Time and the Paradigm of Operational Art–Authority and Responsibility of the Operational Artist in the Political-Military Discourse

A Monograph

by

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14. ABSTRACT

In the last few decades and within nearly all campaigns and operations of Western forces after World War II, the main effort of political decision-maker and military planner has been the ability of maintain public support. In Western democracies, public support of the majority is an expression of an agreement with the actions of the government. Creating this agreement, the political aim for the action and the respective war-narrative for its explanation have to be sound. Time becomes the essential factor for politicians and the military in achieving the desired results and aim while limiting the costs. However, matching the ends with the available means in a certain way is the major theme of the contemporary doctrinal understanding of operational art in achieving the political aim. The monograph introduces time as another major factor that expands the existing paradigm of ends, ways, and means. Because of the different meaning of time in an absolute war for final victory than in a limited war for limited aim, time becomes the essential factor for assessing and evaluating the relationship between political aim, war-narrative, and available means. The monograph applies two case studies–the US engagement in World War II and the US engagement in Vietnam–to compare and contrast the meaning of time in an absolute war for final victory and a limited war for limited aim. The lenses of political aim, war-narrative, and time are the methodological framework of the case studies. The relationship of political aim, war-narrative, and time illustrates the importance of the factor time within the realm of the political-military discourse. Time is less relevant in an absolute war, because the final victory in destroying the threat of a nation's survival is vital. On the contrary, in a limited war, where the survival of a nation is not at stake, time is predominant. Is the achievement of interests–the limited objectives–worth the costs? Specifically this question unfolds a major consideration in the political-military decision-making and discourse after the post-1945 settlement.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
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Abstract

Time and the Paradigm of Operational Art–Authority and Responsibility of the Operational Artist in the Political-Military Discourse, by LTC (GS) Thomas Kopsch, German Army, 66 pages.

In the last few decades and within nearly all campaigns and operations of Western forces after World War II, the main goal of political decision-maker and military planner has been the ability to maintain public support. In Western democracies, public support of the majority is an expression of an agreement with the actions of the government. To create this agreement, the political aim for the action and the respective war-narrative for its explanation have to be sound.

Time becomes the essential factor for politicians and the military in achieving the desired results and aim while limiting the costs. However, matching the ends with the available means in a certain way is the major theme of the contemporary doctrinal understanding of operational art in achieving the political aim. The monograph introduces time as another major factor that expands the existing paradigm of ends, ways, and means. Because of the different meaning of time in an absolute war for final victory than in a limited war for limited aim, time becomes the essential factor for assessing and evaluating the relationship between political aim, war-narrative, and available means. The monograph applies two case studies–the US engagement in World War II and the US engagement in Vietnam–to compare and contrast the meaning of time in an absolute war for final victory and a limited war for limited aim. The lenses of political aim, war-narrative, and time are the methodological framework of the case studies.

The relationship of political aim, war-narrative, and time illustrates the importance of the factor time within the realm of the political-military discourse. Time is less relevant in an absolute war, because the final victory in destroying the threat of a nation's survival is vital. On the contrary, in a limited war, where the survival of a nation is not at stake, time is predominant. Is the achievement of interests–the limited objectives–worth the costs? Specifically this question unfolds a major consideration in the political-military decision-making and discourse after the post-1945 settlement.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AOC	Army Operating Concept
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
CJCS	Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
ETO	European theater of operations
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FM	Field Manual
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JFK	John Fitzgerald Kennedy
JP	Joint Publication
LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson
MACV	Military Advisory Command Vietnam
NSC	National Security Council
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OFF	Office of Facts and Figures
OWI	Office of War Information
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SVN	South Vietnam
ULO	Unified Land Operations

Illustrations

Section I: Introduction

Setting the Stage–Time, the Military Domain, and Operational Art

After the Soviet success bringing the first human into space, President John F. Kennedy (JFK) announced in his 1961 inaugural address to the American people that the United States set a goal to send and retrieve the first man to the moon by the end of that decade. This project illustrated the ability and willingness of this great nation to achieve the unachievable. Within that speech, JFK committed the United States to this specific political aim, explained the narrative why this has to happen, and connected these two elements with a specific timeframe. In contradiction, the Joint Strike Fighter- or F-35 Lightning II-program is currently 170 billion dollar over budget and has a delay of seven years. In 1996, the announcement was the development of a fifth generation fighter for all services by 2007. However, several changes and resource limitations caused the delays of the program and led to the public perception of an extreme military procurement disaster.[1] In both examples, time is the essential parameter that influences the program and public opinion about the success in achieving the political aim–either the moon or the Joint Strike Fighter.

Within the military domain, the West and specifically the United States conducted stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq within the last two decades that illustrated the importance of time. The main effort of these campaigns was the creation of a safe and secure environment to enable economic growth, the development of democratic structures, and legitimate governance. The United States concept of Unified Land Operations (ULO) with operational art as its main pillar tried to balance this effort between the neutralization of the enemy and the provision of security and growth–the equilibrium of Echevarria's metaphor of a

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[1] John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs," *NASA*, May 25, 1961, accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.nasa.gov/vision/space/features/jfk_speech_text.html; Ryan Browne, "John McCain: F-35 is 'a Scandal and a Tragedy'," *CNN Politics*, April 27, 2016, accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/26/politics/f-35-delay-air-force/.

first and second grammar of war.[2] According to the scale of these campaigns, the political aim

was not to fight an absolute war for final victory. The US government with their coalition

partners tried to conduct a limited war for limited aims.[3] The necessity of a long-term engagement

to create security, economic growth, and governance required sustained population support.

However, the protraction of these conflicts set the government's war-narrative under pressure,

specifically when the proposed strategic objective did not match the assumed timeframe. Over

time, the support of the US population decreased with a dwindling effect on the legitimacy of

these wars.[4]

     Today, many governments, including the United States, try to reduce their footprints

abroad, in Syria for example, to reduce the political risk of unpopularity. These reductions lead to

an increased risk for the achievement of the pursued policy, formulated through strategic

objectives and the political aim. Consequently, a relationship exists between the factor time, the

formulated political aim, and the war-narrative to ensure population's support legitimizing the

specific war.[5] Against this backdrop, the monograph focuses on the relevance of the factor time

for political aim and war-narrative, the effect of this relationship on the US doctrinal

understanding of operational art, the political-military discourse, and the operational artist's

authority and responsibility. Specifically in a limited war for limited political aims, the factor

time is far more important for operational art and the operational artist in relation to political aim

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[2] Antulio J. Echevarria II, "American Operational Art, 1917-2008," in *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*, eds, John A. Olsen and Martin van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138.

[3] Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy*, 5th ed, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 13-45, 238-251; Michael W. Cannon, "The Development of the American Theory of Limited War, 1945-63," *Armed Forces & Society 19*, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 71-104; Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War. Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, NJ: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 124-127.

[4] Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper 379 (London: Routledge, 2006), 67-72.

[5] Jeffrey J. Kubiak, *War Narratives and the American National Will in War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 153-159; Alan C. Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (June 1997): 190-196.

and war-narrative than in an absolute war for final victory. Further, the monograph illustrates the changing meaning of time within the spectrum of absolute war for final victory and limited war with limited aim; its role for the political-military discourse between operational artist and political decision-maker according to policy and political risk, and its consequences for political aim and war-narrative. Consequently, time has a significant influence on operational art as the hinge between the political and military level and accordingly on the authority and responsibility of the operational artist.

Although US Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process,* and Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, address the importance of time in synchronizing tactical and operational actions, the focus of the monograph is the influence of the factor time in the realm of the political-military interface. Therefore, time significantly affects the negotiations between the political decision-maker and the operational artist concerning the means fulfilling the ends.[6]

Ultimately, the monograph argues for an expansion of the paradigm of operational art through the factor time, which sets military evaluations and planning in relation to political aim and war-narrative, enhances the accuracy of the operational artist's advice, and finally enables the clear definition of authority and responsibility of operational art and the operational artist. Consequently, the monograph recommends the recalibration of the scope of operational art, the succinct determination of the level where the political-military discourse takes place, and the specification of the philosophical aspect of operational art–the art of operations.[7]

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[6] Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-7-1-9; Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), III-8-III-44.

[7] G. Stephen Lauer, "The TAO of Doctrine: Contesting an Art of Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly,* no. 82 (3rd Quarter, July 2016): 122-123.

Contemporary US Army's Understanding of Operational Art

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 frames operational art as "the pursuit of strategic objectives through the arrangement of tactical actions."[8] Operational art is the doctrinal approach to overcome the ambiguity of a "complex, ever changing, and uncertain operational environment."[9] The contemporary US Army understanding of operational art centers on the connection of tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives within the paradigm of ends, ways, and means. The synthesis of cognitive skills with the procedural integration of ends, ways, and means ensures the prevention of disconnected tactical actions resulting in mission failure. This connects the necessary creativity to engage complexity in war with technical procedures and principles of warfare.[10] Operational art's bridging function allows both the consideration and translation of tactical means at the strategic level and vice versa mediating the political-military discourse. Although operational art is not able to replace flawed strategy, the established connection ensures an iterative process, prevents a political-military decoupling, and keeps the pace within decision-making.[11]

According to limited war with limited aims, the strategic focus shifted from an unconditional surrender of the enemy to operational legitimacy and maintaining the long-term support of the population. The political-military discourse provides military advice towards the achievability of the political aim and the creation of a war-narrative to maintain social cohesion. However, the elements of operational art do not reflect this relationship appropriately, because of

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[8] Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 9; Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 4.

[9] Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-1; Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 2-1.

[10] ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 9; ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 4-1; ADP 3-0, *Operations*, 4; ADRP 3-0, *Operations*, 2-1.

[11] Huba Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is not a Level of War," *Small Wars Journal* (March 2011): 4-6; Lauer, 121-122, Frans P.B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War, The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2007), 243-255.

their overall focus on decisive action and victory. The integration of guiding principles according to the relation of political aim, military means, war-narrative, and time available to overcome this weakness might be appropriate. Further, the Army postulates that operational art is applicable to every level, which means the integration of everyone down to the platoon level. Every Soldier will become an operational artist. The unspecific definition creates confusion and internal friction about aspects of responsibility and authority within the political-military discourse. This dilution of responsibility hampers ultimately effective campaign planning and a concerted political-military discourse. A delineation of operational art as the interface and art of operations as a philosophy at every level of war seems to be appropriate. The evaluation of time, its integration, and therefore expansion of the existing paradigm supports this delineation.[12]

The Trinity of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time in the Spectrum of Absolute and Limited War

The current US doctrinal approach of operational art operates along the paradigm of ends, ways, and means in order to arrange tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives. The political aim determines the strategic objectives. The responsibility of the operational artist consists of the discourse within the tactical-strategic-spectrum about the arrangement (way) of military actions (means) to achieve the strategic objectives (ends). However, this arrangement depends on the nature of the respective war. According to Carl von Clausewitz's determination of the nature of war through his fascinating trinity, the phenomenon of war constitutes its character between the three tendencies of reason, enmity, and chance.[13]

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[12] Kubiak, 158-160; Echevarria, 158-159; Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy. A History* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 225-230; ADRP 3-0, 4-1; Justin Kelly and Michael J. Brennan, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," *Joint Forces Quarterly,* no 56 (January 2010): 113-116; Lauer, 122.

[13] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 89.

The application of Clausewitz's theory to contemporary conflicts and wars reveals that the political aim is a characterization for the reason to wage war. The reason for waging war depends on the existing threat–existential for a nation's survival or non-existential if secondary interests are at stake. This imposes the requirement to fight either a war of necessity to survive or a war of choice for interests. On the foundation of these considerations, the political decision-maker has to define the scope of the war through the political aim–absolute war for final victory or limited war for limited aim–that becomes ultimately the policy within war.[14]

According to the policy within war, the intent of the war-narrative is twofold–explain the government's political aim while gaining and maintaining the support of the population–the enmity–that legitimizes the government's actions in war. According to this, the war-narrative is key within the relation of reason to enmity and government to population. Legitimate political aims explained through a clear war-narrative enhances government's credibility, whereas the mismatch of political aim and war-narrative undermines political reliability and leads ultimately to the increase of the political risk for the government.[15]

Recent studies of the RAND Corporation indicate that rather war casualties than the divergence of political aim and war-narrative have a significant impact on public opinion. The conditions that influence public opinion are the kind of the threat, existential or non-existential, therefore fighting a war of necessity or choice, the political aim within the war in relation to the nation's vital interests, the war-narrative, and the related war casualties. The population accepts war casualties as long as the United States benefits in her vital interests and the political aim coincides with the proclaimed narrative. War casualties unfold a deteriorating effect on public opinion and therefore on the legitimizing entity from that date, if a campaign consumed too much, without perceived national security benefits, and the emergence of a widening gap between

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[14] Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, 35-45; Kubiak, 157-158.

