates still maintained hope of winning a negotiated peace with their northern foe. The Confederates saw an opportunity by continuing the war through the November 1864 presidential elections, in the hope that a more sympathetic candidate to negotiated peace could defeat Abraham Lincoln. Lieutenant General James Longstreet echoed these sentiments in a letter to the Confederate Quartermaster General A. R. Lawton in March 1864, "If we can break up the enemy's arrangements early, and throw him back, he will not be able to recover his position nor his morale until the Presidential election is over, and we shall then have a new President to deal with."[17] Newly appointed Union general in chief, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's campaign plan was designed to end the war prior to the fall presidential elections, or produce significant Union success to ensure the reelection of Abraham Lincoln.[18] Grant's Overland Campaign seized and retained the operational initiative through a new operating concept that synchronized distributed operations to isolate the Army of Northern Virginia, and a campaign plan that limited General Robert E. Lee's freedom of action with constant maneuver and engagements.

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[17] Lieutenant General James Longstreet to General A.R. Lawton, March 5, 1864, in United States Government, *The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901) ser. 1, vol. 32, 588. Hereafter referred to *O.R.*

[18] James M. McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 721.

Campaign Synopsis

The Overland Campaign began on May 4, 1864 as the Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan River moving south in an attempt to bring the Army of Northern Virginia into open battle or turn the Confederate left flank and threaten Richmond. The ensuing battles of The Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864) and Spotsylvania (May 8-21, 1864) saw the two armies fight inconclusively while incurring significant casualties. In just over a week of fighting the Army of the Potomac had suffered 32,000 casualties, and the Army of Northern Virginia roughly 18,000. Unlike previous campaigns, this tremendous toll was only the beginning.[19]

Grant again tried to turn Lee's right flank by moving the Army of the Potomac towards the railroad junction near the North Anna River, where the skirmishes of North Anna (May 22-27, 1864) resulted in another indecisive outcome, and another march south for the Federals towards Cold Harbor.[20] At Cold Harbor (June 1-12, 1864) Grant attempted to break the Confederate line through frontal assaults, but the elaborate Confederate breastworks proved too much, as the attacking Federals suffered nearly 7,000 casualties to the Confederate's 1,500 in the failed assaults. Despite the setback, Grant immediately devised a plan to envelop the Confederates by moving across the James River towards Petersburg.[21]

The Confederates reinforced their lines despite the Union's tactical surprise, and the Army of the Potomac was forced to lay siege to Petersburg (June 15, 1864-March 25, 1865), effectively ended the maneuver portion of the Overland Campaign.[22] While the Overland

[19] McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 726-734.

[20] McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 733.

[21] U. S. Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters 1839-1865,* ed. by Mary Drake McFeely and William S. McFeely (New York: The Library of America, 1990), 588; McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 737.

[22]McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 740-741.

Campaign did not end the war, Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were isolated to Petersburg and Richmond and unable to have a significant impact on the remainder of the war.

Orientation: A Plan to Isolate the Army of Northern Virginia

As spring of 1864 approached, both Grant and Lee assessed their armies' respective strengths and weakness in developing their plans. For Grant, Vicksburg served as a blueprint for success against the Confederates that synchronized separate maneuver elements to isolate, fix, and force the capitulation of a defender. For Lee, his blueprint remained the same as utilized in 1862 and 1863: counterattack and attempt to defeat the Army of the Potomac when the opportunity arose to prolong the war and achieve a negotiated peace. Grant on the other hand, developed a concept that unified the separate Union armies in an attempt to isolate the Army of Northern Virginia to negate the defensive mindset of Lee and to seize the operational initiative. This concept exploited the two most pressing constraints facing the Confederacy: an increasingly dire supply situation and the need to defend Richmond from Union attack.

While preparing for the operations of 1864, Grant noted an overall lack of coordination of the separate Union armies during the previous campaigns in Virginia: "Before this time these various armies had acted separately and independently of each other, giving the enemy an opportunity often of depleting one command, not pressed, to reinforce another more actively engaged. I determined to stop this."[23] Grant elaborated on this intent in his 1865 campaign report to the Secretary of War:

> I therefore determined, first, to use the greatest number of troops practicable against the armed force of the enemy, preventing him from using the same force at different seasons against first one then another of our armies, and the possibility of repose for refitting and producing necessary supplies for carrying on resistance; second, to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources until, by mere attrition, if in no other way, there should be nothing left to him but an equal submission…[24]

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[23] Grant, *Memoirs,* 477.

[24] U. S. Grant, "Report to the Secretary of War on Operations, March 1864-May 1865,"

By uniting the armies under a common purpose, Grant could conduct a "distributed campaign" that would strain the limits of the Confederates ability to sustain operations in both "deep" and "close" theaters to achieve one overarching strategic goal.[25]

Grant envisioned that operations in the west and south of Richmond could isolate Lee's Army of Northern Virginia from key supply areas and prevent the repositioning of unengaged Confederate forces. Grant's detailed this "deep" theater plan to Major General William Tecumseh Sherman in an April 4, 1864 letter: "You I propose to move against [General Joseph] Johnston's army, to break it up and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources."[26] While fixing Johnston's army in Tennessee and Georgia would prevent reinforcements to Lee, Grant understood that the most significant impact from this deep operation would be against Lee's supply lines.

By the spring of 1864, the war's toll on the Confederacy was becoming increasingly devastating and Grant's victory at Vicksburg in July 1863 was a critical blow to the Confederate's ability to supply their war effort. Willey Howell emphasizes the significance of Vicksburg's loss to the Confederacy in his 1916 analysis of Grant's campaign, "But it is none too strong a statement that on the capture of Vicksburg the beginning of the end of the Southern Confederacy had arrived."[27] The loss of Vicksburg prevented the Confederacy from drawing on the substantial resources of the Trans-Mississippi Region for the remainder of the war. Grant

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July 22, 1865, *O. R.*, ser. 1, vol. 46, pt. 1, no. 1, 11.

[25] James J. Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundation of the Operational Art*, Theoretical Paper No. 4 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2004), 39-41. Schneider argues distributed operations are one of the fundamental components of operational art, and Grant's Overland Campaign was the birth of American operational art.

[26] Lieutenant General U.S. Grant to Major General W.T. Sherman, April 4, 1864, in Grant, *Memoirs*, 479.

[27] Willey Howell, "Lieutenant-General Grant's Campaign of 1864-1865," *The Military Historian and Economist* vol. I, no. 2 (April, 1916): 114.

sought to replicate these effects with Sherman's campaign orders in Tennessee and Georgia. Howell argues that this was Grant's aim: "that if a hostile state be deprived of its resources in men, material, and food, its ability to sustain a war disappears. This idea is a fundamental one in the plan of campaign of 1864."[28]

While the Confederate supply situation was important from a practical standpoint, Grant understood the larger implications of this constraint and its impact on the initiative during the campaign. Grant could force the Confederates to weaken their front lines and divert resources to protecting their already tenuous supply system. Grant highlighted this in his memoir, "Better indeed, for they forced the enemy to guard his own lines and resources at a greater distance from ours, and with a greater force…Either the enemy would have to keep a larger force to protect its communications, or see them destroyed and a large amount of forage and provision, which they desperately needed, fall into our hands.[29] Grant ensured that once the initiative was seized in the opening stages of the campaign, Lee would have to choose to divert forces from guarding his supplies to replace losses, or attempt to continue to fight with a reduced force that limited his available options.

Lee was well aware of the worsening supply situation and the impact it would have on his planning for the 1864 campaign. Through the winter of 1863 and early 1864, Lee began to realize the disastrous potential that a coordinated campaign against his army could accomplish, despite his astonishing record success against the Army of the Potomac. After assuming command of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee had frustrated and spoiled Union campaign after campaign, despite constant numerical inferiority. With the Confederate loss of Vicksburg however, Lee began to feel the resource constraints on his army, and feared that he would be unable to execute timely counterattacks against Union forces utilizing interior lines and multiple maneuver

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[28] Howell, "Lieutenant-General Grant's Campaign of 1864-1865," 115.

[29] Grant, *Memoirs*, 479.

elements and supported by adequate logistical support, a technique that brought his army such success in 1862-1863.

In February 1864, Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis about possible courses of action to spoil the upcoming Union campaign. In his February 3, 1864 letter to Davis, Lee wrote that, "If we could take the initiative and fall upon them unexpectedly we might derange their plans and embarrass them the whole summer."[30] Lee's first option was an attack by James Longstreet's army towards Kentucky to cut Grant's lines of communication and force the Union to reallocate forces away from Johnston's army. The other was a move against Meade and Washington, but this required additional troops from Longstreet's Corps in Tennessee, and most importantly additional supplies for the Army of Northern Virginia.[31] Without additional supplies, neither course of action could be realized. Most critically for Lee, the longer his army went without adequate supplies, the more likely it would be that he would have to cede the operational initiative to the Union Army in the coming campaign. Time was becoming a substantial constraint.

On February 18, 1864, Lee wrote to Davis of the importance "to take the initiative before our enemies are prepared to open the campaign. My information is restricted entirely to my own front, and I can do nothing for want of proper supplies."[32] Louis Manarin, in his dissertation "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies" succinctly captures Lee's problem: "As a commander, Lee was paralyzed for 'want of proper supplies.' Unable to assume the initiative, it would be lost by default should the enemy move first."[33] Despite this bleak outlook, Lee

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[30] General Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, February 3, 1864, in *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, eds. Clifford Gowdey and Louis Manarin (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Compan: 1961), 666-667.

[31] Louis H. Manarin, "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1965), 540.

[32] General Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, February 18, 1864, in *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, 675.

remained hopeful that the supplies could be found to allow him to operate under conditions of his choosing and to retain the initiative he had so long held.

