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Operational Art in NATO
--How Will Politically Motivated Restrictions
Affect Operational Maneuver?

by

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School of Advanced Military Studies
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The conclusions show the disconnect between theory and its application in NATO. The concept of forward defense places our forces well forward in a linear, terrain oriented posture. The FRG government does not want us to cross the international border. Offensive action against Warsaw Pact forces is not in line with FRG political objectives. These restrictions combine to greatly limit the operational commander. We have a doctrine that is being applauded throughout our Army; yet, it has not been as widely approved in NATO where we may fight using AirLand Battle. We must recognize this disconnect between doctrinal theory and application in the NATO theater of operations.

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ABSTRACT

OPERATIONAL ART IN NATO: HOW WILL POLITICALLY MOTIVATED RESTRICTIONS AFFECT OPERATIONAL MANEUVER? by LTC William H. Janes, USA, 35 pages.

FM 100-5, Operations, published in May, 1986, contains AirLand Battle doctrine which our Army will use into the next century. The new doctrine is considerably different from the Active Defense doctrine of the 1970's. Supported by the Army's top leaders, AirLand Battle is being integrated into the OPLANS of our NATO forces. This integration will not be completed without difficulty as the political restrictions imposed by the concept of forward defense and the prohibition of crossing the international border may limit the operational commander. This study examines the extent of these restrictions and what, if any, impact they will have.

The study summarizes the main concepts of operational art from FM 100-5 and historical examples of operational maneuver being restricted. Manstein's campaign into Russia during 1941-43 provides excellent examples of a commander proficient in developing a campaign plan and using operational maneuver. His campaigns are also relevant to this study as Hitler imposed restrictions which adversely affected operational maneuver. Contemporary articles are reviewed to determine US and Allied interpretations of AirLand Battle in NATO's defense. A Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) White Paper stipulates the concern of their government with the political implications of our new doctrine.

The conclusions show the disconnect between theory and its application in NATO. The concept of forward defense places our forces well forward in a linear, terrain oriented posture. The FRG government does not want us to cross the international border. Offensive action against Warsaw Pact forces is not in line with FRG political objectives. These restrictions combine to greatly limit the operational commander. We have a doctrine that is being applauded throughout our Army; yet, it has not been as widely approved in NATO where we may fight using AirLand Battle. We must recognize this disconnect between doctrinal theory and application in the NATO theater of operations.

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I. Introduction

The President of the United States and the General Secretary of the Soviet Union recently signed an intermediate-range missile treaty which is being heralded as a major advancement in improved relations between the world's two great superpowers. Concurrently, NATO governments are being encouraged to increase conventional force spending and ensure that the United States' commitment to a free Europe is as strong as ever. Both the treaty and the emphasis on conventional force strength have major implications for the United States Army.

When formally approved, the treaty will remove an important, and arguably, successful deterrent from Warsaw Pact aggression against Europe. Requests for additional funding for conventional forces coincide with severe economic turbulence at home and in NATO. However, the dilemma for our Army planners is that both the treaty and increased defense spending signal the increased importance of our conventional forces arrayed against an acknowledged numerically superior enemy.

Our Army has invested tremendous resources and planning time in the 1980's to counter the Warsaw Pact numerical superiority. Determining a fighting doctrine has been one of the highest priorities in this effort. As doctrine provides "the general consensus among military leaders on how to wage war,"¹ our

conventional doctrine must now guide our preparedness for war without the backstop of the intermediate-range nuclear missile deterrent. Conventional force effectiveness will be the deterrent of the 1990's. AirLand Battle is the doctrine that may be used to wage that war.

Army leaders in 1987 have voiced strong approval of AirLand Battle despite its vastly different concepts. It is different because it resulted from a "reaction to doctrinal currents that extended deep into the preceding decade."² Instead of the lateral movements by units in the Active Defense, the Army is now talking about a deep attack well forward of defensive lines. The offensive spirit, often described as positive action, has replaced the previous defensive focus. Additionally, an operational level of war has been introduced between strategy and tactics. The promulgating manual is FM 100-5. Much has been written interpreting the new manual's concepts; however, one critic has issued a strong challenge to the military to ensure that in promulgating our new doctrine, we are not "preaching in a void - without intellectual challenge."³

This critical reminder is very relevant as the new doctrine received great emphasis from Generals Starry, Depuy, Richardson, Otis, and Vuono. These men have contributed much to Army thought during the development of AirLand Battle. They have involved many other soldiers during the process. Their combined influence

and the ongoing efforts by service schools to present the concepts AirLand Battle have contributed greatly to its acceptance. As we analyze the new concepts and integrate them into the campaign planning of the various theaters of operations, we must scrutinize each detail to ensure the doctrine is right for our next conflict.