[15] Kubiak, 155-165; Lamborn, 190-196.

political aim and war-narrative. Specifically in a period, where the government and the political opposition attacked each other, the public opinion deteriorated rapidly. Consequently, the factor time unfolds its significant impact on public opinion in relation to war casualties and on the war-narrative in relation to the political aim.[16]

This interdependency illustrated its crucial meaning in the period after the peace settlement of 1945. In the absence of an existential threat to the United States, war in absolute terms for final victory disappeared and limited wars with limited aims became the norm. The definition of appropriate political aims corresponding with a credible war-narrative became a major challenge for the governments of democratic countries, specifically in the era of protracted wars.[17]

In Clausewitz's understanding, the aspect of chance illustrates the friction, unpredictability, and non-linearity within war. Besides government and population, the military is the third essential player within war, in which the tendency for chance is most represented in Clausewitz's trinity. The military is the subordinated, political instrument to achieve the political aims within war.[18] However, in the era of protracted wars, limited in nature and aim, the absence of the decisive victory fulfilling the political aim has become a major challenge for war termination and specifically for the preservation of a credible war-narrative.[19] Therefore, the factor time as the interpretation of Clausewitz's element of chance has a total different meaning in the post-1945 era of limited wars than in the pre-1945 era of absolute war. The factor time influences significantly the relationship between political aim and war-narrative, government and population. Figure 1 illustrates the derivation of this relationship based on Clausewitz's

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[16] Kubiak, 141-154; Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), xxii-xxiii.

[17] Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, 35-45.

[18] Clausewitz, 89.

[19] Kubiak, 155-165; Larson, xxii-xxiii, 14-19, 24-30.

fascinating trinity about the nature of war and her comprising actors. Consequently, the factor time is key for the military, operational art, and specifically for the operational artist within the political-military discourse, because of its implications on policy and political risk.
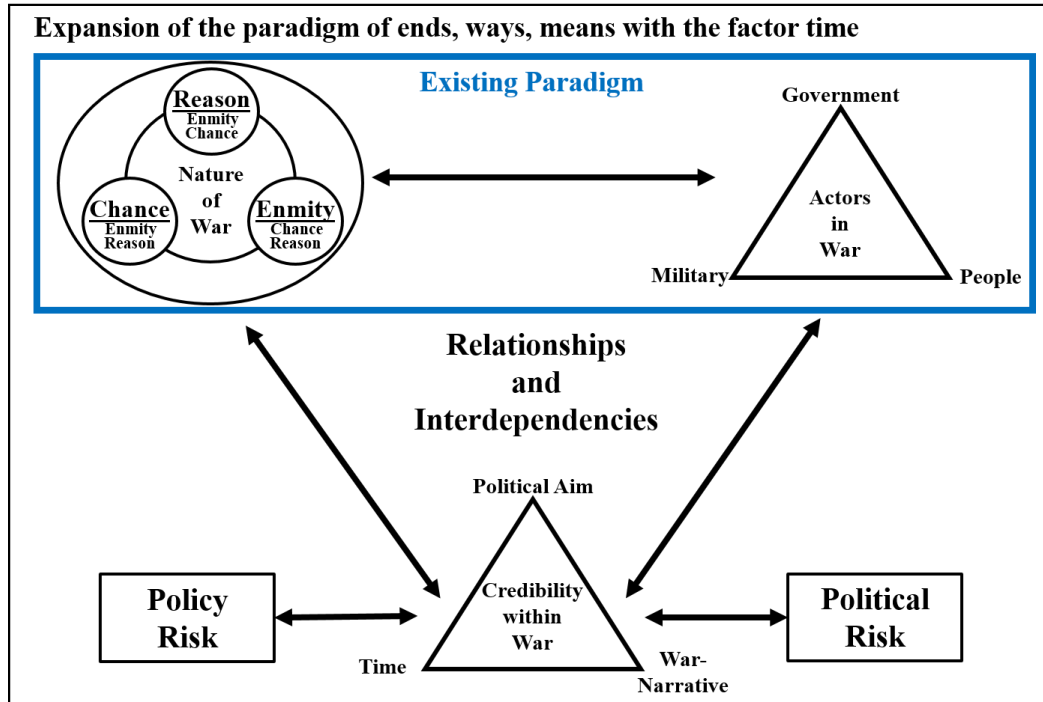
Figure 1. Relationship of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time. (Figure developed by the author).

The trinity of political aim, war-narrative, and time in conjunction with operational art is crucial and expands the paradigm of ends, ways, and means, because its understanding provides the foundation for the operational artist to support the political decision-maker in assessing and balancing the policy and political risk rather than only linking tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives. In addition, through the evaluation of time and its implications according to political aim and war-narrative, a delineation of the authority and responsibility of the operational artist is possible that leads ultimately to a differentiation between operational art at the political-military interface and the art of operations at every level of war.

8

Methodology and Framework

The monograph applies the methodology of comparing two historical case studies–the US engagement within World War II from 1941-1945 as an example of absolute war, and the Vietnam War within the frame of 1961-1975 as illustration of a limited war. Subsequently, the monograph contrasts the different meaning of the factor time for operational art and the operational artist within the political-military discourse, specifically in relation to policy and political risk. The evaluation of time focuses on the negotiations about ends and means rather than the synchronization of actions at the tactical or operational level.

The theoretical framework to compare and contrast these case studies comprises a synthesized model that combines the current doctrinal paradigm of operational art with and application of Clausewitz's fascinating trinity. Therefore the modelled trinity of political aim, war-narrative, and time provides the lenses to examine the case studies in an anecdotal fashion. Political aim as the first lens will focus on the formulation of strategic objectives, specifically within the military domain, through the political level or the political decision-makers. The second lens highlights the coinciding war-narrative that explains the political aim towards the public opinion with the intent of legitimizing governmental action. The third lens, time, marks the frame for evaluation of its effect on the political aim and war-narrative. By applying these lenses, this will illustrate the different meaning and significance of time to political aim and war-narrative in an absolute and limited war with its implication to the existing paradigm of operational art–ends, ways, and means.

For the application of the described lenses within the two case studies, the monograph utilizes a combination of primary and secondary sources of literature. Presidential Administration's correspondences, memoranda, Pentagon Papers, material from Presidential Libraries of the Roosevelt-, Truman-, Kennedy-, Johnson-, Nixon-Administration, and from the Center of Military History are the primary sources to reveal the political aim and apply the respective lens. Secondary sources provide interpretation of the political aim and the effect on

public opinion to reveal its relationship and the shift over time. Specifically Jeffrey E. Kubiak, G. Stephen Lauer, and Alan C. Lamborn provide strong arguments for the influence of time on political aim and war-narrative, and therefore operational art. Operational art is the interface between the political and military level, provides advice concerning policy and political risk, and therefore relates to a specific level. Eric V. Larson, Kubiak, and Benjamin C. Schwarz arguing that public opinion shapes the political aim, because of its importance as a legitimizing factor for governmental action, specifically war. On the contrary, Steven Casey argues that the convergence of political aim and war-narrative in combination with a legitimate cause maintains public opinion over time. Virgus R. Cardozier backs these arguments in the context of the explanation of perceived benefits according to the national war effort. For that reason, the coincidence of war-narrative and political aim over time is a central element to maintain the support of the population and therefore the chosen policy. Further, secondary literature serves as an additional foundation to interpret primary sources, letters, and coverage within the two case studies.[20]

The monograph integrates five parts. Section I contains the hypothesis and guiding question of the research, the theoretical framework, mental model, and lenses for evaluating, assessing, and analyzing the case studies, and a sample review of the literature. Section II outlines the first case study about the US engagement in World War II as an example of an absolute war for final victory. Section III transitions to the US engagement in a limited war for limited aims– Vietnam. Contrasting the results of Section II and III, Section IV reveals the different meaning of time through contrasting absolute and limited engagements. Finally, Section IV condenses and

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[20] Kubiak, 1-15, 43-77, 155-163; Lauer, 118-124; Lamborn, 187-214; Larson, 24-29, 59-66, 86-101; Benjamin C. Schwarz, *Casualties, Public Opinion and US Military Intervention: Implications for US. Regional Deterrence Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), ix-25; Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War against Nazi Germany* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), xvii-xxvi, 5-18, 80-129; and Virgus R. Cardozier, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II: How the Government, Military, and Industry Prepared for War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1995), 1-5, 30-45, 104-130.

links these results to the existing paradigm of operational art, recommends its expansion, and suggests the exact location of the operational artist within US doctrinal understanding.

Section II: The Trinity of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time During the US Engagement in World War II from 1941-1945

The Strategic Setting of the US Engagement in World War II

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the United States, specifically the American population, perceived initially the task of getting Nazi-Germany under control as a European challenge. Reasons were the reluctance of bearing the costs of the apparent inability of European problem–solving, economic challenges of the ongoing Great Depression, and US resentments against Great Britain because of her existing debt of World War I. Up to 1941, several polls showed that the opposition against an US engagement was stable above eighty percent.[21]

However, American political and military leaders evaluated the threat of Nazi-Germany and Imperial Japan as existential–physically against US security and ideologically against her values. From 1940, the US government agreed that the defeat of Nazi-Germany was the top priority, because Germany posed a greater threat on vital US security interests and threatened the survival of Great Britain–the United States main ally in Europe. Consequently, the political aim of the US administration, specifically President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), also before Pearl Harbor, was the total defeat of Germany and the Axis Powers. The aim of total defeat with a final victory as its prerequisite refers directly to concept of absolute war in the sense of Clausewitz. Achieving this aim, FDR proclaimed the intent to support US allies against Germany and her Axis partners, the start of a mobilization of the US economy, military, and technological resources, and later the Lend-Lease-Law.[22]

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[21] Cardozier, 11-22.

[22] Thomas G. Mahnken, "US Grand Strategy, 1939-1945," in *The Cambridge History of The Second World War, Volume 1: Fighting the War*, ed. John Ferris, and Evan Mawdsley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 195-200; Casey, 15-45; Clausewitz, 582-583; 595-600; Peter R. Mansoor, "US Grand Strategy in the Second World War," in *Successful Strategies: Triumphing in War and*

Running for re-election in 1940, FDR acknowledged that the American public was lukewarm to actively enter the war. However, the administration developed a war-narrative that supported the political aim as well as the President's re-election. FDR used several presidential speeches stating this US support, fireside chats emphasizing that the Nazis enslaved Germany and Europe, and that the Axis could expand their domination globally, if Britain failed. With the selection of like-minded people–Henry Stimson became Secretary of War–the administration spoke with a coherent voice. After re-election, FDR described crystal-clear in his inaugural address the major pillars of the administration's political aim–the Four Freedoms. These absolute freedoms, speech, worship, freedom from want, and fear, were a reflection of the US perception of a post-war world order.[23]

With the formulation of the US political aim and the establishment of a coherent war-narrative before Pearl Harbor, FDR set the stage for the US preparation for an absolute war. The historical case study illustrates that time is a less important factor in an absolute war for final victory, because of the coherence of political aim and war-narrative facing an existential threat, and the ability to influence the factor time through the application of all military and political means available. The US entry into World War II, FDR's declaration of unconditional surrender at Casablanca, and President Harry S. Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb, illustrated in figure 2, serve as points in time to evaluate political aim, war-narrative, and implications for the operational artist. This provides the foundation assessing the importance of time in an absolute war for final victory.