Lee expressed this sentiment in his March 25, 1864 letter to Davis, "Energy and activity on our part, with a constant readiness to seize any opportunity to strike a blow, will embarrass, if not entirely thwart the enemy in concentrating his different armies, and compel him to conform his movements to our own."[34] Unfortunately for Lee, the critical supply shortages never materialized to the degree that he could take the offensive. Lee expressed his resignation at the inability to control the course of the coming campaign in his April 30, 1864 letter to his son G. W. C. Lee, "I am afraid it is too late now. I cannot yet get the troops together for want of forage, and am looking for grass."[35]

This lack of supplies was compounded by the constraint imposed upon Lee that the Army of Northern Virginia must defend Richmond from the Army of the Potomac. Nearly three years of war had taken its toll on the Army of Northern Virginia, and Lee simply did not have the amount of forces to execute the daring and brilliant maneuvers such as Chancellorsville, where he split his army twice in order to defeat the numerically superior Army of the Potomac.[36] By early April, Lee was convinced that Grant would move the Army of the Potomac toward Richmond, a move that would force Lee to concentrate his available forces in a defensive posture and negate any possibility of a Confederate offensive. If forced to operate in a purely defensive mode, Lee understood that his chances of success were bleak.[37] As the opening of the campaign neared, it

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[33] Manarin, "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies," 519.

[34] General Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, March 25, 1864, in *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, 684.

[35] General Robert E. Lee to G.W.C. Lee, April 30, 1864, in *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, 707.

[36] McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 638-646.

[37] This sentiment was made clear in Lee's April 15, 1864 letter to Davis: "If I am obliged to retire from this line, either by flank movement of the enemy or the want of supplies, great

was clear to Lee that he could not fight the Army of Northern Virginia in the offensive manner that made it successful. Grant on the other hand, developed a plan for the Union forces that exacerbated the limitations of the Confederacy and forced Lee to fight on Federal terms. This waiting for the Federal offensive, as historian Clifford Dowdey noted, was "galling to his [Lee's] nature as a man and antithetical to his principles of warfare."[38] With a "deep" plan of operations moving to isolate the Army of Northern Virginia, Grant turned his focus to the "close" campaign plan for the Army of the Potomac in Virginia.

Limiting Lee's Freedom of Action: Preventing the Counterattack

The previous campaigns of the Army of the Potomac were unable to overcome the tactical brilliance of Robert E. Lee and followed a consistent rhythm in their operations. The Union Army would begin its march in an attempt to attack Richmond, encounter Lee under the conditions of Lee's choosing, suffer defeat despite significant numerical and logistical advantages, and finally retreat back towards Washington DC to begin anew under a new commander. These disjointed Union campaigns allowed Lee to reconstitute and resupply his forces from other areas of the Confederacy. Grant however, understood that while Richmond was important, it was not the key to victory. In order to defeat the Confederacy, Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia must be the focus of the campaign. To accomplish this task, Grant developed a campaign plan that limited Lee's freedom of action through constant maneuver and engagements towards Richmond that kept Lee on the defensive, unable to reconstitute losses, and ultimately unable to counterattack.

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injury will befall us." General Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, April 15, 1864, in *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, 700.

[38] Clifford Dowdey, *Lee's Last Campaign: The Story of Lee and His Men Against Grant – 1864* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 4.

Grant summed up his intent in his 1865 report on the Richmond campaign: "it was my determination, by hard fighting, either to compel Lee to retreat or to so cripple him that he could not detach a large force to go north and still retain enough for the defense of Richmond."[39] In this statement one can see the fundamental aspect of Grant's campaign plan: by compelling Lee to retreat towards Richmond, the Union would by default retain the initiative. In the previous Virginia campaigns, it had been the Union Army that retreated after battles with the Army of Northern Virginia. Grant on the other hand, determined that the outcome of the battles was not as critical to the success of the campaign as continuing to pressure Lee towards Richmond. There would be no respite for Lee in this campaign.

Grant's April 9, 1864 letter to Major General George G. Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac articulated this change in emphasis and intent for the campaign, "Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also."[40] This guidance was followed early in the campaign as the Battle of the Wilderness drew to a close. As various skirmishes were occurring on Grant's right flank, Grant ordered the Army of the Potomac to prepare to march south towards Spotsylvania and continue to press Lee. Grant's reasons for this order made clear he would not cede the initiative to Lee:

> These movements of the enemy game me the idea that Lee was about to make the attempt to get to, or towards, Fredericksburg to cut off my supplies. I made arrangements to attack his right and get between him and Richmond if he should try to execute this design. If he had any such intention it was abandoned as soon as Burnside was established south of the Ny.[41]

By anticipating one of Lee's possible courses of action, Grant immediately set the Army of the Potomac moving south towards Richmond, a move that Lee would be forced to respond to in order to protect Richmond, all but eliminating Lee's ability to seize the initiative from Grant.

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[39] *O. R.*, ser. 1, vol. 46, pt. 1, no. 1, 16.

[40] Grant, *Memoirs*, 482.

[41] Grant, *Memoirs*, 544.

Grant's supposition was accurate as Lee was focused on the Federals from maneuvering

between the Army of Northern Virginia and Richmond. Lee's tactical brilliance was on display as

he divined Grant's intentions to move towards Spotsylvania and ordered Jubal Early's Corps to

move to Spotsylvania on May 7, seizing the crossroads ahead of the Federal advance.[42] Lee's

letters to Jefferson Davis and Secretary of War Seddon during Spotsylvania are indicative of

Grant's retaining of the initiative. Lee's thoughts were focused on where Grant may move next

and on obtaining more reinforcements from the Confederacy.[43] As the Army of the Potomac

moved south once again after Spotsylvania, Lee understood that the time to regain the initiative

would lessen the closer the armies moved to Richmond.

As the cat and mouse game between Grant and Lee moved south of Spotsylvania, Grant

developed a plan to entice Lee out from his entrenchments by exposing a corps on the march to

Richmond far enough from the rest of the Army of the Potomac.[44] This plan entailed risk as the

Anna River posed a significant obstacle for the advancing corps that could allow Lee to defeat the

separated forces in detail. Lee saw the opportunity that was being offered and moved his army to

south side of the Anna River in a position to strike: "Whatever route he pursues I am in a position

to move against him, and shall endeavor to engage him while in motion."[45] On May 24, the lead

corps of the Army of the Potomac crossed the Anna, and as Grant noted in *Memoirs*, "Lee had

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[42] Manarin, "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies," 529.

[43] Lee's May 9 letter to Davis showed his defensive mindset and lack of opportunity to take the offensive: "We have succeeded so far in keeping on the front flank of that army, and impeding its progress, without a general engagement, which I will not bring on unless a favorable opportunity offers, or as a last resort." General Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, May 9, 1864 in *Lee's Dispatches*, 176; See also *Lee's Dispatches*, ed. Douglas Southhall Freeman (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1957), 169-187; *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee*, 722-736.

[44] "I believed that, if one corps of the army was exposed on the road to Richmond, and at a distance from the main army, Lee would endeavor to attack the exposed corps before reinforcements could come up; in which case the main army could follow lee up and attack him before he had time to intrench." Grant, *Memoirs*, 560.

[45] General Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, May 23, 1864, in *Lee's Dispatches*, 195.

now a superb opportunity to take the initiative either by attacking Wright and Burnside alone, or by following by the Telegraph Road and striking Hancock's and Warren's corps, or even Hancock's alone, before reinforcements could come up. But he did not avail himself to either opportunity."[46] In this case, fortune shone on the Army of the Potomac, as Lee had been overcome by illness and was bedridden. Not only was Lee too ill to coordinate the attack, the reality of the situation for the Army of Northern Virginia was the reinforcements available to exploit any success that may have come from such an attack were insufficient, despite the arrival Pickett's division from Richmond.[47] By May 25, Grant realized the danger his divided Army faced, and since no attack from Lee seemed imminent, planned to move again by the left flank toward Cold Harbor in one final attempt to get between Lee and Richmond.[48] Thus the best opportunity for Lee to change the course of the campaign was lost.

Cold Harbor encapsulated Grant's brilliance and limitations in the Overland Campaign as an opportunity for operational breakthrough was hampered by the limited tactical ability of the Army of the Potomac. Seeing the opportunity provided by hastily entrenched Confederates on the evening of June 1, Grant ordered his remaining forces to Cold Harbor for an attack on the morning of June 2, but the attack could not take place until June 3 due to the slow movement of

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[46] Grant, *Memoirs*, 562.

[47] Manarin, "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies," 535; Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, Vol. 3: Gettysburg to Appomattox* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 496-497 and Lee, *R.E. Lee: A Biography*, *Volume III* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 355-359. Freeman argues that Lee was too sick to be effective and should have relinquished command to one of his Corps commanders who could oversee the attack against the divided Federals.

[48] Grant, *Memoirs*, 569.

the Army.[49] Lee did not waste any time using the extra day to entrench his forces at Cold Harbor, and the ensuing disaster of June 3 remained one of Grant's major regrets.[50]

Despite the failure of the Union assaults at Cold Harbor, the trajectory of Grant's campaign remained the same, but now required a change of purpose. Louis Manarin noted "The Battle of Cold Harbor resulted in a defensive victory for Lee, but Grant was still free to maneuver."[51] Grant firmly retained the operational initiative, and Lee's options for preventing Grant from forcing him into a siege at Richmond were rapidly dwindling. Grant understood that he had limited the Confederate options, but his original campaign objective of destroying Lee's army north of Richmond could not be accomplished.[52] Unlike Lee, Grant still had options and saw that the critical railways of Petersburg provided Richmond's last major link to the heart of the Confederacy and its remaining supplies. Rather than Lee's army, Grant would now attempt to cut off Richmond from its lifeline. The only major obstacle preventing this move was the James River.