An essential challenge that any doctrine must undergo is applicability to varying theaters of war. Nowhere is the intellectual debate about AirLand Battle more appropriate than in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Central Region. In NATO, the doctrine must provide the direction to our Army against Warsaw Pact forces, yet be compatible with the effort in recent years to improve interoperability among Allied forces. Furthermore, the doctrine has strategic implications of great importance to NATO's political leaders. Two of the major political concerns of AirLand Battle are the international border of the Federal Republic of Germany and the concept of forward defense. This study will present key doctrinal concepts from FM 100-5 and project them into the NATO arena. Additionally, historical examples will be introduced to better understand the conditions necessary to employ AirLand Battle.

II. OPERATIONAL ART

FM 100-5 describes operational art as "the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations."⁴ This definition suggests battles and engagements of a major operation linked by a campaign plan. "Operational art thus involves fundamental decisions about when and where to fight and whether to accept or decline battle."⁵ Therefore, operational art necessitates great flexibility and actions of the forces employed in a theater of operations.

Clausewitz emphasized that art was "the employment of the available means for the predetermined end."⁶ Operational art employs military forces as means to achieve an end result - destruction of an enemy force, peace, or some other desired status. To graphically represent operational art, the three dimensional area for military action is the theater of operations. Doctrine (AirLand Battle) as a form or art, links the military force to the end result. Unconstrained operational art could be depicted as in Illustration #1 (see page 5). This representation is ideal because the commander has complete latitude and freedom of action to employ his force throughout the theater of operations. The theater of operations as depicted in

Illustration #1: Operational Freedom of Action

END (Defeat of Warsaw Pact Attack)