Peace from Antiquity to the Present (Cambridge, NJ: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 320-321.

[23] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Third Inaugural Address," *FDR Library*, January 20, 1941, accessed October 7, 2016, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msf01412; Mahnken, 199; Talbot Imlay, "Western Allied Ideology, 1939-1945;" in *The Cambridge History of The Second World War, Volume II: Politics and Ideology*, eds, Richard J. B. Bosworth, and Joseph A. Maiolo (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51-53.

US engagement within World War II – major milestones for political aim, war-narrative, and time

direct US engagement

1 September 1939	7 December 1941	8 December 1941	24 January 1943	26 July 1945	6/9 August 1945
German invasion of Poland and start of World War II	Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor	USA declaration of war to Japan	Conference of Casablanca	Conference of Potsdam	Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; End of World War II

war-narrative

US government's political aim — Defeat of Germany and Japan "Germany-first" — Unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan — Unconditional surrender of Japanese armed forces

time

Figure 2. Relationship of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time in World War II. (Figure developed by the author).

Pearl Harbor–The United States Enters the War

Japanese bombers attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, destroyed a significant number of American battleships, and killed thousands of American servicemen. On 8 December, FDR addressed Japan's attack to a joint session in Congress in conjunction with the request to declare war on Japan. Senate and the House of Representatives agreed overwhelmingly to declare war to Japan. According to their tripartite alliance, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States on 11 December 1941. The same day, the US Congress responded with the declaration of war against the Axis and entered the global stage of World War II.[24]

President Roosevelt's Political Aim

The overarching political aim of FDR's administration was the rearrangement of a post-war international order along American interests and principles. The Four Freedoms were one

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[24] Cardozier, 30-37; Mahnken, 201-203.

major pillar. On this foundation, the US national objectives were the protection of the Western Hemisphere, the collaboration with Great Britain in conducting the war, and the absolute defeat of Germany and Japan.[25] Although Japan directly attacked the United States, the American administration and specifically FDR pursued and re-stated their "Germany first strategy."[26] The separation of Germany and Japan by space and the emerging but still insufficient US economic and military mobilization precluded cooperation and further prioritization. *Germany first* was FDR's preference, because of his belief that Germany's defeat would likely presage Japan's collapse, whereas vice versa Germany could continue fighting without Japan.[27]

Further, the American-British alliance held their first wartime conference–Arcadia–from 22 December 1941 to 14 January 1942 in Washington DC. The results comprised the establishment of an Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), the development of an Allied military strategy, the decision to plan a combined invasion in North Africa in 1942, and the deployment of American bombers to England. These decisions shaped the war effort of the years 1942 and 1943 and underpinned the preferred *Germany first* strategy.[28]

US Government's War-Narrative and the Public Response

After US declaration of war against Japan, a national poll on 10 December revealed that ninety-six percent of the American population supported the war. However, another poll showed also that the public–forty-five percent–was not quite sure about the American war aims.

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[25] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Day of Infamy Address," *FDR Library*, December 8, 1941, accessed October 11, 2016, 1-5, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msfb0002, 1-5; Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Re-Declaration of War Against Germany and Italy," *FDR Library*, December 11, 1941, accessed October 11, 2016, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msfb0006; Louis Morton, "Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War II," in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Robert Greenfield. (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), 41-47; Imlay, 60-63.

[26] Mansoor, 331; Casey, 50.

[27] Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department; Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, Government Printing Office, 1953), 98-100; Mansoor, 329-333.

[28] Mahnken, 201-204.

Specifically after the Roosevelt administration's announcement to pursue a *Germany first* strategy, many US newspapers shaped the opinion that Japan should be the first priority instead.[29]

Acknowledging the centrality of the war-narrative as the foundation for political aim, war policy, and public understanding of government's action, FDR established a program to shape the public will through propaganda efforts of the Office of War Information (OWI) and used the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) to continuously assess the public opinion.[30] FDR based the US war-narrative on the moral cause to fight a campaign against the German evil first, and the Japanese subsequently. The US administration did not pursue any material or land-based benefits, nor attacked another country voluntarily. Further, the government proclaimed the necessity for an all-out fighting of World War II that meant the achievement of final victory in an absolute war.[31]

Ensuring the coherence within the government, FDR placed reliable people in central positions of decision-making and at the interface to the public domain. Famous examples are the nomination of Henry Stimson as Secretary of War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) consisting of General George C. Marshall, Air Chief General Henry Arnold, and the chief of naval operations Admiral Ernest J. King, and later the nomination of General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Commander of the European theater of operations (ETO). According to the political aim, the corresponding war-narrative, and the necessary mobilization of all American economic and public resources, the US war effort overcame concurrently the Great Depression. FDR's measures and programs bolstered the economy, dropped the unemployment rates, and created opportunities for the lower and middle classes attending a university study program after serving–the GI Bill. This increased significantly the public opinion and motivation for fighting World War II.[32]

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[29] Cardozier, 35-37; Mahnken, 202; Casey, 48-55.

[30] Kubiak, 153-154.

[31] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address to Congress," *FDR Library*, January 6, 1942, accessed October 11, 2016, 7-18, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msfb0015; Cardozier, 214-234; Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98-104.

[32] Joseph E. Persico, *Roosevelt's Centurions: FDR and the Commanders He Led to Victory in*

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FDR focused primarily on the *Germany first* strategy, the cohesion of the alliance with

Great Britain, and secondly on maintaining the American public support. With the outcome of the

OFF assessments of American public enmity against Japan, Marshall and General Douglas

MacArthur argued in favor of a shift to the Pacific. Although two-thirds of mass opinion would

support such a shift, FDR refused the advice and remained with *Germany first* in line with the

government's war-narrative.[33]

Within the European theater, Marshall and Eisenhower argued for a direct attack through

a cross-Channel invasion of Europe. Eisenhower presented the plan for preparation–Operation

Bolero–and for the cross-Channel attack named Roundup for spring 1943. Although carefully

planned, the British government refused the start of Bolero and Roundup in 1942 or 1943, and

recommended therefore an invasion in North Africa. US Army planners opposed the British

suggestion, because of its lack of support for the Soviets, the further dispersion of American

troops, and the significant timely postponement of the cross-Channel invasion.[34]

Balancing the American-British alliance and backing his *Germany first* strategy, FDR

decided to refuse the advice of his operational artists to attack directly while avoiding further

protraction. FDR agreed to the British suggestion of launching an invasion in North Africa to

weaken Germany's position indirectly. Operation Torch based therefore on two main aspects.

First, the British disagreement of a cross-Channel operation in 1942 or 1943 and much more

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World War II (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2014), 241-257.

[33] Casey, 80-87.

[34] Maurice Matloff, "Allied Strategy in Europe, 1939-1945," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 683-691; Persico, 184-202; Maurice Matloff, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department; Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, Government Printing Office, 1959), 14-16.

important FDR's intent of conducting offensive operations against Germany.[35] Besides its tactical

and operational purpose, Torch aimed on the morale of American people at home, the creation of

a boosting public opinion, and finally the underpinning of the *Germany first* strategy.[36] The

political subordination of military objectives and campaigns were predominant within the

political-military discourse.[37] FDR subordinated time to the prioritized relation between political

aim and war-narrative in achieving and maintaining credibility.

Casablanca–Emergence of Unconditional Surrender

After the first year of US commitment in World War II, the Allies, specifically the United

States and Great Britain met in Casablanca, North Africa. Operation Torch at the end of 1942 was

a success, whereas decisions according a cross-Channel attack on Europe and specifically

Germany awaited further determination.[38] The Allies understood their insufficient resources to

conduct a cross-Channel attack in 1943. Lacking these resources limited their opportunities and

strategic options.[39] Consequently, this meant either a limitation of their political aims or the

acceptance of a long duration campaign against the Axis and Japan. As a condition for Torch, the

Allies negotiated with the French Vichy forces in North Africa and agreed to cooperate with them

in case of their neutrality. The Darlan deal was highly controversial in the United States, because

these negotiations with previous opponents probably implied a contradiction to the aim of final

defeat.[40]

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[35] Matloff, "Allied Strategy in Europe, 1939-1945," 683-691; Casey, 82-93; Mahnken, 204-206.

[36] Maurice Matloff, and Edwin M. Snell, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department; Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942*, 221-222, 279-284, 294-298.

[37] Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address to Congress," 20.

[38] Persico, 258-266; Casey, 112-119.

[39] Mansoor, 338-341.

[40] The United States and Great Britain wanted to neutralize, at least minimize, the opposition of French forces after the Allied landing in North Africa. Therefore, the Allies wanted to shape their military campaign by political actions. Ultimately, the Allies negotiated and concluded a cease-fire agreement with Admiral Jean-Francois Darlan, the commander of all French/Vichy forces in North Africa, because of his standing and influence within the forces and the Vichy government. The nucleus of the Darlan deal was

President Roosevelt's Political Aim

Although Casablanca focused on maintaining a strong Alliance, the results were strategically indecisive. Besides the agreement on maintaining the initiative in both theaters–the Mediterranean and Pacific–the Allies defined only short-range objectives like operations against Sicily and the conduct of an enduring combined bomber offensive. The strategic question of a cross-Channel attack left open.[41] Although the perceived lack of strategic decisions, President Roosevelt made his famous announcement at the final press conference on 24 January 1943 expressing the will of the Allies, specifically the United States, to fight until the final defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan. FDR focused therefore the whole war effort on the destruction of the opposing ideologies of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Unconditional surrender was consequently the only remaining war aim of the Allies after Casablanca, concentrated their war aims, and shaped ultimately the war-narrative.[42]

US Government's War-Narrative and the Public Response

The intent of announcing unconditional surrender was twofold. On the one hand, this formulated political aim ensured Russia that the United States did not accept negotiations or a form of appeasement that left Germany operationally capable. Secondly, FDR focused also on the dissipation of doubts of the American population regarding the Darlan deal and the affirmation of the pursued *Germany first* strategy. FDR connected the aim of unconditional surrender with the defense of American values in the fight against the Nazi ideology and with the American sacrifice for a "Good War."[43] In the case of Casablanca, political aim and war-narrative coincided exactly.

that the Allies accepted Darlan as the head of the civilian government in return of stopping all actions of Vichy forces in North Africa against the Allies. Casey, 109-120.

[41] Matloff, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department; Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*, 18-41.

[42] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Joint Press Conference with Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca," *The American Presidency Project*, January 24, 1943, accessed October 11, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16408; Persico, 266-271; Brewer, 104-116.

[43] Casey, xviii; Persico, 266-271.

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After Casablanca, time was less relevant for the JCS. Although the operationalization of unconditional surrender was challenging, the JCS got a clear political aim backed through a consistent war-narrative to the public. The major challenge was the synchronization of the multi-theater operations and simultaneous preparation for the cross-Channel attack within the JCS and CCS. Although Marshall explained concerns that unconditional surrender motivated the Axis to protract the war, time became less relevant for the military after FDR's definition of this absolute war aim.[44] Specifically, the postponement of the cross Channel attack directly at Europe's and Germany's main stake illustrated the decoupling of time from aim and narrative.

Dropping the Bomb–Achieving Unconditional Surrender Without War-Protraction

After the sudden death of FDR on the 12 April 1945, Harry S. Truman became the 33rd President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States. The battle in Europe approached the end with the capitulation of Germany on 8 May 1945. At the conference in Potsdam in July 1945, the United States, Great Britain, Russia, and China sought to find a post-war solution for Europe and their actions against a not yet surrendered Japan. Considerations of a participation of Russia in the fight against Japan, the territory of Manchuria, the post-war constellation in the Pacific, and specifically the position of Japan as counterweight to Russia and China determined the political considerations and decision-making of the US administration.[45]

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[44] Mansoor, 340-351.

[45] Robert J. Moskin, *Mr. Truman's War: The Final Victories of World War II and the Birth of the Postwar World* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 99-102, 267-276; Within the considerations about the decision of dropping Atomic weapons, the monograph will not focus on moral aspects or judgments concerning the target discrimination to avoid civilian casualties. Acknowledging the importance of opposing perspectives, discussions, and criticism about the application of these weapons, these considerations are not part of the monograph.