Robert E. Lee also understood that his options had dwindled. In fact, after Cold Harbor Lee realized that there was only one major option left for the Army of Northern Virginia, and that

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[49] "It is true that a genuine opportunity had been glimpsed on the evening of June 1, and it is perfectly possible that a smashing attack at dawn on June, 2 would have succeeded. But the attack was not made on the morning of June 2, or anywhere near there, because this army simply did not have the right kind of reflexes. From the fall of 1861 onward, it had never been quite ready. On the battlefield it was heroic but slow." Bruce Catton, *Grant Takes Command: 1863-1865* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 259-262.

[50] "I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made." Grant, *Memoirs*, 588.

[51] Manarin, "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies," 538.

[52] "They act purely on the defensive, behind breastworks, or feebly on the offensive immediately in front of them and where in case of repulse they can instantly retire behind them. Without a greater sacrifice of human life than I am willing to make, all cannot be accomplished that I had designed outside of the city." Lieutenant General U.S. Grant to Major General Halleck, June 5, 1864, in *Memoirs*, 591.

was to attack Grant and to somehow prevent the Army of the Potomac from crossing the James. Lee described this to A.P Hill:

> The time has arrived, in my opinion, when something more is necessary than adhering to lines and defensive positions. We shall be obliged to go out and prevent the enemy from selecting such positions as he chooses. If he is allowed to continue that couse we shall at last be obliged to take refuge behind the works of Richmond and stand a siege, which would be but a work of time.[53]

Louis Manarin sums up Lee's plight: "Lee was powerless. He did not have the men or equipment necessary to draw Grant out or away from his proposed route of advance. Lee could only move to check him as before. The result was inevitable should Grant possess the means of crossing the James. Lee could not prevent him from reaching that river."[54] Early on the morning of June 15, the Army of the Potomac crossed the James and began its assault on Petersburg. Much like Cold Harbor, a sluggish Union advance on weakly held Confederate lines doomed the Union from exploiting Grant's operational foresight. By early morning on June 16, the Confederates had reinforced their lines and the siege of Petersburg began.[55]

Grant did not achieve his two major campaign objectives ahead of the 1864 elections. Robert E. Lee was still in control of the Army of Northern Virginia, and Richmond was still the Confederate capital. Despite these failures, Grant's ability to seize and maintain the initiative throughout the campaign forced Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia into a position that they could no longer affect the outcome of the war. The six weeks of constant fighting had reduced the Army of Northern Virginia's ability to fight in its preferred counterattacking method, and Grant's continuous flanking movements eventually forced Lee into the siege that he most feared. The Overland Campaign serves as an example of one army maintaining the initiative throughout the duration of the campaign.

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[53] *O. R.*, ser. 1, vol. 40, pt. 2, 702-703.

[54] Louis H. Manarin, "Lee in Command: Strategical and Tactical Policies," 540.

[55] Catton, *Grant Takes Command*, 284-288.

Eighth Army in Korea

Find Them! Fix Them! Fight Them! Finish Them!

-Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War*

From June to December 1950, the US Eighth Army in Korea experienced every aspect of initiative during its fight against North Korean and Chinese Communist Forces (CCF). The initial North Korean invasion of South Korea to unify the Korean Peninsula under Communist rule seized and exploited the initiative, leaving Eighth Army desperately trying to defend the Pusan Perimeter. With the brilliant and daring Inchon landings, Eighth Army seized the initiative and forced the North Korean invaders back across the 38th Parallel. In the subsequent pursuit north, Eighth Army exploited this initiative north to the Yalu River and the Chinese border when disaster struck. The CCF offensive shattered the Eighth Army and forced it on a desperate retreat south. By late December, the CCF were nearly in position to take Seoul and force Eighth Army off the Korean Peninsula. With the tragic death of the Eighth Army commander Lieutenant General William Walker in a jeep accident, MacArthur appointed Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway commander of Eighth Army on December 23, 1950. Ridgway and Eighth Army seized and retained the operational initiative by remolding Eighth Army into an effective, offensive minded force, and limited the CCF freedom of action through a combination of firepower and maneuver that ultimately enabled Eighth Army to reestablish the border between North and South Korea.

Campaign Synopsis

Ridgway arrived in Korea with Eighth Army just as the Third Chinese Offensive commenced on December 31, 1950, and Eighth Army was forced to evacuate Seoul as a result. As the Chinese Communist Force (CCF) offensive culminated, Ridgway set about to transform the Eighth Army and regain contact with the enemy. Eighth Army conducted limited offensive

operations Operation Wolfhound (15-16 January, 1951) and Operation Thunderbolt (25 January-11 February, 1951) and then defeated the Fourth Chinese Offensive in mid-February.[56]

Eighth Army conducted four major offensives to seize the initiative and restore the 38th Parallel from February 21, 1951 until April, 1951: Operation Killer (February 21 – March 7, 1951), Operation Ripper (March 7 – April 4, 1951), Operation Rugged (April 1-15, 1951), and Operation Dauntless (April 10-22, 1951). The Fifth Chinese Offensive (April 22-29, May, 16-21) saw early CCF gains negated by superior Eighth Army firepower, with significant CCF casualties.[57] The CCF were unable to exploit tactical success into seizing the operational initiative back from Ridgway and the Eighth Army. With the relief of General MacArthur for insubordination on April 5, 1951, General Ridgway was promoted to Supreme Commander in the Far East and ended his operational command of Eighth Army.[58]

Orientation: Rebuild the American Steamroller[59]

The relentless CCF onslaught against Eighth Army had shattered its offensive spirit and capability. If Eighth Army was to remain in Korea, let alone reestablish the 38th Parallel, it had to find a way to return to the offensive. Ridgway planned on returning to the offensive when he met with MacArthur on December 26 in Japan but the condition of Eighth Army was an issue.[60]

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[56] Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 685-696.

[57] Allen R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 430.

[58] Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper Brothers*,* 1956), 220; Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 488-506.

[59] Marshall described the World War I American operating concept as "adapted to the temperament and characteristics of the American soldiers. Our men gave better results when employed in a 'steamroller' operation, that is when launched in an attack with distant objectives and held continuously to task without rest or reorganization until unfit for further fighting." Ridgway, who was one of Marshall's disciples during the interwar period, fought under this concept in Europe during World War II. George C. Marshall, *Memories of My Services in the World War: 1917-1918* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), 179.

Ridgway "discovered that our forces were simply not mentally and spiritually ready for the sort of action I had been planning."[61] In order to resume offensive operations and thereby seize the initiative from the CCF, Ridgway remolded the Eighth Army and restored its fighting spirit, repaired its command and control and leadership shortcomings, and emphasized firepower and coordinated maneuver that attacked the CCF's operational shortcomings.

Ridgway's first order of business upon arriving in Korea was to "restore the fighting spirit of the forces under my command."[62] Ridgway took the opportunity to visit as many command posts and commands as he could in the first forty-eight hours in Korea to assess his army. Ridgway recalled in a seminar at the US Army Command and General Staff College in 1984 "to me, a basic element in troop leadership is the responsibility of the commander to be where the crisis of action is going to happen…. From the battalion on up, I think the commander should be where the crisis of action is, where the going is the toughest."[63] These visits allowed Ridgway to assess the climate of Eighth Army and how soon it could return to the offensive, and express "the old fashioned idea that it helped the spirits of the men to see the Old Man up there, in the snow and the sleet and the mud, sharing the same cold, miserable existence they had to endure." [64] The picture that Eighth Army painted however, was troubling.

General Ridgway was disturbed by the pessimism he found rampant in Eighth Army during his initial battlefield circulation. He found that "Every command post I visited gave me the

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[60] Ridgway recounted the conversation with MacArthur: "'If I find the situation to my liking, would you have any objections to my attacking?' And his answer encouraged and gratified me deeply: 'The Eighth Army is yours, Matt. Do what you think is best.'" Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (New York: Doubleday and Company, INC., 1967), 83.

[61] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 86.

[62] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 101.

[63] Matthew B. Ridgway and Walter F. Winton, USA, Retired, "Leadership at the Operational Level: The Eighth Army in Korea" (seminar, Advanced Military Studies Program, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, May 9, 1984), 3.

[64] Ridgway, *Soldier*, 204.

same sense of lost confidence and lack of spirit. The leaders from sergeant on up, seemed unresponsive, reluctant to answer my questions."[65] More alarming to Ridgway was that the offensive he hoped to soon execute would not be possible with the current morale and command climate. Ridgway noted, "I had met with every Corps Commander and all but one of the Division Commanders, and had learned from their lips their feelings about a major offensive – that any such effort by our armies at this time would fail and perhaps cost us heavily."[66] To get Eighth Army reoriented into an offensive mindset, substantial organizational and leadership changes would have to be made.

Since the Inchon landings, the command relationship between X Corps and Eighth Army had been challenging. X Corps was created to conduct the Inchon landing, and Lieutenant General Almond, MacArthur's Chief of Staff, was personally assigned to lead the corps.[67] After the Inchon landing, the tension between the two units centered on General Walker's desire to consolidate X Corps under Eighth Army, and the impression among Eighth Army that Almond, as MacArthur's Chief of Staff, took advantage of this relationship with Far East Command at the expense of Eight Army.[68] Ridgway was desperate to get X Corps back into the line after its evacuation from North Korea, but only under a reformed command structure. Ridgway recognized that Almond's aggressiveness was a commodity in short supply in his subordinate commanders, but unity of command was critical to Ridgway's plans.[69]

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[65] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 87.

[66] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 86.

[67] Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June-November 1950)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1961; reprint 1992), 490.

[68] Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 609.

[69] "He [Almond] was aggressive at least, and Ridgway had a need for aggressive commanders, but from now on he was going to have to play it straight – there would be no gamesmanship nor end runs around Matt Ridgway. He would for a time be allowed to keep command of a corps – but he would have to give up his job as chief of staff." David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 498-499.

With Eighth Army's command structure now firmly in place, Ridgway set his next sights on substandard leaders. Ridgway began to replace commanders he felt were contributing to the defeatist command climate. He noted that "The leadership I found in many instances sadly lacking, and I said so out loud."[70] Ridgway relieved four of the six division commanders and several assistant division commanders and artillery commanders under a new "rotation policy" that would send general officers that served six months in Korea back to the United States.[71] With a satisfactory command and control situation in place, as well as energetic and aggressive commanders at the helm, Ridgway articulated how he wanted Eighth Army to fight its Chinese Communist enemy.

The Eighth Army began to understand CCF tactics by December, 1950. The Chinese preferred to infiltrate their infantry during darkness, utilized terrain to mask their movements from UN aircraft, and to position their assault forces where they could envelop and encircle overwhelmed defending forces.[72] This concept had its roots in Mao Tse Tung's concept of War of Quick Decision, required "adequate preparations, seizing the opportune moment, concentration of superior forces, encircling and outflanking tactics, favourable terrain, and striking at the enemy when he is on the move, or when he is stationary but has not yet consolidated his positions."[73] This concept was successful for the CCF because it exploited gaps between positions of the overextended Eighth Army as it pushed to the Yalu River. As Eighth Army withdrew under pursuit, the CCF concept continued to exploit the weaknesses that a pursued army presented: gaps in lines for infiltration, and separated units that could be encircled.

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[70] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 88.

[71] Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 580-581.

[72] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 59-60, 187.

[73] Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Writings*, 144.

This operating concept did have shortcomings however. The People's Liberation Army was a peasant army and consisted of "a mass of infantry with little artillery support, no armor or air support, and primitive, haphazard logistical support."[74] While on the offensive and in pursuit, it was effective at isolating and overwhelming defenders. Over time however, the limited firepower and logistical support prevented CCF from continuous operations and provided its opponents an opportunity to counterattack.

For Eighth Army to exploit this opportunity, it would have to relearn the fundamentals of combat. Ridgway was appalled at the tactical proficiency of Eighth Army and excoriated his commanders:

> Your infantry predecessors would roll over in their graves the way you have been conducting operations here. You're road bound, you can't get off the road, you say you don't have communications, you've got runners, use them. Get up in the hills and take the high ground. They got mousetrapped up there, time and time again by advancing down these little narrow valleys, cause they were road bound.[75]

The poor tactical proficiency of Eighth Army was allowed the CCF to execute its preferred operating concept, and prevented Eighth Army from defending against CCF attacks. Not only was Eighth Army unable to defend against these attacks, most units were unaware of what enemy elements they faced.

In the frantic withdrawal from North Korea, Eighth Army outran their Chinese pursuers, and their intelligence deteriorated to a point where the composition and disposition of CCF was unknown in many commands.[76] Ridgway responded to the troubling intelligence situation by ordering units to begin aggressively patrolling: "I immediately ordered vigorous and aggressive patrolling all along that thinly held 135-mile line. We would find the enemy and poke and prod

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[74] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 56.

[75] Ridgway and Winton, "Leadership at the Operational Level: The Eighth Army in Korea," 6.

[76] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 183.

him until he revealed his positions and his strength."[77] These patrols would help clarify the enemy situation to Eighth Army's front, help negate the Chinese tactics of infiltration, and begin to rebuild confidence in small units at the tactical level.

Ridgway was also appalled at the state of Eighth Army's equipment. The retreat from North Korea cost many units critical artillery pieces, firepower that Ridgway saw as key to stopping the CCF assaults. Ridgway ordered that no "precious equipment" would be abandoned or soldiers would face court martial.[78] Ridgway also requested the immediate deployment of ten artillery battalions from the United States to help reconstitute the lost artillery pieces.[79] Artillery and other equipment was what gave the Eighth Army a tactical advantage over the larger CCF numbers, and maximizing the use of available firepower would be a key element to Ridgway's new plan.

The solution to the CCF tactical problem boiled down to two elements: firepower and coordinated operations. The Chinese previously negated the UN firepower advantage through their infiltration tactics, and chose to attack at night to minimize the effect of UN air assets. Ridgway saw the opportunity inherent in the CCF tactics:

> We lacked the manpower to halt the night attacks. But by buttoning up tight, unit by unit, at night and counterattacking strongly, with armor and infantry teams, during the day, we had an excellent opportunity to deal out severe punishment to the hostile forces that had advanced through the gaps in our line. I urged upon commanders, therefore, the importance of occupying suitable hill masses and positioning our troops as to invite enemy penetration at night. Then with our superior firepower and air support we could destroy the enemy by daylight.[80]

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[77] Ridgway, *Soldier*, 205-206.

[78] Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 586. Blair distilled the various oral instructions that Ridgway articulated to his Corps and Division commanders during his initial inspections of Eighth Army into nine "oral instructions." The "precious equipment" order was the ninth.

[79] Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 576-577; Ridgway, *Soldier*, 206.

[80] Ridgway, *Soldier*, 89.

Through the use of all available firepower, Eighth Army could inflict significant casualties on the CCF, and reduce their ability to exploit tactical success.

Equally critical to the new concept would be "avoiding all reckless, unphased advances that might lead to entrapment by a numerically superior foe."[81] By conducting coordinated operations across the width of its front, Eighth Army could reduce gaps in the line and salients that could be exploited by the CCF. These tactics offered also Eighth Army a blueprint for retaining the operational initiative in the face of a Chinese offensive. This blueprint would sacrifice short-term tactical losses for overall success at the operational level. Ridgway understood that an offensive would be needed to regain the operational initiative from the CCF, but first, Eighth Army would have to withstand an imminent offensive from the CCF.

Limiting CCF Freedom of Action: Deal Out Maximum Damage at Minimum Cost

With the new operating concept in place, Ridgway would have to wait for the appropriate opportunity to attack. On December 31, 1950 however, Ridgway was most concerned with retaining its freedom of action against the CCF. The Third Chinese Counteroffensive began just after dark on December 31, 1950 and relentless pressure of the CCF caused Ridgway to order the evacuation of Seoul, and the withdrawal of UN forces to Line D, a defensive line situated on high ground south of the Han River that was easily defensible.[82] This withdrawal, however, was nothing like the previous Eighth Army withdrawals. Ridgway noted that "There was no question in my mind that we would have to give some ground, but I wanted the withdrawal to be orderly, on phase lines, with rearward positions properly prepared."[83] This line would give Ridgway the

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[81] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 111.

[82] Millett, *The War for Korea*, 384.

[83] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 90.

time and space required to begin planning his first offensive moves, while at the same time

utilized the natural obstacle of the Han River to constrict the CCF's maneuver options.

On the south side of the Han River Ridgway began to feel confident that he retained his

freedom of action during the withdrawal. The Eighth Army had its two US Corps, I Corps and IX

Corps defending along the western sector and two Republic of Korea Corps along the eastern

portion of the line and X Corps deployed north and held the critical town of Wonju against ten

North Korean Army divisions.[84]

 After retaking Seoul, the CCF commander, Peng Dehuai began reorganizing his forces

for a final offensive aimed at destroying the UN forces, and uniting the Korean peninsula under

Communist control. Key to this consolidation was the assumption that Eighth Army would not

attack, an assumption that was the opportunity that Ridgway was hoping to exploit. As Allen

Millett noted, "For all their painstaking intelligence work, the Chinese did not understand

Matthew B. Ridgway. If they thought his army would sulk along Line D and remain passive, they

were wrong."[85]

Ridgway exploited the CCF's brief operational pause after their Third Offensive

aggressively. Operation Wolfhound, a I Corps reconnaissance in force, was the first offensive

operation conducted by Eighth Army with Ridgway in command.[86] Soon after Ridgway ordered

Operation Thunderbolt and Operation Roundup (February 5 – 11, 1951). Thunderbolt was an

armed reconnaissance to confirm the dispositions of the CCF XIII Army Group ahead of future

offensive operations.[87] These operations would be the first test of the newly remodeled Eighth

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[84] Millett, *The War for Korea*, 387.

[85] Millett, *The War for Korea*, 389.

[86] Roy E. Appleman, *Ridgway Duels for Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1990), 149. Operation Wolfhound was planned as a limited spoiling attack against a reported build up of CCF north of Line D.

[87] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 240.

Army steamroller. Ridgway noted "this advance would far different than the reckless and uncoordinated plunge toward the Yalu. Now all ground forces would be under a single command, with all major units mutually supporting, and the entire Army under tight control."[88] X Corps executed Operation Roundup to spoil a CCF build up within the central corridor. During the Battle of the Twin Tunnels, a combined American and French Regiment of X Corps defended and inflicted nearly 1300 casualties on CCF attackers through a combination of close air support, artillery, and direct fire.[89]

These operations proved to Ridgway, Eighth Army, and the CCF that the American steamroller was now fully operational. In fact, the CCF commander recognized that the dynamics of the war had changed. The infiltration tactics and massed assaults could no longer produce sustainable successes if the Eighth Army forces received coordinated close air support and artillery fires. CCF limitations in artillery, air support, and logistic support would be prohibitive to their freedom of action from this point forward.[90] Eighth Army still had to prove that it could stop an organized Chinese offensive before it could finally seize the initiative. The Fourth Chinese offensive, launched on February 11 with a concentrated thrust toward X Corps in the central corridor, provided Eighth Army this test. Unlike the previous CCF offensives however, Eighth Army absorbed the initial onslaughts and inflicted serious casualties on the attackers.