In the Pacific theater, the US Navy and US Air Force dominated their respective

domains, encircled the main islands of Japan, and established a blockade. However, the Japanese

forces demonstrated their intent to fight the war to the last man, woman, and child. The US

seizure and occupation of Okinawa illustrated the Japanese hesitation to surrender. Consequently,

the United States assumed either an extreme protraction of the war, or a significant increase of

American war casualties in an invasion of Japan.[46]

President Truman's Political Aim

In formulation the political aim, President Truman had to balance a Japanese military

surrender, keeping Japan's government under US control operationally capable, and establishing

Japan as a Russian-Chinese counterweight in the Pacific.[47] During the Potsdam-Conference on 26

July 1945, along with the Soviet Union, France, Great Britain and China, President Truman

formulated the US political aim of the unconditional surrender of Japan's armed forces. In the

following declaration of Potsdam, the Allies offered Japan the opportunity to end the war through

her proclamation of the disarmament and surrender of her forces. Otherwise, the Allies,

specifically the United States, promised the invasion and devastation of Japan.[48] The success of

the Trinity tests provided President Truman the opportunity of achieving the formulated political

aim with less casualties in comparison of an invasion. The atomic bomb, however historically and

morally questioned, increased President Truman's options avoiding US casualties and enforcing

the end of World War II.[49]

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[46] Michael D. Pearlman, *Unconditional Surrender, Demobilization, and the Atomic Bomb* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 1996), 9-11; Herman S. Wolk, and Richard P. Hallion, "FDR and Truman. Continuity and Context in the A-Bomb Decision," *Air and Space Power Journal* (Fall 1995): 1-5.

[47] Moskin, 99-102, 99-102, 268-275.

[48] Harry S. Truman, "Draft Statement on the Dropping of the Bomb," *Truman Library*, July 30, 1945, accessed October 12, 2016, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/documents/index.php?documentid=9-15&pagenumber=4; Moskin, 267-275.

[49] Moskin, 271-272; Wolk, 1-5; Sarah Hamshari, *Harry S. Truman and the Atomic Bomb: A Case*

US Government's War Narrative and the Public Response

The war-narrative of the US government remained unchanged with President Truman's announcement requiring the unconditional surrender of Japan during the Potsdam-Conference. Although the American population still believed on the necessity of a final defeat of Japan, public opinion shifted to a preference of a more casualty-minimizing strategy. Further, the first signs of a beginning exhaustion of the population emerged with the requirement of shifting of some war production to consumer goods.[50] However, the unchanged US war-narrative focused and maintained public opinion to the final victory.[51]

The Political-Military Discourse–Implications for Operational Art and the Operational Artist

Within the JCS, there existed several perspectives about the final approach on Japan. All of these kept the most important consideration of a balanced cost-benefit analysis in mind. Although the US Navy suggested a blockade in conjunction with a prolonged combined bomber offensive of the US Air Force, Marshall as well as Stimson objected several times because of the time-consuming aspect of this suggestion. Further, the JCS took into account the possible access of Russia into the fight and its consequences on US influence in the Pacific. Marshall as the Chief of the JCS supported President Truman's claim for unconditional surrender. Main aspects were the avoidance of the impression of a deteriorating US commitment to fight, wrong signals towards the Allies, and exhaustion of the US population will to fight.[52] Dropping the two atomic bombs forced Japan to surrender instantaneously without the necessity of an US invasion. The

Study in the Decision Making Process Leading to Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Case Study, Austin, TX: Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, 2012), 7-12, accessed Aug 22, 2016, http://lbjschool.austin.utexas.edu/diplomacy/files/2013/05/Sarah-Hamshari-Case-Study-Truman-and-the-Atomic-Bombs.pdf.

[50] Larson, 17-19; Pearlman, 5-7.

[51] Pearlman, 7.

[52] Louis Morton, "The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb," in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Robert Greenfield (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), 500-518; Pearlman, 11-20.

United States was able to balance the assumed costs of an invasion, the protraction and extension of the war through a blockade, with the necessity to shorten and finish the war quickly. The atomic bomb ensured the achievement of the political aim while preserving the public opinion against a further exhaustion. Therefore, the atomic bomb was an absolute mean to end an absolute war and a direct instrument to influence the factor time.

The Significance of Time for the Relationship of Political Aim and War-Narrative

The case study of World War II illustrated that the factor time was less relevant in its relation to political aim and war-narrative, because of the emergence of an existential threat, the war of necessity, the coherence between political aim and war-narrative, and the opportunity to influence the factor time with all means available in an absolute war. Nazi Germany and Japan posed an existential threat to the security of the United States. Although the United States indirectly supported the war against Germany until 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor forced the United States to enter the war. In other words, the United States fought a war of necessity against nations, who threatened the existence of the United States.[53] This created a moral cause for the US government to legitimize the political aim of Germany's and Japan's defeat and later unconditional surrender with a credible war-narrative. The moral cause as the maintained foundation for political aim and war-narrative created credibility over time. The huge degree of population's agreement to fight this *Good War* backed the government and illustrated the willingness to bear the societal costs of like reduced production of consumer goods, the casualties' attendant to a long war, or budget debts.

Specifically the government's ability to sustain the coincidence of political aim and war-narrative ensured her credibility. The maintained explanation of American interests, values, and

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[53] Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs,* 67-72; Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 12-15, 19-22.

reasons of the *Good War* did not change the population's expectations about outcome and benefits for the United States in a post-war world order. The initial and final aim and their interdependent public expectations were in consonance. The political aim of final victory in an absolute war is timeless, because this political aim did not focus on the achievement of an aim in a certain period. The aim was final, not bound to a specific timeframe. Further, the US government, specifically FDR, was able to set the conditions for a sequenced success to maintain public support. The postponement of a direct attack on Europe and Germany in favor of the assumed more successful operation Torch was one example. Another case was the start of the cross-Channel attack in 1944 instead of 1943 to increase the chances for success. Additionally, FDR allowed the war effort in the Pacific to continue, albeit with fewer ground forces, but as a major air and naval war, in keeping the American peoples' enmity and desire to defeat Japan as the nation that actually attacked the United States.[54]

Ultimately, the United States had the means to influence the factor time actively. At the brink of a necessary invasion of Japan, the United States possessed the means to weigh prospective and actual costs of the prolongation of the war. According to political aim of Japan's unconditional surrender and the respective US war-narrative, the US government used her atomic weapons to finish the war quickly preventing the probable exhaustion of the American population.[55]

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[54] Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1992), 9-17.

[55] Larson, 10-12.
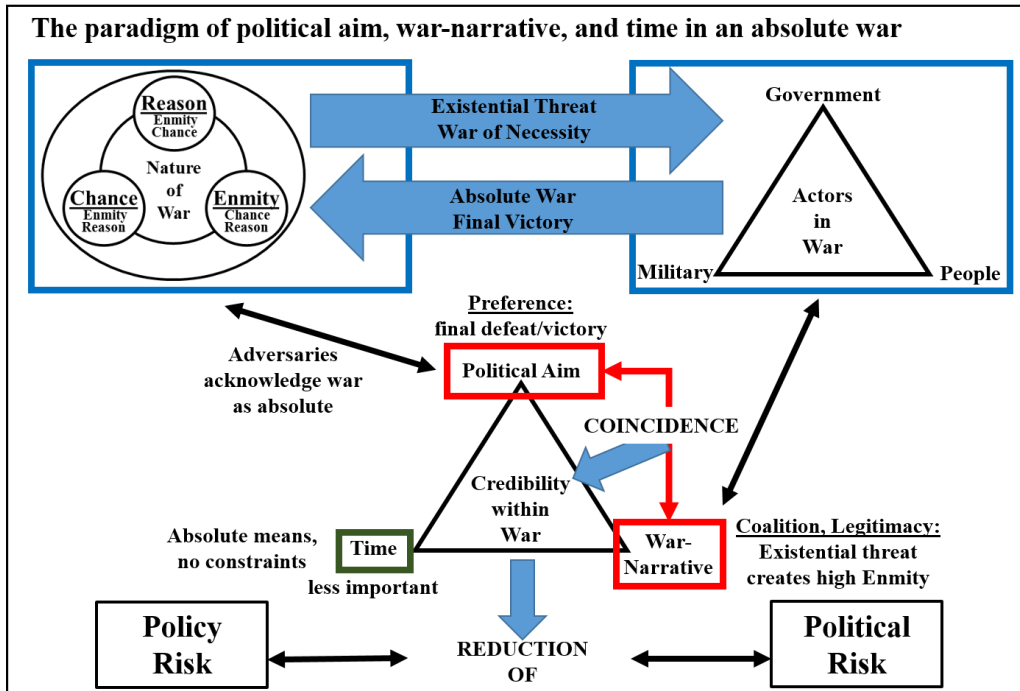
Figure 3. Relationship of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time in an Absolute War. (Figure developed by the author).

As figure 3 indicates, time was less important within the US engagement in World War II, because of the coincidence of political aim and war-narrative that ensured credibility, public support, and that the means available matched the ends. Consequently, government's credibility ensured the control of policy and political risks.[56] Operational art is therefore the philosophical frame evaluating the political aim in relation to the war that a nation is willing to fight, the appropriateness of the corresponding war-narrative, and the military means available to achieve the aim or influence the factor time. Concisely, the operational artist evaluates the national operational paradigm in relation to those of the opponent within the respective operational environment including the factor time. Therefore, operational art expands its paradigm of ends, ways, and means with the factor time.

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[56] Kubiak, 156-163.

Section III: The Trinity of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time During the US Engagement in the Vietnam War from 1961-1975

The United States, the Theory of Limited War, and Vietnam

The successful test of a Soviet atomic bomb in 1949 introduced the dawn of the end of unimpeded US post-World War II supremacy. The nuclear arms race and the development of the hydrogen bomb made the conduct of absolute war for final victory at least for the superpowers United States and the Soviet Union to a suicidal endeavor. Further, the superpowers fostered and expanded their respective partnerships and alliances, resulting in the two competing spheres–the US-led free world and the bloc of communism–the seed of the Cold War.[57]

The Korean War from 1950 to 1953 with its final stalemate illustrated the absence of the strategic final victory for the first time, because President Truman limited the ends and means in avoiding the nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union in an area of marginal US interest. Cold War and Korea led consequently to a revival of the theory of limited war through the works of Robert Osgood in 1957. Major theoretical cornerstones were the necessary limitation of political aims, the clear communication of these aims to the adversary, a precise restriction of the geographical area, the availability of open diplomatic channels, and the war termination through negotiations. Prerequisites were the tight control of the military with the overall purpose of preventing an escalation and transition to a nuclear confrontation.[58]

Avoiding such an escalation, the goal of US defense strategy after World War II was containment of Communism on a global scale. Although Europe was key, the United States intended to support free countries in their resistance against communist suppression. Therefore, US involvement in Southeast Asia started immediately after World War II. Filling the void of the

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[57] Cannon, 71-104; Osgood, 13-45, 238-251.

[58] George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), 3-7; Osgood, 13-45, 238-251; John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 33-34.

Japanese surrender in August 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

(DRV) to a sovereign state in North Vietnam that led to an unavoidable conflict and essentially

ended the resurrected power of France. The French-Indochina War started in 1946 with French

defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. According to the "domino theory"[59] that predicted the fall of all

nations in an area after the collapse of the first state to Communism, President Dwight D.

Eisenhower supported the French efforts in Southeast Asia. The Geneva Accord of 20 July 1954

separated Vietnam at the 17th parallel. The intent was the re-unification of the Communist

controlled North with South Vietnam (SVN) after a general election under one government.