Two major battles occurred during the Fourth offensive that illuminated the shift in the campaign: Chipyong-ni and Wonju. During the battle of Chipyong-ni, (February 13-16, 1950), the Twenty Third Regimental Combat Team fought off an attack by six Chinese regiments. The battle demonstrated the re-found effectiveness of American artillery and mortars as they each fired over 1,000 shells against the Chinese attackers. The results on the CCF were crippling, as

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[88] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 106.

[89] Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 664-671, Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 400-401.

[90] Millett, *The War for Korea,* 403.

the attackers lost nearly 5,000 casualties during the battle.[91] Similarly, the "Wonju Shoot" of February 14, 1951 saw four hours of continuous shelling on an estimated 10,000 Chinese attackers that resulted in nearly half of the attackers becoming casualties. The battle continued to attrite the CCF but the cost in men and equipment for X Corps, nearly 1,700 casualties, further convinced Ridgway that only coordinated, mutually supporting actions could achieve his desired purpose of "the infliction of maximum damage on the enemy with minimum to ourselves."[92]

The results of the Fourth Offensive were clear: "The X Corps victories at Chipyong-ni and Wonju proved that the Eighth Army could advance if it shifted to a defense style notable for *not* trying to withdraw at night and moving only with ample artillery and air support in daytime."[93] Ridgway's transformation of Eighth Army was beginning to reap dividends. The offensive cost the CCF significant losses in soldiers and equipment, and further proved that their operating concept was no longer able to deliver substantial operational success.[94] Most importantly, Ridgway's focus on firepower to redress the numerical superiority of the CCF was beginning to have a decisive effect, and the moment had come for Eighth Army to seize the initiative from the CCF for good.

Ridgeway planned Operation Killer as the first of multiple subsequent operations to restore the 38th Parallel and retain the initiative. The objective of Operation Killer was simple: "IX Corps and X Corps would destroy enemy forces located east of the Han…"[95] The operation further proved that the Eight Army steamroller concept was working as IX Corps inflicted nearly 5,000 CCF casualties during the operation.

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[91] Millett, *The War for Korea,* 407-10; Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 295-300.

[92] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 108.

[93] Millett, *The War for Korea,* 403.

[94] Millett, *The War for Korea*, 403.

[95] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 306.

Operation Ripper, planned to begin as Operation Killer was winding down, sought to further limit Chinese and North Korean options near Seoul and the 38th Parallel with the purpose to "destroy enemy forces and equipment and to interdict enemy attempts to organize an offensive. A secondary purpose was to outflank Seoul and the area north of the city as far as the Imjin River."[96] The success of Operation Ripper produced in the CCF the dilemma Ridgway had envisioned. "By pointing a dagger at the enemy's heart-line, actually at the brain of the enemy commander, it forced him to choose between attacking us at tremendous disadvantage to himself (inasmuch as we controlled the high ground) or abandoning the South Korean capital."[97] As Operation Ripper continued to advance with little enemy resistance, Eighth Army captured Seoul on March 16 and Ridgway planned more offensives north toward the 38th Parallel.[98]

Keeping with the theme of deliberate and careful advances, Ridgway planned Operations Rugged and Dauntless with a weary eye towards the Chinese. Ridgway began to fear that a counteroffensive was being planned, and in an effort to retain the initiative, sought to ensure his next move would not allow the CCF to exploit overzealous advances.[99] While Ridgway's promotion to Supreme Commander in the Far East in the wake of General MacArthur's relief precluded him from commanding Eighth Army during the Fifth Chinese Offensive (April 22-29), Eighth Army retained the initiative and defeated the CCF decisively.[100]

Ridgway seized, exploited, and retained the operational initiative in Korea through leadership, and an intuitive understanding of the strength and weaknesses of the Eighth Army and its CCF foes. Unlike his predecessors, Ridgway understood the opportunities that CCF offensives

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[96] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 310.

[97] Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 113.

[98] Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 328-329.

[99] Millett, *The War for Korea,* 415-416; Ridgway, *The Korean War*, 120-122.

[100] Millett, *The War for Korea,* 426-434.

offered, and how to exploit them. Ridgway's operational remolded Eighth Army to not only seize

the initiative through offensive actions, but allowed for the retention of the initiative during

defensive operations. Once on the offensive, Ridgway's operations seized the initiative from the

CCF and the deliberate and methodical advances when combined with the tremendous casualties

Eighth Army was inflicting on the CCF, ensured that Eighth Army would retain the initiative, and

restored the pre-conflict boundaries.

The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War

> There is a logical problem here: There must always be some proportion between the means and the ends. Here, one means was eliminated but the goals remained the same. If that was indeed the case, then it was pointless from the start.
>
> - Yehezkel Dror, Winograd Commission

The ambush and subsequent kidnapping of two IDF soldiers from a routine border patrol

on July 12, 2006 triggered a thirty-four day war that saw the vastly superior Israeli military

stymied by the stubborn and cunning Hezbollah in Lebanon.[101] During the war, the IDF failed to

meet its campaign objectives against Hezbollah despite a sustained air and ground campaign in

southern Lebanon. In the aftermath of the conflict, the IDF entered a process of soul-searching

and reflection that questioned deeply held assumptions about the capabilities and utility of the

IDF in the face of emerging threats.[102] In the end, the IDF failed to seize the operational initiative

because of the misalignment and misapplication of its operating concept against Hezbollah's

capabilities, and an unsynchronized operational plan that failed to reduce Hezbollah's Katyusha

rocket capability. As a result, the IDF was unable to limit Hezbollah's freedom of action during

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[101] Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 2-5.

[102] Alon Ben-David "Israel Reflects: New Model Army?" *Jane's Defence Weekly* vol. 43, no. 42 (October 11, 2006), 23-29.

the conflict, and in the eyes of the international and domestic communities, suffered a humiliating defeat.

Campaign Synopsis

The IDF responded to the attack and kidnapping by launching Operation Specific Gravity, a precision air campaign aimed at Hezbollah's long range and intermediate range rocket systems.[103] Specific Gravity was a major success for the Israeli Air Force (IAF), as a large portion of Hezbollah's rocket systems were destroyed without any IAF losses. In the optimistic aftermath of the success, Israeli and IDF leadership were confident that the strikes would prove decisive and bring the conflict to a speedy conclusion.[104]

Hezbollah however, responded to Operation Specific Gravity by launching significant Katyusha barrages against northern Israel on July 13. On July 14, Hezbollah attacked the Israeli Navy cruiser Hanit in the Mediterranean with an Iranian C-802 shore-to-ship missile, damaging the ship and killing four sailors.[105] As short range Katyusha rockets continued to rain down on northern Israel from southern Lebanon, IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz ordered battalion and brigade sized ground operations aimed at the towns of Maroun al-Ras on July 17 and Bint Jbeil on July 24 but struggled to find any success against well-entrenched and trained Hezbollah fighters.[106]

On July 28, Halutz ordered the activation of the IDF reserves and began planning Operation Change of Direction 11. This operation called for a large-scale ground invasion of

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[103] Matt M. Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Combat Studies Institute, 2008), 36-37; Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 56.

[104] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 91-93.

[105] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 101.

[106] Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 43-48.

southern Lebanon by four IDF divisions. As the IDF struggled to make significant advances into southern Lebanon, years of low intensity operations in Gaza against Hamas and the tactical atrophy of the IDF in conventional combat operations was evident.[107]

A ceasefire took effect on August 14, 2006 with the IDF achieving little tactical success in Lebanon. Approximately 120 IDF soldiers had been killed with more than 1,000 wounded with Hezbollah's estimated losses ranging from 250-800 killed.[108] Hezbollah hailed the outcome as a great victory, but in Israel and international circles, it was a stunning defeat to the IDF. Once seen as a dominant military force in the region, the IDF was suddenly exposed as never before.

Orientation: The Failure of New Ideas Against an Old Threat

Israel entered the 2006 Lebanon War as an army in a state of transition. The post-conflict Winograd Commission Report noted that "over the past few years, and particularly since 2000 and the beginning of the Second Intifada, the IDF dedicated a lot of efforts to the types of military activity that was necessary to deal with the Palestinian front. Furthermore, those years were likewise characterized be significant budget cuts."[109] The combination of budget cuts and a preponderance of low intensity operations precipitated a shift within the IDF towards more efficient means of prosecuting conflicts. Technological changes and advances in precision indirect and air to ground fire systems offered this means of efficiency, and a shift in emphasis from ground operations as the decisive element towards "firing" elements such as air power and

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[107] Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 50-56; David E. Johnson, *Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Coorporation, 2011), 71-78.

[108] Anthony H. Cordesman, George Sullivan, and William D. Sullivan *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War* (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 5.

[109] The Commission for the Examination of the Events of the 2006 Campaign in Lebanon, *The Second Lebanon War: Final Report*, January 2008, ch. 7, sec. 4, accessed November 21, 2014, https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/ PTARGS_0_0 _200_217_0_43/ content/Display/GMP20080208738002. In subsequent notes this report will be referred to as the *Winograd Final Report*.

precision artillery becoming the decisive component to determine the military outcome occurred.[110] The new focus on decisive airpower and precision effects prevented the IDF from affecting Hezbollah's ability to fight in the manner in which it prepared for the war, and forced the IDF ground forces to adopt new operational doctrine that hindered its success at the tactical level.

The new concept assumed that precision fire directed at an enemy's strategic centers of gravity such as communication nodes, key leaders, and other infrastructure would disorient and incapacitate the enemy's ability to command and control and operate effectively. The enemy, realizing the inability to effectively respond to the situation, would be forced to capitulate.[111] In reality, the ability of this concept to seize the operational initiative, let alone secure the military end state, was questionable. Ron Tira, an Israeli reserve officer, noted that "the precision firepower-oriented approach, in practice (if not theory) forgoes taking the initiative to dictate political objectives, as it is doubtful whether firepower-based operations alone can in all cases unsettle an enemy and cause it to experience distress and defeat to the extent that it seeks a ceasefire or surrenders."[112] By this logic, the IDF willingly ceded the initiative to Hezbollah under the assumption that effective precision fires would achieve the desired outcome through the

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[110] *Winograd Final Report*, ch. 7, sec. 22-24. The change in focus of the IDF operational concept did not make ground maneuver obsolete, but rather one aspect among many that supported the decisive fires.

[111] John A. Warden, "The Enemy as a System," *Airpower Journal*, 9 (Spring, 1995): 41-55; Timothy R. Reese, "Precision Firepower: Smart Bombs, Dumb Strategy," *Military Review* 83, vol. 4 (July-August 2003): 50-51. Warden's seminal article is the theoretical basis for the theory of "Effects Based Operations," (EBO) which the IDF's operating concept shared many fundamental similarities. The most important being the targeting focus on an enemy's command and control architecture, and the belief that when applied properly, EBO could defeat an enemy without utilizing ground troops decisively. Reese's article refutes EBO theorists' claims, stating that airpower alone cannot be decisive, and "even when precision firepower is decisively important in the conduct of a campaign, only ground forces are capable of ensuring lasting victory." There may never be an end to this debate.

[112] Ron Tira "Breaking the Amoeba's Bones," *Strategic Assessment*, vol. 9, no. 3 (November, 2006): 7.

cumulative disruptive effects of the campaign. Most glaringly, what targets the precision fires could actually destroy was the concept's largest constraint. If the precision fires could not reduce the critical tactical capabilities of Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets, then the Israeli Army could be called to reduce this capability through a ground assault at a time when it was struggling through changes to its operational doctrine that would hamper its effectiveness.

The Israeli Army adjusted its doctrine based on its years fighting Hamas during the Second Intifada. The resulting doctrine, that was approved in April 2006, contributed to significant confusion at the operational and tactical levels during the campaign and hindered IDF ground force operations in southern Lebanon. The Systemic Operational Design (SOD) process developed by Shimon Naveh and officers at the IDF's Operational Theory Research Institute influenced the new IDF doctrine.[113] This process of campaign design was an "intellectual exercise that draws on the creative vision, experience, intuition, and judgment of commanders to provide a framework for the development of detailed operational plans."[114] The IDF introduced the doctrine in the campaign against the Palestinians during the Second Intifada but it began to draw criticism for its dense language and challenging intellectual influences including post-modern philosophy. To wit, Shimon Naveh stated that "it is not easy to understand; my writing is not intended for ordinary mortals."[115]

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[113] Naveh stated in an interview with Matt Matthews that "the core of this document [IDF doctrine] is the theory of SOD, but it was never really linked to the other elements." Shimon Naveh, interview by Matt Matthews, "Interview with BG (R) Shimon Naveh," Combat Studies Institute, November 1, 2007.

[114] LTC L. Craig Dalton, "Systemic Operational Design: Epistemological Bumpf or the Way Ahead for Operational Design?" (Masters thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2006), iii.

[115] Yotah Feldman, "Dr. Naveh, Or, How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Walk Through Walls," *Haaretz,* October 27, 2007, accessed February 19, 2015, http://www. haaretz.com/weekend/ magazine/dr-naveh-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-walk-through-walls-1.231912.

The new manual replaced many terms from previous doctrine with "flowery" language that made the translation of campaign goals into tactical tasks difficult for commanders untrained and unfamiliar with the new doctrine.[116] The Winograd Report found:

> When the new 'ornate' language penetrated into the procedures and commands, a more significant problem arose because they were meant to establish an infrastructure for a common understanding and action, but this was not the case….It seems the unclear language interfered with the application of simple principles of commonsense on the reality.[117]

Rather than providing an effective tool for the prosecution of the campaign, the new doctrine caused significant confusion and prevented the development of a coherent campaign plan. Retired General Yoram Yair stated "The basic principles of war were neglected in this campaign. There was no initiative, persistence, onslaught, concentration of effort nor artifice."[118]

The new doctrine failed to transfer its effectiveness from low intensity operations against Palestinians to the high intensity engagements against Hezbollah. While the utility of SOD and similar design strategies as a campaign planning tools continue to be debated, Matt Matthews articulated SOD's shortcomings in the 2006 campaign, "The core of SOD may not be without merit, but it is useless if it cannot be understood by officers attempting to carry out operations orders using SOD terminology and methodology.[119] While the shortcomings of the IDF's operational concept failed to produce a coherent strategy for the war, Hezbollah developed an effective and adept concept that focused on the limitations this IDF doctrine imposed.

Hezbollah gained an appreciation for the IDF's evolving operational concept through the years of conflict prior to the 2006. It first observed this transformation of the IDF from a maneuver centric force to an air power and precision fires based force take place in the aftermath

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[116] *Winograd Final Report*, ch. 7, sec. 26.

[117] *Winograd Final Report*, ch. 7, sec. 27-28.

[118] Alon Ben-David, "Debriefing Teams Brand IDF Doctrine 'Completely Wrong,'" *Janes Defence Weekly* vol. 44, no. 1, (January 3, 2007): 7.

[119] Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 64.

of the Gulf War and the UN air campaign in Kosovo.[120] The IDF's 1993 Operation Accountability used effective standoff air and indirect fire attacks that frustrated and surprised Hezbollah. To counter the effective air and indirect fires of the IDF, Hezbollah fired Katyusha rockets into Israeli territory during the IDF's 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath.[121] The low cost Katyushas provided Hezbollah with an effective, decentralized weapon system to strike at Israel's civilian population and proved difficult to target by the IDF's preferred air and indirect weapon systems. These short range Katyusha rockets, along with longer-range rockets such as the Fajr-3 and Fajr-4 that could strike into central Israel became the centerpiece for Hezbollah's operational planning against Israel in the lead up to the 2006 war.[122]

Hezbollah also assumed that the IDF's preference for a precision air campaign would lead to an increased reluctance to commit ground troops into Lebanon. This assumption was tied to Hezbollah's much larger view of Israeli society as weak and unwilling to sustain large numbers of casualties.[123] If Hezbollah's assumptions were correct about the Israeli society's unwillingness for a protracted, high-casualty ground operations, then it could focus towards small, fortified defensive units around Katyusha rocket sites and caches, rather than attempting to defend large areas of southern Lebanon. These small, decentralized units could inflict casualties against IDF incursions into southern Lebanon in prepared ambush sites, and then withdraw and disperse when necessary to regroup and fight again. In fact, Hezbollah built an extensive network of tunnels, bunkers, and weapons caches to defend the rocket sites in the years prior to the 2006 war.[124] The

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[120] Amir Kulik "Hizbollah vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension," *Strategic Assessment* vol. 9, no. 3 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, November, 2006): 29.

[121] Kulik, "Hizbollah vs. the IDF," 30.

[122] Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 17-18.

[123] Kulick, "Hizbollah vs. the IDF," 30; Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 16-17.

[124] Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry "How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 1: Winning the Intelligence War," *Asia Times Online,* October 12, 2006, accessed November 24, 2014, http://

defensive teams were armed with a variety of anti-tank weapons including Anti-Tank (AT)-3 Sagger, AT-14 Kornet-E, and American made Tube Launched, Optically Tracked, Wire Guided (TOW) missiles that could disable the IDF Merkava main battle tank.[125] Tactically, Hezbollah developed a solution to the IDF operating concept that played to its strengths as a decentralized defender, and limited Israel's ability to reduce the rocket threat without paying a high cost.

Hezbollah's operating concept was aligned properly with its operational and strategic goals for the campaign, and its understanding of the IDF's preferred concept. In the end, Hezbollah simply did not have to lose to win against Israel. As long as Hezbollah maintained the ability to fire rockets into Israel and inflict casualties against IDF attacks in southern Lebanon, Hezbollah could retain the operational initiative and maintain its freedom of action. The theoretical underpinnings of this strategy echo Mao Tse-Tung's writings on initiative in guerilla warfare: the ability to continue to fight along one's preferred course of action translated into retaining the initiative.[126]

Hezbollah's campaign plan offered the IDF two equally unpalatable options to the conflict: a sustained air campaign that could not effectively reduce the Katyusha threat against Israel, or a large scale ground offensive against prepared defensive positions, at the cost of high casualties and growing domestic discontent.[127] Hezbollah judged each of these courses of action as acceptable and feasible, as they both maintained operational freedom of action and the initiative. Israel and the IDF, on the other hand, struggled to develop a coherent operational plan to seize the initiative in the hours and days following the July 12 kidnappings.

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www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/ HJ12AK01.html.

[125] Andrew Exum "Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment," *Policy Focus* No. 63, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006), 5-7.

[126] Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Writings,* 235-236.

[127] Tira, "Breaking the Amoeba's Bones," 13.

Limiting Freedom of Action: IDF Constraints and Tactical Limitations

On the evening of July 12, 2006, the Israeli cabinet began moving towards approving a military plan to respond to the kidnappings. They generally agreed that something must be done to discourage Hezbollah from attempting similar operations in the future, but the specific political goals, and military aims of the campaign remained unclear, evolving, and ultimately unattainable throughout the course of the war.[128] As a result, the IDF's operational plan for the war was unsynchronized and unable to limit Hezbollah's freedom of action.

The IDF drafted two contingent operational plans as tensions with Hezbollah increased in the months leading to the 2006 war. One plan, Operation Icebreaker, was a standoff fire only option with the possibility of a limited ground attack. The other plan, Operation Supernal Waters, was more robust, with an air campaign and the option for a large-scale invasion of Southern Lebanon to the Litani River.[129] Both of these operations called for an immediate air response, with concurrent planning for a ground offensive, the major difference being in the scale and objectives of the ground offensive.