Accordingly, the DRV postulated ultimately her political aim of Vietnamese re-unification as the

only agreeable solution. In Clausewitz's context, re-unification was the political aim of final

victory for the DRV that characterized the nature of her war in absolute terms. On the other hand,

the proclamation of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) on 26 October 1955 with Ngo Dinh Diem as

her first President thwarted the Geneva agreement. President Eisenhower initiated and JFK

pursued the support of the RVN with material, equipment, and training to prevent the falling first

domino as a Communist splinter into the Southeast Asian economic trade zone.[60]

The confrontation between the two superpowers, specifically between JFK and Premier

Nikita Khrushchev, increased significantly and expanded to Southeast Asia in 1961. The Soviet

government announced officially her support of nationalist liberation movements in Vietnam. The

combination of the Berlin Crisis in 1961, the Cuba missile crisis in 1962, a deteriorating situation

in Laos, the pressure of US media and public expectation of preventing the loss of Southeast Asia

urged JFK to pursue a *hard* course against Communism and pulled the United States more and

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[59] The domino theory postulates the theory of a chain reaction that if the first nation falls to Communism all other nations in an area would follow. Such a development would also challenge US credibility on a global scale. Gary R. Hess, *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 78-84.

[60] Adrian R. Lewis, *The American Culture of War: A History of US Military Force from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 228-239; Within the monograph, the application of the terms Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and South Vietnam (SVN), as well as Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and North Vietnam (NVN) are synonymous.

more into Vietnam. Diem's inappropriate approach to governance and the military coup on 1 November 1963 in SVN with Diem's death led to further deterioration. After the assassination of JFK on 22 November 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) took office and faced emerging operations in the Northern provinces with an expansion of Communist control in 1964. Consequently, LBJ increased the number of US forces in SVN and established the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) with General William C. Westmoreland as its head. Further, LBJ approved OPLAN 34A in January 1964 that allowed covert commando operations against NVN, naval electronic reconnaissance within the De Soto patrols, and the show of force of the US Navy along the North Vietnamese coast.[61]

Running for election, LBJ central themes were the "Great Society,"[62] specifically the improvement of education, Medicare, civil rights, and the decrease of poverty, while maintaining peace and avoiding US force deployments to Vietnam. The limitation of the war in Vietnam was the main intent to avoid unfolding effects on US domestic programs. LBJ's Republican challenger, Senator Barry Goldwater, argued in favor of an escalation of the war against Communism. The incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin on 2 and 4 August 1964, where–from US perspective–North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the US destroyers USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy without provocation, provided LBJ the opportunity to act in pursuing US interests while limiting the expansion of the conflict. After the announcement of the deliberate NVN-attack and the directed air strikes on North Vietnamese gunboats on 4 August, LBJ requested the support to act from Congress along four premises.[63] "First, America keeps her word. Second, the

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[61] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.3, "Evolution of the War. Rolling Thunder Program Begins: January - June 1965," *National Archives*, 2011, i-iv, accessed November 2, 2016, https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-3.pdf.; Spencer C. Tucker, *Vietnam* (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 97-110; Lewis, 228-239; J. Justin Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 8-15.

[62] Hess, 83.

[63] George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 141-148.

issue is the future of Southeast Asia as a whole. Third, our purpose is peace …[without] military, political, or territorial ambitions in the area." Fourth, this is not a jungle war, but a struggle for freedom on every front of human activity."[64] The Congress voted overwhelmingly for LBJ's request, approved the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution,"[65] and granted the conduct of appropriate actions. However, the Tonkin-incident and resolution widened US commitment from defending SVN to responding to North Vietnamese provocations.[66] Through the overwhelming victory in the presidential election, President Johnson united the majority of the American population as well as the Congress in backing his course in the case of Vietnam.[67]

The formulation of the political aim of a restricted US commitment to Vietnam, the subsequent strategy of "gradual escalation,"[68] and the respective war-narrative limited the US effort in Vietnam. The United States tried to fight a limited war for limited aims against an enemy, who pursued an absolute political aim. The historical case study illustrates that time was the most important factor in driving the political aim, war-narrative, policy and political risks. Geographic limitations, the constrained application of military means in combination with a mismatch of political aim and war-narrative led finally to a credibility gap and the collapse of US war-policy. Through the loss of public support and therefore the democratic legitimacy for war, Vietnam became unwinnable. LBJ's Americanization of the Vietnam War in 1965, the policy change after the 1968 Tet-Offensive, and President Richard Nixon's Vietnamization serve as points in time to evaluate political aim, war-narrative, and implications for the operational artist.

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[64] Lewis, 239; Hess, 83-84.

[65] Lewis, 239.

[66] Herring, *America's Longest War,* 144-145; William C. Gibbons, *The US Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Responsibilities, Part III: January-July 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 1-20; Hess, 86-89.

[67] George D. Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 132-143.

[68] Herring, *America's Longest War*, 148.
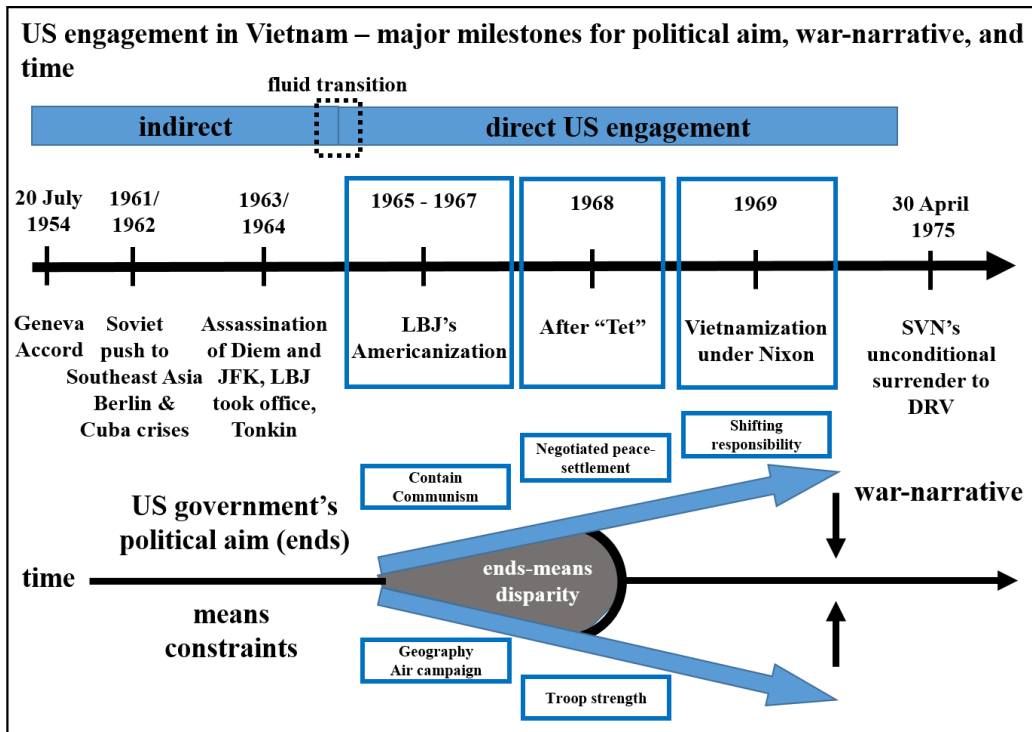
Figure 4. Relationship of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time in Vietnam. (Figure developed by the author).

Figure 4 illustrates the case study's hypothesis that a disparity between political aim, means, and presidential restrictions and constraints existed that increased the policy and political risks over time. Mitigating this disparity at the first phases of the war, the war-narrative turned, over time, the credibility of the population towards the US administration that increased the political risk significantly. This provides the foundation assessing the importance of time in a limited war for limited aim.

Lyndon B. Johnson's Americanization of Vietnam in 1965

Elected as 34th President of the United States in 1964, LBJ altered the promise of keeping the United States out of war. Although the US government supported SVN and General Westmoreland's steady requests of numerical force expenditures within the advisory program, the situation in SVN deteriorated continually. Ultimately, the DRV attack on a US base at Pleiku and the car bombing of US embassy Saigon were the trigger for the transition from a rather passive to an active participation, and from defending SVN to directly attacking North Vietnam. LBJ

decided the expansion of the military mission in Vietnam from advisory to waging war, starting with the air campaign Rolling Thunder in February 1965, and finally the execution of a major ground war in July 1965.[69]

Lyndon B. Johnson's Political Aim

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorized LBJ to prevent the fall of SVN by taking appropriate action that included also the significant deployment of force. LBJ and his advisors, specifically Secretary of State McGeorge Bundy and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, pursued an approach of *gradual escalation*. The major assumption was the DRV would not risk its total destruction for the achievement of its goal. Therefore, LBJ decided in February 1965 to launch the air campaign Rolling Thunder to disrupt North Vietnam's ability to support combat and insurgency operations in the South in combination with the US force build-up in SVN to neutralize insurgency, reconstitute, and train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).[70]

The National Security Council (NSC) developed under the guidance of President Johnson the US policy along the following political aims and objectives. The general political aims were the support of an independent SVN, the establishment of a neutral settlement-process in Southeast Asia, and therefore the resistance against a further global Communist expansion. The specific aim for SVN was the limitation of the influence of China and her ally North Vietnam, the support of the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) to stabilize the situation, and gain time for the United States strengthening other areas in Southeast Asia.[71] However, LBJ limited geographically all US actions to North and South Vietnam in avoiding a further escalation.

[69] McGeorge Bundy, *National Security Action Memorandum No. 328* (Washington, DC: The White House, 1965), 3; Kubiak, 43-45; Tucker, 114-117.

[70] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.3, i-iv; Herring, *America's Longest War*, 147-149; Gregory A. Daddis, "American Military Strategy in the Vietnam War, 1965‑1973," *American History: Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, March 2015, accessed October 31, 2016, http://americanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-239?mediaType=Article#acrefore-9780199329175-e-239-div1-6.

[71] Pentagon Papers Part V.A, "Justification of the War. Public Statements, Volume II, D: The Johnson Administration," *National Archives*, 2011, D, accessed November 2, 2016, https://nara-media-

On the foundation of these political aims, General Earle Wheeler–Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)–described the outlined US policy along the following premises. The first was the maximization of the military effort to shore up and reverse the currently deteriorating situation. The second premise was the expansion of US military effort in SVN in combination with an increase of tempo and effectiveness of the air campaign in North Vietnam to the extent possible, while avoiding a Chinese or Communist intervention. Finally, all actions had to set favorable conditions for the improvement of the United States and SVN positions for further negotiations.[72]

Ultimately, these political aims in combination with the given constraints and geographic limitations led to Rolling Thunder, the phased US force build-up in SVN, and finally to the declaration of a major large-scale US operation in July 1965.

US Government's War-Narrative and the Public Response

LBJ's war policy founded on the premise that the resistance against Communism in Southeast Asia was vital for the United States. The narrative to legitimize LBJ's war policy followed the logic that the root cause of the conflict was the Communist aggression of North Vietnam. Although LBJ emphasized the US vital interests were at stake, the Johnson administration did not pursue necessary actions like the mobilization of national reserves, the

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001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-V-A-Vol-IID.pdf; Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.2.c, "Evolution of the War. Direct Action Military Pressures against NVN November - December 1964: The Johnson Commitments, 1964-1968," *National Archives*, 2011, 12-14, accessed November 2, 2016, https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-2c.pdf; Lloyd C. Gardner, *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 221-252.

[72] Earle Wheeler, "Telegram from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp)," in *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers*, ed. David M. Barret (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 129-130; Earle Wheeler, "Telegram from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp)," *Office of the Historian*, February 27, 1965, accessed November 1, 2016, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d170.

increase of the war budget, and the reduction of national spending to finance the war effort. This mismatch would later become the trigger of questioning legitimacy and necessity of the war.[73]

After starting Rolling Thunder, President Johnson addressed the US political aim within his speech at Johns Hopkins on 7 April 1965. The major US objective was an independent South Vietnam, unimpeded by other nations. Further, LBJ acknowledged that the US did not pursue any territorial or economic gains, and that the US was willing to do everything necessary to achieve the stated objective. Further, LBJ announced an economic program to leverage the US efforts on Southeast Asia supporting the Asian nations. However, LBJ concurrently limited the US commitment by stating that the US administration sought to prevent the conflict from spreading, favored a solution through negotiations, and tried to avoid North Vietnam's devastation through the restraining of the use of US military power.[74]

The war-narrative provided the stick of military action, the carrot of economic support, and the acceptance of negotiations simultaneously. Although LBJ approved Rolling Thunder, this campaign proved ineffective to disrupt North Vietnamese actions. Therefore, major ground deployments to SVN were necessary. These measures threatened LBJ's *Great Society* and compromised the escalation of war as well. Without additionally asking the Congress or giving a national address via television, President Johnson declared in a press conference on 28 July 1965 that the United States was prepared to defend SVN and was expanding her commitment, but was interested in peace negotiations that avoid a larger war.[75]

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[73] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.6.c, "Evolution of the War. Direct Action US Ground Strategy and Force Deployments 1965-1967: The Johnson Commitments, 1964-1968," *National Archives*, 2011, 10-14, accessed November 2, 2016, https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-6-a.pdf; Kubiak, 50-53.