Halutz recommended neither on July 12 and instead pushed for a third option. Operation Specific Gravity was designed to destroy Hezbollah's Fajr missile array in a complete and devastating initial attack to deprive Hezbollah of its ability to strike deep into Israeli territory. Subsequent attacks would focus on major Lebanese infrastructure such as the Beirut Airport runways, and Hezbollah command and control nodes, and communications networks.[130] Specific

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[128] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 84-86.

[129] Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War Against Lebanon*, 28. The language of the two operations was specific for role of ground troops: Operation Icebreaker, called for a "precision standoff-attack operation lasting 48 to 72 hours, along with concurrent preparations for a possible limited land counteroffensive to follow immediately thereafter." Operation Supernal Waters called for "a concurrent large-scale call up of IDF reserve forces for possible immediate containment, and either a halt to standoff fire alone after 48-72 hours or an escalation to combined ground operations aimed at decisively pushing Hezbollah's forces north of the Litani River."

[130] Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War Against Lebanon*, 28-32.

Gravity had no planned ground offensive as Halutz and the Israeli cabinet were wary of the potential casualties a ground invasion would incur.[131]

In theory, this approach punished Hezbollah for the kidnapping, crippled their ability to affect the Israeli population with long-range rockets, and brought the organization to the bargaining table for a negotiated settlement on Israel's terms. The quick approval resulted from the operation's appealing design; a short air campaign with no ground attack, nor significant preparation of future ground operations. The lack of discussion of the possible Hezbollah responses to the operation also aided the approval process.[132]

The initial results of Specific Gravity, in the eyes of Halutz and Olmert, were spectacular. By the morning of July 13, the IAF claimed the destruction of the Hezbollah Fajr rocket network without any IDF losses, and "according to the conventional wisdom emanating from the leaders' offices, in a few days Hezbollah would come begging for a cease-fire."[133] In reality however, the results of the airstrikes in terms of operational initiative were limited. Hezbollah was surprised at the intensity and accuracy of the initial air campaign but had weathered the initial onslaught and was still capable of implementing its planned courses of action focused on Katyusha rocket fire into northern Israel. Operation Specific Gravity failed to target and destroy the most important tactical capability to Hezbollah's freedom of action - the Katyusha rockets. By July 16, it was becoming clear to Halutz and the leadership of the IDF that an air campaign alone would be

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[131] Uri Bar-Joseph "The Hubris of Initial Victory: The IDF and the Second Lebanon War," in *Israel and Hizbollah: An Asymmetric Conflict in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, ed. Clive Jones and Sergio Catignani (New York: Routledge, 2010), 152.

[132] The interim Winograd Report is extremely critical of the Prime Minister and his cabinet's approval process: "The ministers voted for a vague decision, without understanding and knowing its nature and implications. They authorized to commence a military campaign without considering how to exit it." "Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report," Tel Aviv: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, media release, April 30, 2007.

[133] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 92.

unable to limit Hezbollah's ability to fire Katyusha's into northern Israel, and Hezbollah still firmly held the operational initiative.

In terms of seizing the operational initiative, the most damaging aspect of the IDF's initial campaign plan was that it consciously constrained its own freedom of action. The Winograd Commissioned echoed this in their findings: "The decision made in the night of July 12th - to react (to the kidnapping) with immediate and substantive military action, and to set for it ambitious goals - limited Israel's range of options."[134] To this point in the campaign, Israel failed to orient the IDF against Hezbollah's key capabilities, and constrained itself to an approach that could not reduce Hezbollah's tactical capability that could limit or disrupt their freedom of action. The only option remaining to Israel for seizing the initiative and achieving its political ends was a ground offensive into Lebanon to destroy the Katyusha rockets.

The IDF did not possess the ability to destroy Hezbollah's Katyusha rocket capability during the 2006 campaign and thereby could not limit Hezbollah's operational freedom of action. The Israeli Army was hindered at the tactical level by incoherent guidance and intent, and atrophied tactical capability. The Winograd Commission Final report summarizes the performance of the IDF in this regard: "one must admit that the IDF failed in its efforts to bring about the military achievements that were necessary to and possible in light of the circumstances of the war and the balance of power."[135]

The initial use of ground troops in the 2006 campaign was of a limited nature and not nested with concrete objectives and purposes at the operational level. Rather than activate the ground portion of Operation Supernal Waters, which would have occupied the entirety of the Katyusha firing areas, Halutz ordered Northern Command to conduct limited battalion and brigade sized raids into Lebanon "to 'craft a consciousness of victory' for the Israelis and a

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[134] "Winograd Committee Submits Final Report," Tel Aviv: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, media release, January 30, 2008.

[135] *Winograd Final Report*, ch. 11, sec. 8.

'cognitive perception of defeat' for Hezbollah."[136] The raids were not aimed at destroying

Katyushas or even reducing Hezbollah's overall tactical capability, but in Halutz's estimation

when combined with the ongoing air campaign, would convince Hezbollah to agree to a political

settlement.[137] Other members of the IDF publicly echoed these sentiments. Brigadier General Ido

Nehushtan, a member of Israel's general staff, stated: "The goal is not necessarily to eliminate

every Hezbollah rocket. What we must do is disrupt the military logic of Hezbollah. I would say

that this is still not a matter of days away."[138]

The tactical leaders of Northern Command struggled to incorporate this intent into their

operations. Uri Bar-Joseph noted "the result was a conceptual gap between [Major General Ehud]

Adam and [Major General Eyal] Ben-Reuven, two traditional armoured corps officers who

termed victory the removal of the Katyusha threat through Israel's occupation of southern

Lebanon, and Halutz and his staff, who looked for a substitute for such an operation by way of a

'spectacle of victory' rather than a real victory."[139] The confusion resulted in limited operations

into Lebanon by IDF forces with no plan for reducing Hezbollah tactical capability. Worse, the

confusion created a situation where the IDF attacked in an uncoordinated fashion against a

prepared enemy, which resulted in limited tactical success, and panicked, haphazard

reinforcements.

The unsuccessful raid against the towns of Maroun al-Ras on July 17 and Bint Jbeil on

July 24 illustrated the effects of this unclear strategy and proved that the IDF would not be able to

destroy Hezbollah's rocket capabilities, nor secure the "spectacle of victory" that Halutz

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[136] Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 43; Uri Bar-Joseph, "The Hubris of Initial Victory,"156.

[137] *Winograd Final Report*, Chief of Staff Halutz's Winograd Testimony.

[138] Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry "How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 2: Winning the Ground War," *Asia Times Online,* October 13, 2006, accessed November 24, 2014, http://www. atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/ HJ13Ak01.html.

[139] Bar-Joseph, "The Hubris of Initial Victory," 156.

envisioned. Maroun al-Ras saw the elite Maglan unit of the IDF bogged down against well-prepared defensive positions. Within forty-eight hours of the start of the attack, seven IDF soldiers were killed, with many more wounded.[140] Reports from the soldiers who fought there painted a sobering picture. "'We didn't know what hit us,' said one of the soldiers, who asked to be named only as Gad. 'In seconds we had two dead.' We expected a tent and three Kalashnikovs - that was the intelligence we were given. Instead, we found a hydraulic steel door leading to a well-equipped network of tunnels."[141] Despite claims from the IDF that they had successfully secured Maroun al-Ras, the Hezbollah defenders remained present and effective. Crooke and Perry noted: "After-battle reports of Hezbollah commanders now confirm that IDF troops never fully secured the border area and Maroun al-Ras was never fully taken. Nor did Hezbollah ever feel the need to call up its reserves, as Israel had done."[142] The fact that Hezbollah did not feel threatened to the point to call for reinforcements is indicative of the IDF's inability to reduce Hezbollah's capability, or limit their freedom of action.

Bint Jbeil provided the IDF many of the same frustrations as Maroun al-Ras. Bint Jbeil was the sight of Hezbollah leader Sheikh Nashrallah's victory speech upon the withdrawal of Israel from Southern Lebanon in 2000, and perceived as a Hezbollah center of power.[143] Halutz saw Bint Jbeil as a potential symbolic victory if captured and one that help achieve his desired "spectacle of victory.[144] As a tactical objective however, the practical results of an operation against the town were questionable. The ensuing attack into Bint Jbeil followed a similar plot as

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[140] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 131.

[141] Umi Mahnaimi "Humbling the Supertroops Shatters Israeili Army Morale," *The Sunday Times Online*, August 27, 2006, accessed November 21, 2014, http://www. thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/world_news/ article166140.ece.

[142] Crooke and Perry, "How Hezbollah Defeated Israel, Part 2."

[143] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, *138*.

[144] Avi Kober, "The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?" *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (February, 2008): 28.

Maroun al-Ras as the IDF attacked against well-prepared defensive positions without decisive

success. Most damaging to the IDF's campaign was the internal frustration at the lack of tactical

success, and the growing realization by the leadership and Israeli public that Hezbollah was still

firmly in possession of the operational initiative, and continued to successfully launch Katyusha's

into northern Israel.[145] For Halutz, another strategy for seizing the operational initiative would be

needed.

On July 28, Halutz belated realized that Hezbollah maintained the operational initiative

and activated IDF reserve forces for a full-scale ground operation into southern Lebanon. The

sixteen-day delay in the reserve activation however, severely constrained the IDF's ability to have

properly trained and equipped forces ready in time for the invasion of Lebanon.[146] More

critically, the armored units that would comprise the decisive punch of the invasion were

unprepared for the type of fight they were to encounter. The years of low intensity operations in

Gaza allowed their skills against AT missiles and ambushes to atrophy to a dangerous level.

Operation Change of Direction 11 began on August 11, and the introduction of the

reserve units illustrated their lack of preparedness for combat operations. Umi Mahnaimi

interviewed a reservist that stated:

> In the past six years I've only had a week's training," he revealed. "Soon after we arrived,
> we received an order to seize a nearby Shi'ite village. We knew that we were not properly
> trained for the mission. We told our commanders we could control the village with
> firepower and there was no need to take it and be killed for nothing. "Luckily we were
> able to convince our commander," he concluded with a faint smile.[147]

Shifting public perceptions about future conflicts and years of low intensity operations resulted in

budget and training cuts to the reserve forces that atrophied the capabilities of the reserves to near

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[145] Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 188-189. Two Hezbollah rocket attacks on August 6, 2006 had significant impact on Israeli public perception of the war. The first was an attack that killed 12 IDF paratroopers in their assembly area, and the second was a rocket that landed in Haifa and killed three civilians.

[146] Bar-Joseph, "The Hubris of Initial Victory," 157.

[147] Mahnaimi, "Humbling the Supertroops Shatters Israeili Army Morale," 22.

disastrous levels.[148] To compound matters, the recommendation of Halutz to execute Operation

Specific Gravity without calling up reserve forces cost these units sixteen potential days of

mobilization and training to prepare for combat operations in Lebanon.[149]

The regular units that participated in operations in Lebanon also suffered from extended

low intensity operations. The substantial anti-tank threat presented by the Hezbollah defenders

quickly overwhelmed armored crews that had not trained on the appropriate tactics and

countermeasures.[150] From a collective training standpoint, these units had not trained in large-

scale maneuver either. The Winograd Commission highlighted this deficiency:

> Here it is important to point out that since 2000, the IDF as a whole "was sucked into"
> answering the needs of the military operations on the Palestinian fronts and that since the
> First Lebanon War in 1982, the IDF had not deployed large ground forces…This
> deficiency in holding maneuvers caused the flaws in activating the divisions and the
> forces and in their maximization, as well as in the effective integration of the various
> military arms and units.[151]

Despite the development of a maneuver plan to at last attempt to reduce the Hezbollah Katyusha

threat, the tactical capabilities of the IDF during Operation Change of Direction 11 simply was

not present. The tactical overmatch of the Hezbollah defenders ensured that they would retain the

freedom of action to launch over 250 rockets into northern Israel on 13 August, one day before

the UN mandated cease-fire took effect.

The IDF proved unable to seize the operational initiative from Hezbollah during the

thirty-four day 2006 Lebanon Campaign. The IDF failed to accurately orient its operational

concept to the threat that Hezbollah presented. The Katyusha rockets that were immune to

precision air strikes could only be reduced by a substantial ground assault that Hezbollah

meticulously prepared to defend against. Israel unnecessarily limited their own freedom of action

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[148] Cordesman, Sullivan, and Sullivan, *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War*, 93-94.

[149] Bar-Joseph, "The Hubris of Initial Victory," 161.

[150] Bar-Joseph, "The Hubris of Initial Victory," 161.

[151] *Winograd Final Report*, Chapter 11, sec. 49.

by choosing not to utilize a simultaneous ground maneuver with the effective Operation Specific Gravity, allowing Hezbollah to retain the freedom of action to launch Katyusha rockets into northern Israel daily. Once it became clear that the only option to reduce the Katyusha threat would be a large ground assault, Israel did not possess the ability to reduce this threat. Delayed mobilization of reservists deprived these units of precious training time against an unfamiliar threat, and the regular unit did not possess the requisite skills after years of low intensity operations. As a whole, the IDF's 2006 Lebanon Campaign represented a failure to seize the operational initiative.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above in this monograph, initiative is a key aspect of success or failure at the operational level. Despite the varying definitions of initiative that have been offered by military theorists over the years, there are few if any theories on how to seize and retain the initiative during campaigns. Two theorists in particular however, John Boyd, and Mao Tse-Tung, offer compelling pieces to the theory of initiative puzzle. Boyd's OODA Loop and Mao's writings on the importance of freedom of action provide two parts to a theory of operational initiative that states that armies seize and retain the operational initiative through orienting their operation concept against an adversary's weaknesses and limitations, while arranging tactical actions to limit their opponent's freedom of action. The cases studies offered in this monograph depict the varying success and failures of armies through the lens of this theory.

Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign exemplifies an Army that seized and retained the operational initiative throughout the duration of the campaign. Grant's success in the west in 1862-1863 provided a blueprint to plan and execute campaigns that sought through maneuver and engagements victory in an era of conflict that rendered decisive battles all but obsolete. Grant reoriented the Union armies from separate, non-coordinated campaigns in different theaters, to one coordinated distributed campaign with mutually supporting campaign goals and purposes.

This new operating concept stressed the increasingly dire manpower and resource situation that faced the Confederacy in the winter and spring of 1864, and isolated Grant's main objective, Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. Grant then used constant maneuver in an attempt to place the Army of the Potomac between Richmond and the Army of Northern Virginia. These moves forced Lee into a dilemma of either fighting an open engagement against the larger Army of the Potomac and potentially face destruction, or withdraw closer to Richmond in an attempt to exploit an opportunity to counterattack. The constant fighting of May 1864 reduced Lee's army to the point where it could no longer conduct a coordinated counterattack, and as the armies inched closer to Richmond, limited Lee's options to one – withstanding a siege at Petersburg. By reducing Lee's options siege warfare, Grant effectively eliminated Lee's impact on the remainder of the war.

Matthew Ridgway's brilliant rehabilitation of Eighth Army in Korea demonstrates how an army can successfully reorient its operating concept to seize and retain the operational initiative from its opponent in the midst of a campaign. Ridgway's experience fighting in Western Europe in World War II provided an effective American operating concept to negate the CCF threat. The CCF tactics of infiltration and encirclement were effective against an unorganized, withdrawing opponent, but was hamstrung by significant firepower and logistical considerations. Through Ridgway's leadership, Eighth Army returned to the American style of deliberate operations that utilized firepower and coordinated maneuver to negate the CCF's infiltration and massed light infantry attacks. As Eighth Army returned to the offensive in February 1951, it found that the revitalized American steamroller could inflict enormous casualties against the poorly equipped CCF.

The 2006 Lebanon War illuminates how a seemingly more powerful and technologically savvy force could fail to seize the operational initiative throughout the duration of a campaign. In the years prior to the 2006 war, the IDF developed an operating concept that placed increasing emphasis on air and precision standoff fires. This new operating concept emerged from IDF

operations against the Palestinians, where continuous low intensity operations changed the general perception of future conflict in the eyes of Israel. Not only did this emphasis on precision powers affect how campaign efforts were weighted, the years of low intensity operations caused significant atrophy within the regular and reserve ground forces, and a new doctrine that caused significant confusion across all echelons of the IDF ground forces. Hezbollah on the other hand, developed a concept of operations that offered Israel two unpalatable choices: conduct a large scale ground operation into southern Lebanon and risk high casualties, or rely solely on precision fires that could not reduce the short range Katyusha threat to Israeli civilians. The IDF campaign could not seize the operational initiative from Hezbollah because the IDF did not possess the internal flexibility to reorient its operating concept mid-campaign, nor the requisite tactical capacity to be successful in a ground campaign.

Implications

The first implication that this monograph demonstrates is that the ability for an army to orient and reorient against its opponents weaknesses and limitations is potentially more important than its published operating concept. Grant's ability to reorient the Union armies away from the concept of decisive battle, towards distributed campaigns that exacerbated the weakness of the Confederacy was a critical turning point in the war. Lee, due to the various resource constraints of the Confederacy and need to defend Richmond, was left to operate under a concept of decisive battle that was becoming obsolete. Ridgway found that Eighth Army had abandoned the successful operating concept of World War II, and was operating in a manner that the CCF could exploit with their preferred concept. By quickly articulating his vision of the American operating concept, Eighth Army was able to reorient towards an offensive concept of operations. The CCF would never again seize the operational initiative, as they did not possess the means to reorient their army towards a more heavily equipped and logistically sustainable force. The IDF operating concept precluded the Israeli's from reorienting during the 2006 Lebanon campaign. The reliance

on precision fires saw the reduction in training and capabilities of the IDF ground forces to the

point that they were not effective when called upon. Much like the Confederates during the

Overland Campaign, and the CCF in Korea, when it was clear that their operating concept was no

longer feasible, they did not possess the means to rapidly reorient towards as successful concept.

Another implication that this monograph highlights is that political considerations can be

just as detrimental to an army's freedom of action as the loss of tactical capabilities through

engagements. The Army of Northern Virginia casualties during the constant fighting were a

significant limitation on Lee's ability to counterattack during the latter stages of the campaign.

From the political standpoint, Lee was constrained by the need to defend Richmond from the

Army of the Potomac. This constraint limited Lee's available maneuver options, and when

combined with the resource shortfalls his army experienced, ceded the operational initiative to

Grant before the campaign even began. The IDF constrained its options due to political

considerations as well. During initial campaign deliberations, Halutz and the Israeli cabinet

quickly dismissed any options that called for a significant ground invasion of southern Lebanon.

Not only did this limit the potential course of actions that the IDF could pursue, the elimination of

this option prevented the activation of the reserve forces, a move that could have provided the

reserves more time to prepare for a different tactical environment than they saw against the

Palestinians. While army's can expect to lose a degree of freedom of action through casualties

and the loss of equipment due to engagements at the tactical level, the loss of freedom of action

due to political considerations can be just as important, yet overshadowed by the more

conspicuous tactical losses.

With the publication of the 2015 *Army Operating Concept*, the Army now has a concrete

operating concept for future conflicts.[152] The utility of this new operating concept and the success

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[152] Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (TRADOC PAM) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014).

of our nation in future wars will not necessarily rest on how close this new operating concept

comes to identifying future adversaries or types of campaigns, but rather if this operating concept,

and the resulting focus on leader development, leader training, and capabilities that it spawns,

allows the Army to orient faster than our enemies, and provides the right mix of capabilities to

limit enemy freedom of action and make the enemy's operating concept obsolete.

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