[74] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address at Johns Hopkins University: 'Peace without Conquest'," *LBJ Library University of Texas*, April 7, 1965, accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650407.asp; Brewer, 193-197.

[75] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.3, vii-viii; Hess, 104-109; Gibbons, 432-443.

In general, the LBJ's war-narrative generated the required public support, because of reasons like containment of Communism, credibility of the United States in Southeast Asia, and the support of free countries to resist Communist regimes. On the other hand, Johnson's major objective of a negotiated settlement in combination with military constraints limited the expectations of US public opinion for victory. Further, the different perspectives and discussions within the government–Democrats and Republicans–about US stakes in Vietnam and the consequences of their loss spread to the public domain, led to a polarization of opinions, and finally to the birth of the anti-war movement. Additionally, the limited objectives and expected gains of the war limited the willingness of US population to support the war with infinite resources. Limited aims justified only the use of limited resources and means.[76] Consequently, the war-narrative in relation to the political aim illustrates the difficulty of fighting and legitimizing a limited war for limited aim. The disparity between the ends and the available means creates a gap that leads to an increasing vulnerability over time, specifically against an adversary that pursues the paradigm of absolute war.

The Political-Military Discourse–Implications for Operational Art and the Operational Artist

LBJ established the NSC in November 1964 for developing a coherent US policy for Southeast Asia along LBJ's political aims. The NSC integrated for example representatives of the Office of the President, Department of State, Department of Defense, and the JCS ensuring the political-military discourse in developing options of an US policy for Southeast Asia. The formation of the NSC's military element consisted initially of the CJCS, General Wheeler and later additionally General Westmoreland as the Commander MACV. Further, Wheeler's

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[76] Pentagon Papers Part V.A, D-50-D-59; Larson, 24-30; Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge, NJ: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 323-326; Benjamin C. Schwarz, *Casualties, Public Opinion and US Military Intervention: Implications for US Regional Deterrence Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), 15-16; Brian S. Anthony, "On Public Opinion in Time of War" (Master's Thesis, Monterrey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), 7-24.

predecessor, General Maxwell Davenport Taylor, the acting US ambassador in SVN contributed also to the considerations of the NSC.[77] Consequently, the integration of the expertise of the JCS, the Joint Force Commander (JFC) MACV, and the US ambassador in SVN ensured and illustrated the political-military discourse in action.

Along LBJ's political aims, the Department of State suggested three options to the NSC: expanding military assistance to SVN as option one, the second option was a systemic program of military pressure in combination with option one, and the orchestration of negotiations between North and South Vietnam while disrupting infiltrations as third option. In assessing these options, the JCS emphasized Southeast Asia as an area of major US interest against Communism. Further, the JCS rejected option one and option three, because these options were not feasible to achieve US objectives in Southeast Asia. In accordance with option two, the JCS preferred a rapid deployment and force build-up rather than the gradual escalation or response. Their reasoning was that resoluteness provided a greater psychological effect to the enemy about US determination to discourage the will of North Vietnam. Overall, this would mitigate risk, casualties, and costs. They reasoned further, that a graduated build-up and response supported the adaptation and escalation of the enemy that aimed on a long and protracted war.[78]

Besides the evaluation of the policy options in the NSC, the JCS and Westmoreland estimated in several meetings and considerations from November 1964 to July 1965 a troop strength of 500,000 forces and at least five years to achieve the stated political aims. Further, the military leadership assessed the constraints for ground forces operations to SVN and Rolling Thunder to North Vietnam insufficient in disrupting the North Vietnamese Army (NVA)

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[77] David M. Barret, ed, *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 91-191; Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.2.c, 5-7.

[78] Graham A. Cosmas, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 2* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History Press, 2012), 163-168; Pentagon Papers Part IV C.6.c, 9-15; Pentagon Papers Part IV C.2.c, 18-26; Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-*1967 (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History Press, 2006), 200-212, 232-259.

effectively. The presidential constraints of the war zone, the application of military means, and numbers prevented the US military of seizing the initiative, carrying the fight on enemy's soil, and occupying adversarial sanctuaries. Therefore, Westmoreland foresaw MACV's mission in breaking the enemy's will through force build-up and control of SVN rather than actively defeating the NVA.[79]

In this early phase of US active involvement in the Vietnam War, the JCS presumed that gradual escalation and the presidentially constrained means were not sufficient to break the enemy's will and achieve the objectives.[80] Although the US deployed more forces and economic aid to Vietnam beginning from 1965, the factor time became the critical factor in sustaining the war effort.

LBJ's Delusion and Westmoreland's Disconnect After the 1968 Tet-Offensive

After the US force build-up in the first half of 1965 and the continuous bombing of North Vietnam, Westmoreland pursued a strategy of attrition. Major aim was to search and destroy the enemy, disrupt infiltration routes, defeat the insurgency, aggressively attack NVA's main force, and expand the control in SVN. The development of this strategy emerged from the tactical level, determined after July 1965 the strategic thinking, and supported the US Army's doctrinal approach. Despite how well the US military machinery worked and achieved tactical successes, the battle of Ia Drang in November 1965 illustrated holes in the US policy. The underestimation of North Vietnam's will to fight, the geographic limitation for ground forces to SVN, and Johnson's fear of a conflict escalation through unrestricted bombing proved US policy ineffective in disrupting the DRV's ability to conduct operations or enforce peace negotiations.[81]

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[79] Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, 30-36, 40-45; Bruce Palmer, *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam* (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 172-180; Kubiak, 54.

[80] Moyar, 330-333.

[81] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.7.a, "Evolution of the War. Direct Action Air War in the North 1965-1968: The Johnson Commitments, 1964-1968," *National Archives*, 2011, 1-20, accessed November 2,

The Vietnam War protracted to 1966 and 1967. In 1966, the antiwar-movement increased dramatically. Specifically the US political aim of negotiations offered a polarized discussion concerning the way in achieving this objective. Further, the protracted escalation of the war, the fear of a confrontation with China or the Soviet Union, and the increasing costs for the United States led to the formation of several congressional commissions–the Fulbright Commission in 1966, Senate Republican Policy Committee study in 1967–to examine the US administration's policy and legitimacy of the Vietnam War.[82]

The Tet-Offensive on 30 January 1968 crushed psychologically the US administration, the political and intellectual elite, the US population, and specifically President Johnson. Although 'Tet' was a major tactical success for the US military, it blew the US government's war-narrative and created a tremendous credibility gap. The US war-narrative and the steady deployment of US forces from 1965 to over half a million in 1967/1968 produced the public perception that a North Vietnamese operation of this scale might be impossible. The burden that the United States had borne since 1954, but specifically within the last three years, the media coverage about the ground and air operations and the congressional hearings as well in combination with a further protraction of the war led to a decrease of public support and therefore a change in US policy.[83] The factor time increased the vulnerability of the war-narrative that tried to mitigate the ends-means-disparity between LBJ's political aim, military means, and the enforced constraints.

2016, https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-7-a.pdf; Herring, *America's Longest War*, 163-165; Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*, 42-50; Moyar, 406-411.

[82] Graham A. Cosmas, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 3* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History Press, 2009), 114-117; Kubiak, 61-67; Gregory A. Daddis, *No Sure Victory: Measuring US Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41-54; Mueller, 157-167; Gardner, 207-213.

[83] James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 5-9; Moss, 206-216; Larson, 24-30; Kubiak, 68-69; Daddis, *No Sure Victory*, 153-155; Gustainis, 39-41; Anthony, 24-36.

Lyndon B. Johnson's Political Aim

After the Tet-Offensive, the congressional hearings, and the resistance against the American draft system, US public support for the Vietnam War declined dramatically. The gold crisis of 1968 created additional financial and economic pressure for the US administration. LBJ's advisory group–the wise men–recommended the significant policy change of disengagement to prevent a further damage of United States global credibility. President Johnson's first decisions were the official rejection of Westmoreland's request for 206,000 additional troops and the general's replacement with General Creighton Abrams. The rejection and Westmoreland's replacement, who tried to seize the offensive to win the war, were the end of the *gradual escalation*-policy, the revision of the announcement to defend SVN by taking all necessary actions in 1965, and the inevitable shift of the political objective from winning to stalemate.[84]

The political aims of US policy were still a non-Communist SVN, but now through the increase of the effectiveness of GVN and ARVN, the support with equipment in first priority, the reduction and later the halt of the bombing campaign, and the willingness to achieve a negotiated settlement with North Vietnam. The draft of additional US forces at home, the replenishment of the US strategic reserve, tax increases to finance non-Vietnam related measures to overcome the economic and financial crisis accompanied the US Vietnam policy. This meant that a further escalation of the war became impossible and introduced the US transition from Americanization to Vietnamization and pacification in Vietnam.[85]

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[84] Moss, 240-245.

[85] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.7.b, "Evolution of the War. Direct Action Air War in the North 1965-1968, Volume II: The Johnson Commitments, 1964-1968," *National Archives*, 2011, 194-196, accessed November 2, 2016, https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-7-b.pdf.

US Government's War-Narrative and the Public Response

On 31 March 1968, LBJ addressed the adapted political aim and the new war-narrative of de-escalation to the nation. LBJ offered the halt of the bombing of North Vietnam for productive negotiations. Undermining this offer, the United States promised the unconditional partial bombing halt as a gesture of de-escalation. Further, the US administration would sent only 13,500 instead of Westmoreland's requested 206,000 additional troops. Third, LBJ announced the shift of US engagement to enhance the capabilities of GVN and ARVN–the start of pacification, and later Vietnamization. Finally, LBJ stated that he would resign after his presidential term.[86]

The *old* narrative of containing Communism in Southeast Asia was not able to back the adapted political aims. Therefore, the new war-narrative of de-escalation took place and shaped the presidential election campaign later that year. Specifically the offer of the bombing halt to North Vietnam was of significant importance. Probably hoping that North Vietnam would reject such an offer, the Johnson administration had to start negotiations six weeks after 31 March 1968 in Paris. The promised stop of bombing limited further US military means in Vietnam while concurrently supporting the NVA war effort of supporting insurgency in SVN. Furthermore, these negotiations created the perception by the US public that the Vietnam War would presumably end soon.[87] Consequently, the disparity between political aim, military means, and the further restricting war-narrative expanded the risk of the US policy in Vietnam significantly. LBJ's acknowledgement that he would not run for a second term illustrated the increased political risk stemming from the lost credibility among US population.

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[86] Johnson, Lyndon B. "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Address to the Nation, Announcing Steps to Limit the War in Vietnam and Reporting his Decision not to seek Reelection on March 31, 1968," *LBJ Library University of Texas*. March 31, 1966, accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/680331.asp; Moss, 243-248.

[87] Moss, 247-248; Kubiak, 73-75; Michael P. Jones, "A Tumultuous Tenure: The Presidency of Lyndon Baines Johnson" (Master's Thesis, Department of History, Johnson City, TN: East Tennessee State University, 2010), 60-70; Mueller, 56-58.

The Political-Military Discourse–Implications for Operational Art and the Operational Artist

After the Tet-Offensive in January 1968, President Johnson sent General Wheeler in February 1968 to Vietnam for a general assessment of the situation. Although the DRV and NVA did not achieve their initial objectives and the US led alliance defeated the NVA within the Tet-Offensive, General Wheeler summarized that the will and capability of North Vietnam were still indisputable there. Wheeler acknowledged that the enemy was able to maintain morale with replacements and indoctrination. Further, NVA maintained freedom of movement and action in the countryside, its recruiting potential, therefore its high tempo of recovery, and its adequate logistical system. On the contrary, Wheeler evaluated that GVN effectiveness suffered and the ARVN had lost the initiative, and were on the defense. General Wheeler illustrated three major problem of MACV. First, difficulties of logistical support of US forces according to weather challenges, enemy interdiction, and massing of US forces within the demilitarized zone. Second, the defensive posture of ARVN in combination with the balance between securing hamlets (towns and cities) and the countryside allows the enemy to attack rapidly at the place of his choice and forces MACV to devote their forces to address this challenge. Third, the enemy was able to synchronize its actions while MACV separated its forces to fulfill all tasks concurrently.[88]

The CJCS evaluated the North Vietnamese strategy as offensive in nature in order to expand control and keep pressure on the Alliance. Keeping in mind the political aim of defending SVN against Communism, Wheeler recommended a US strategy of seizing the initiative and defeating the NVA's offensive. In this regard, Wheeler echoed the request of the Joint Force Commander, General Westmoreland, for additional troops. Within the discussions of the JCS, General John P. McConnell, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, recommended the removal of all

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[88] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.6.c, 12-14; Daddis, *No Sure Victory*, 133-153.

geographic constraints, because of the belief that the US policy of limited war with limited means was not appropriate to achieve the political aim of defending SVN and containing Communism.[89]

In general, Wheeler, the JCS, and Westmoreland described the situation in Vietnam that the US forces were not able to fulfill their mission and achieve the political aim, if the restrictions on the military means continued. Meeting the challenges within Wheeler's assessment required either less restrictive constraints, the adaptation and reduction of the political aim, or the mobilization and deployment of additional forces. Therefore, Westmoreland requested additional forces to deal concurrently with all assessed challenges in SVN while Wheeler and the JCS pressed for the mobilization of the US reserve forces.[90] Additionally, Secretary of State Clark Clifford, introduced on 1 March 1968, concluded after an intense study of military assessments, Central Intelligence Agency reports, and discussion with the presidential 'wise men'-advisory group that a victory in Vietnam was not predictable in a foreseeable timeframe. Clifford recommended the US disengagement to President Johnson.[91]

The situation looked like a dilemma for President Johnson. Mobilizing US reserves meant that LBJ would scale the US commitment in the previous portrayed limited war in Vietnam. Further, the expansion of the US war effort would increase the US costs that otherwise would threaten the program of the *Great Society*, and included an additional burden besides the gold crisis for the US population. An approval of Westmoreland's request of additional forces might possibly have decreased the disparity of political aim and available means, contributed to the success of Westmoreland's strategy, and therefore reduced the risk of failure of the US Vietnam policy. On the contrary, the mobilization and deployment of additional forces had contradicted LBJ's narrative of the war in Vietnam, increased dramatically the economic costs,

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[89] Cosmas, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 3*, 149-152.

[90] Ibid., 149-160; Andrew F. Krepinevic, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, NY: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 239-241.

[91] Pentagon Papers Part IV.C.7.b, 150-154; Lewis, 276-280.

and threatened the *Great Society* program. The political risk of losing the popular legitimacy at home would be inherent through an emerging credibility gap between the contradicting poles of political aim and means.[92] Specifically in the context of the assessed and exercised will of North Vietnam to maintain the war, the factor time heavily influenced the evaluation of the risk of US policy in relation to military means and the political risk for the Democrats at home. Besides the influence of time to political aim, war-narrative, policy and political risk, time affects also the ability to seize, maintain, and specifically regain the initiative on the grand, strategic scale. The loss of the strategic initiative in relation to the factor time might also be an indicator for the increase of the policy risk.

Vietnamization under Nixon

In the aftermath of President Johnson's speech in March 1968, the United States pursued the disengagement in Vietnam, the transition of responsibility to ARVN–the Vietnamization, and the approach of de-escalation in combination with a negotiated peace settlement. On the contrary, the DRV adopted her strategy to combine negotiations while still maintaining the fight.[93] The clashing paradigms of absolute war for the final achievement of Vietnam's unification against the limited approach of using negotiations for the settlement of two Vietnam's in an environment of an emerging disparity between political aim and means illustrated the significant influence of the factor time.

Richard Nixon's Political Aim

The main effort of Richard Nixon's presidential campaign was the promise to end the war in Vietnam. However, the approach within the presidential campaign was twofold. On the one hand, Nixon wanted to get the agreement of the Republican Party and its hawks predicting the

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[92] Brewer, 280-283; Michael A. Hennessy, *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps, 1965-1972* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 70-77.

[93] Lewis, 280-281.

end of the war as an American victory. Otherwise, Nixon responded also to the desire of the intellectual anti-war movement–the doves–within politics, student protests, unrests, and decreasing public support for the war. Although predicting the end of the war, Nixon foreclosed the option of a unilateral withdrawal. However, Nixon defeated Vice President Herbert H. Humphrey, who embodied the failed US policy of the Johnson administration.[94]

President Nixon formulated the political aim of ending the war through the following conditions. First, the United States would await DRV proposals for de-escalation, and would discuss de-escalation efforts only in combination with a mutual force withdrawal. Second, the withdrawal of US forces had to accompany an NVA-force withdrawal from SVN, Laos, and Cambodia. Third, the process of Vietnamization–the provision of training and equipment of SVN-forces–had the highest priority of national effort.[95] In combination with the Vietnamization efforts as the condition to withdraw US forces, Nixon expanded the air campaign like Eisenhower in Korea beyond North Vietnam's means, tried to improve the situation with China and the Soviet Union diplomatically through incentives aiming on the enforcement of the government of North Vietnam to the negotiation table.[96] Although President Nixon made these efforts and tasked the development and study of several time-related options for the withdrawal of the US forces, the US administration formulated her political aims of ending the war in a conditions-based rather than time-constrained fashion.

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[94] Richard M. Nixon, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida." *The American Presidency Project*. August 8, 1968, accessed November 11, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968; Moss, 267-270; Willbanks, 9-13.

[95] Henry Kissinger, *National Security Study Memorandum No. 36* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1969), 1; Richard M. Nixon, *National Security Decision Memorandum No. 9* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1969), 1-2.

[96] Lewis, 280-284.

US Government's War-Narrative and the Public Response

After the Tet-Offensive in 1968, LBJ introduced the war-narrative of a political solution of the Vietnam War through negotiations. President Nixon based his presidential election campaign in the narrative of ending the war in Vietnam. Concurrently, Nixon blamed LBJ's policy of using major force deployments and reinforcements in combination with air bombing campaigns as ineffective. Increasing the pressure on NVA-forces in North Vietnam and Cambodia, Nixon approved secret bombings within Operation Menu on 17 March 1969.[97]

President Nixon started to explain the administration's political aim through several interviews and press conferences concerning the US engagement in Asia. Nixon laid out the approach of assisting Asian nations through equipment and material support to withstand Communism–the Nixon Doctrine. Further, Nixon addressed the administration's political aims and approaches within the "Silent Majority Speech"[98] on 3 November 1969 that proclaimed negotiations in combination with Vietnamization–the capability build-up of ARVN.[99]

Although public opinion initially backed Nixon's aim and approach, the revelation of the secret bombing campaign of Operation Menu emerged in massive antiwar-protests, Congressional debates, investigations, and opposition of the liberal elite in US politics that favored negotiations and disengagement. The leak of the secret US Air force bombings in contradiction to the war-narrative of a political solution polarized the public opinion, forced Nixon to abandon these actions, and decreased the credibility of the administration

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[97] Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1979), 239-254; Richard M. Nixon, "Timeline," *Nixon Library*, March 17, 1969, accessed November 11, 2016, https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/thetimes/timeline/; Lewis, 280-284.

[98] Richard M. Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," *Nixon Library*, November 3, 1969, accessed November 11, 2016, https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forkids/speechesforkids/silentmajority/silentmajority_transcript.pdf.

[99] Ibid.; Richard M. Nixon, "Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen." *The American Presidency Project*, July 25, 1969, accessed November 11, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140; Brewer, 208-218; Willbanks, 16-20; Gustainis, 55-62.

significantly.[100] The loss of credibility of the war-narrative and the enforced disparity between political aim and the restricted means deteriorated the US options over time.

The Political-Military Discourse–Implications for Operational Art and the Operational Artist

After President Nixon took office, he tasked the development of several options to withdraw US forces from Vietnam. In June 1969, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird in accordance with the CJCS provided options that ranged from eighteen to forty-two months within a force spectrum ranging from 26,000 to 306,000. Laird and the CJCS evaluated and recommended the option of forty-two months with 26,000 forces as feasible. Further, the recommendation to the President comprised the warning that if North Vietnam refused to withdraw her forces in reciprocity, a rapid re-deployment of US forces would endanger the US policy of Vietnamization. Anticipated results were mission failure to pacification, the insufficient build-up of ARVN's capabilities, and the GVN's collapse.[101] This political-military discourse mirrored the importance of time to the political aim, the means available, and the US policy risk.

General Creighton Abrams replaced General Westmoreland on 1 July 1968 as Commander MACV and turned the military approach from "search and destroy" to "hold and build" and the assistance of ARVN's capability build-up. However, public protests in the United States, domestic and economic pressure, and the will of the Congress to accept unilateral concessions led to Nixon's offer of a possible withdrawal of all foreign forces within one year in the address to the nation in November 1969.[102] This created not only expectations within the US population, the factor time was thereby the most pressing and limiting factor for the military.

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[100] Kubiak, 64-65, 75; Herring, *America's Longest War*, 276-296; Lewis, 280-284.

[101] The BDM Corporation. *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam: Volume V Planning the War* (Carlisle, PE: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute Press, 1980), 6-1-6-18.

[102] Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam;" Palmer, 97-103.

Offensive ground operations to Cambodia or additional bombing raids had the purpose to disrupt the enemy's logistical system and its ability to reinforce its frontline units. This meant that although there was in particular a reduction of geographic constraints, the conduct of offensive operations aimed on the creation of conditions for the withdrawal of US forces. The factor time limited the US government's flexibility in achieving the political aim of ending the war through negotiations. Nixon's announcement created public expectations that increased the President's political risk and threatened the administration's credibility, if they could not be achieved. Therefore, Nixon weighted the political risk against the risk of US policy of Vietnamization. Consequently, the factor time influenced significantly the political and policy risk within the relationship of political aim and war-narrative.

The Significance of Time for the Relationship of Political Aim and War-Narrative

The Vietnam War case study reveals the crucial importance of time in relation to political aim and war-narrative. The Vietnam War was for the United States a limited war with limited aim that created the public expectation of limited costs in relation to limited benefits. Specifically the growing costs of the United States against an enemy that fought an absolute war for unification as final victory illustrated the challenge of maintaining population's enmity and support over time. The preference to achieve the limited political aims with limited costs restricted and constrained the means and led ultimately to a disparity of ends and means.[103]

Although political aim and war-narrative achieved initially the support of the population and the political intellectual elite, the US government faced a credibility gap as the war protracted. Major reason was the disparity between the political aim or the ends and the

[103] Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs,* 67-72; Douglas Pike, "Conduct of the Vietnam War: Strategic Factors, 1965-1968," in *The Second Indochina War: Proceedings of a Symposium held at Airlie, Virginia*, 7-9 November 1984, ed. John Schlight (Washington, DC: US Army of Military History, 1986): 99-119; Larson, 24-30, 86-91.

designated means and constraints. The US government defined the political aim as the containment of Communism through the defense of SVN. On the contrary, the US Vietnam policy should not distract domestic politics like the "Great Society" and designated only limited resources to achieve the defined ends. The rejection of a general mobilization and the limitation to SVN without expanding the area of operations to NVA sanctuaries forced the United States from the beginning on a more defensive posture. The case study illustrated that the pursued policy was not able to break North Vietnam's will, her enmity, and dominate the factor time in favor of the United States avoiding protraction.[104] Consequently, the risk of failure of the US policy increased significantly over time and achieved its tipping point in the Tet-Offensive.

Although the war-narrative achieved initially the provision of Congressional and public support, the mitigation of the ends-means-disparity was not possible over time. Starting with the hearings within the Fulbright Commission in 1966, the government's war-narrative was not able to maintain the coalition and unity of the political elite in Washington. Diverging perspectives of Democrats and Republican split the discussions about the conduct of the war. These tendencies emerged into the public discussions, polarized the public opinion, fueled the antiwar-movements, and finally began to undermine the government's legitimacy and political aims. From the outset of an emerging policy risk, the US administration adapted several times the policy, the political aims, and accordingly the means and constraints.[105]

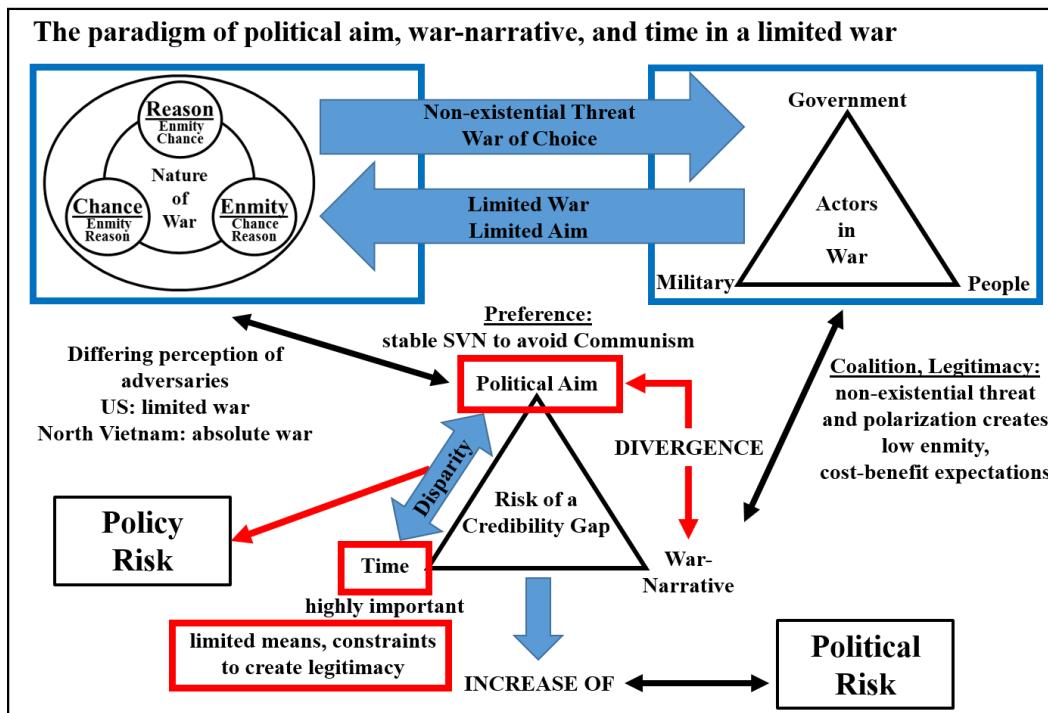[104] Larson, 59-66

[105] Ibid., 86-92.

Figure 5. Relationship of Political Aim, War-Narrative, and Time in a Limited War. (Figure developed by the author).

Figure 5 illustrates that the origin of an ends-means-disparity exists in the realm of the nature of the war. The actors, specifically the US government fought this limited war of choice only with limited means and established constraints. The inability to challenge for example NVA's sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia or to establish a SVN government that represented the majority of the population increased the policy risk of defeat in Vietnam significantly. Consequently, this affected also the political risk for the political decision-maker according an emerging divergence between political aim and war-narrative.

The increasing policy and political risk made adaptations of US policy and the corresponding war-narrative necessary. Over time, the US administrations changed their approaches from Americanization and later Pacification to Vietnamization. The decrease of options to regain the strategic initiative, the inability to unite Washington's political elite, preventing a decreasing and polarizing population's support, and the further limitation of means led finally to a divergence and implosion of the war-narrative to contain Communism on a limited scale without mobilization. This created a credibility gap that the government was unable to

bridge. After Tet, the election of President Nixon, and the promise to end the war, the US government was unable to actively influence the factor time. This illustrates the significance of time on policy and politics in a limited war for limited aims.

Section IV: Conclusion–The Expansion of the Paradigm of Operational Art Meaning of Time in Limited and Absolute War

Time is less important in an absolute war for final victory. The reasons are the existence of an existential threat for the survival of a state, the political aim of final victory overthrowing the adversary, and therefore the application of all national available means to achieve the aim. Against the backdrop of its survival, a government is able to unite the political and intellectual elites as well as the population about this war of necessity. This creates and maintains a high enmity for the war. The existential context of surviving ensures the legitimacy of a state's actions and the respective war-narrative maintaining the population's enmity. A nation is able to apply all means without restrictions and constraints that reduce the risk of the pursued policy. Further, time is less important in an absolute war, because of the consonance of political aim and war-narrative. The emergence of a credibility gap is less likely and therefore the political risk of the political decision-maker is marginal.

In a limited war, a state applies means to maintain interests. The war of choice characterizes the pursuit or protection of interests. Therefore, the political aim is limited, because of the non-existential nature of the threat. Further, the focus on interests permits neither a geographic expansion nor the escalation to the nuclear scale in wars after 1945. The definition of restrictions and constraints through politics and political decision-maker to create legitimacy limits the application of the available means. Consequently, the emergence of a disparity of political aim, the ends, and the constrained and limited means is likely. According to these limitations, the factor time increases exponentially its significance in a limited war for limited aim. Specifically there is the challenge of the creation of a war-narrative that bridges the gap

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between political aim and restricted means. Further, the establishment and maintenance of a coalition–the majority among the political elite and the population–deteriorates over time if the policy is not able to meet the expectations or the costs overweigh the benefits. These developments lead to an increasing policy risk that transitions over time to a credibility gap and the emergence of the political risk for the political decision-maker.

The Expansion of the Paradigm of Operational Art

The case studies illustrated the integration of senior military advisors–the CJCS and JFC–within a political-military discourse. The purpose was the development of a policy, the definition of the political aim, and the derivation of strategic objectives. Further, the discourse comprised also the negotiation of the applicable military means within the respective constraints. The major role of the senior military advisors was the evaluation of the appropriateness of the means to achieve the aims. Matching ends with the means through the way of emerging strategies is the core of this process. Further, these strategies are never final. The changing characteristic of a conflict, the war that the enemy conducts to fight, the approach that the United States is willing to conduct, the perception of the domestic and foreign population, the ability to maintain coalition that legitimizes the conducted actions influences and affects the discourse between politicians and the military continuously.

Figure 6 illustrates the effect of time within political aim and war-narrative on the political-military discourse. Based on the nature of war–absolute or limited–time reflects the essential variable towards aim and means. If the United States faces an existential threat, she will fight an absolute war ensuring the survival of the nation. Therefore, the United States is willing to apply all means available to achieve the aim of survival. Consequently, time is less important.

On the contrary, in a limited war overcoming a non-existential threat, an administration will likely apply only a limited military effort. Consequently, the military negotiates with the political decision-maker within their discourse the necessary means to achieve the aim. If politics

are not willing to apply the necessary means, time will expand to achieve the aim with the

possibility of the increase of policy and political risk. Further, if politics restrict the means and

reject the course of protraction, the political aim might be adapted. If not, an overambitious

political aim that is beyond the means will likely increase the policy risk and failure of the policy.

The mitigation of such a disparity between ends and means to maintain population's enmity and

support will likely create a political risk for the political decision-maker over time according to a
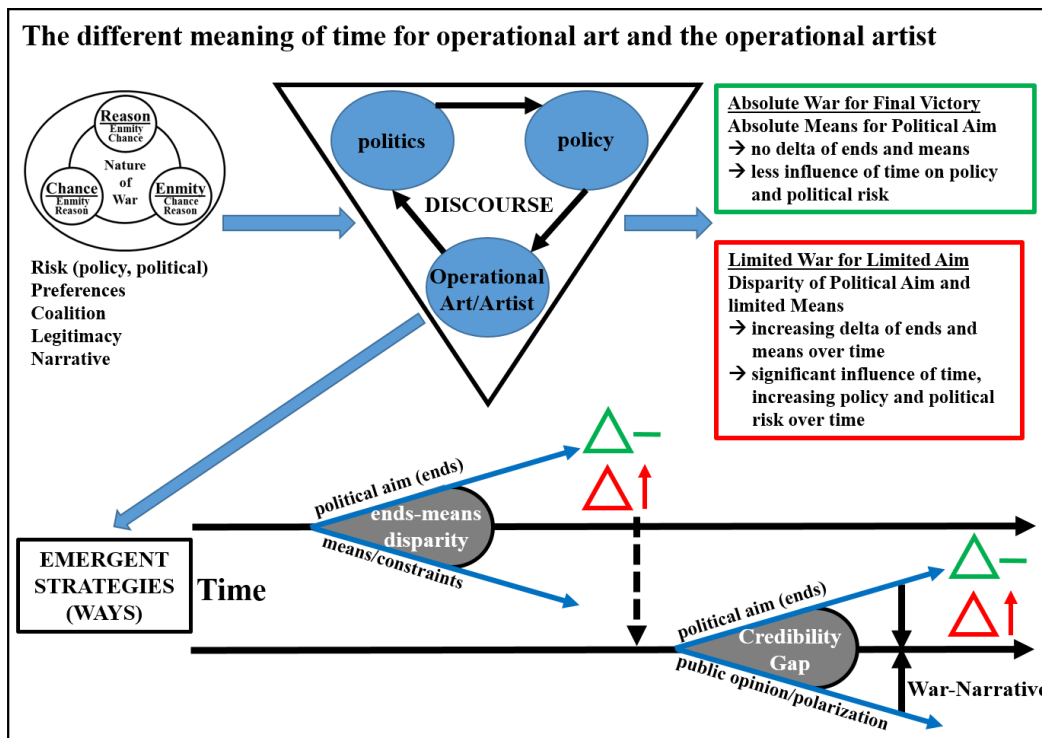
growing credibility gap.

Figure 6. Meaning of Time for Operational Art and the Operational Artist. (Figure developed by the author).

Within the realm of political aim, war-narrative, and time, operational art reaches beyond

the procedural linking of tactical actions in attaining strategic objectives. The necessary political-

military discourse of negotiating political aim, means, time, and consequently the corresponding

war-narrative expands the ends-ways-means-paradigm through the factor time.

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Implications for Authority and Responsibility of the Operational Artist

The emergence of the described disparities requires the integration of the operational artist in formulating strategic objectives and political aims as well as the integration of the fourth denominator besides ends, ways, and means–the factor time. According to the political-military discourse, the operational artist negotiates the means to achieve the aim within a certain timeframe. According to Dr. Stephen Lauer, operational art is more a philosophy rather than a simple technique applicable to each level of war. The influence of time in formulating policy, planning emergent strategies, their adaptations, and the prevention of credibility gaps that undermine the war-narrative illustrates the importance of operational art and the artist beyond procedures and techniques.[106]

Negotiating and acting within the political-military discourse, the operational artist expands his responsibility beyond the realm of the military. Within these negotiations, the operational artist applies his military expertise within the relationship of political aim, war-narrative, and time recommending and advising the political decision-maker. This means, the operational artist's responsibility spans from the military into the political domain. Concurrently, the development of emergent strategies fulfilling the formulated policy describes his authority. According the changing nature of emergent strategies, the responsibility of the operational artist in the military domain reaches also beyond the simple pursuit of strategic objectives. The assessment, evaluation, recommendation, and adaptation of objectives expand the current understanding of operational art and expands its scope from the purely technical level to the realm of philosophy.

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[106] Lauer, 119-123; ADP 3-0, 9.

Concluding Remarks

The monograph illustrates the importance and influence of the factor time within the realm of the political-military discourse. Specifically the relationship of political aim, war-narrative, and time revealed its significant character. Facing an ever-changing character of war while its nature endures drives operational art to present the best recommendation possible within the political-military discourse. Operational art is more than technical procedures. Its reach into the realm of policy and politics emphasizes more the art than technique.

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