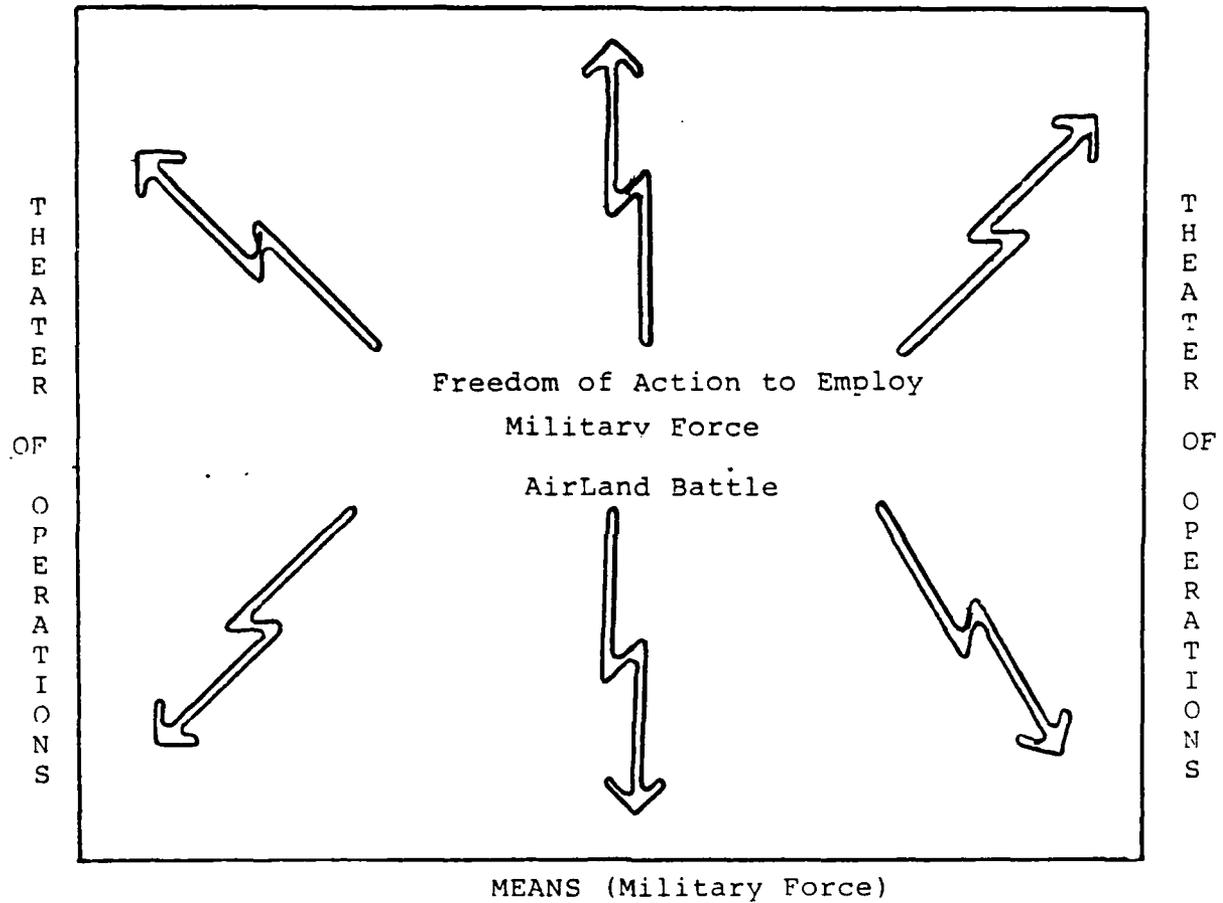


Illustration #1 is important because it encompasses a critical concept of AirLand Battle - the "Extended Battlefield." General Donn A. Starry explained the extended battlefield as primarily in "areas of the world where there are large numbers of relatively modern, well-equipped forces who use Soviet-style operational concepts and tactics."⁷ Extending the battlefield is not new; rather, it was designed to describe our efforts to destroy the enemy in depth with particular emphasis on attacking follow-on echelons which had not reached the forward line of troops. The depth is best exemplified in "deep attack" which General Starry noted was an "absolute necessity" and "not a luxury."⁸

Deep attack enables the defender to be far more aggressive instead of passively awaiting the enemy's blow. In the model described earlier, deep attack theoretically enables the practitioner of operational art to employ resources throughout the theater. The intent is to regain the initiative from the attacker by using conventional forces. "At the present time, our primary strike assets for deep attack are air and artillery interdiction. Conventional and unconventional military forces can be used to interdict enemy movements in depth."⁹ These attacks are critical as the first echelon divisions would not have intact forces in the rear. Losses to attacking Soviet forces would accrue at second echelon division, army, and front levels. First echelon divisions would suffer significant

logistical damages. This would necessitate action by Soviet armies and fronts to repair damaged lines of communications and replace lost vehicles and supplies.¹⁰ By sending aerial or ground forces deep we will cause command posts, logistical, and combat support assets to relocate. The Soviet will be forced to deal with this real threat.¹¹ The accompanying confusion combined with losses in the rear will likely have an adverse impact on the continuity of the Soviet attack.

In addition to the deep attack against logistical, command and control, and second echelon forces, units in our main defensive belt will be maneuvering to attain local advantages and to counter the enemy's thrusts. Flexibility may be further increased by retaining an operational reserve. Discussed later, this reserve normally located behind the defending forces will require additional area. Combining deep attack, forward force maneuver, and an operational reserve, it is evident that the theater of operations should be a sizeable area. Depth is essential whether extending the battlefield forward or allowing for a reserve force in the rear. Orchestration of major operations within this theater is operational art. "No echelon of command is uniquely concerned with the practice of operational art. Rather the locus of operational responsibility will vary with the nature of the war, the structure of the area of military operations, and the nature of the threat."¹² In NATO, the war

will be against modernized conventional forces in a theater that is defined both geographically and politically.

Success in NATO requires understanding of Soviet doctrine and an "avoidance of the traditional U.S. 'checklist' useage of principles or concepts."¹³ The doctrine should help commanders devise specific tactics but remain flexible to present the threat with conditions that he will not anticipate and will jeopardize his mission. For example, in a corps defense, tactical missions may vary as one division has an offensive mission while others defend. Maneuver remains vital to the conduct of a defense.¹⁴ Maneuver at the operational level may involve forces crossing well beyond or behind the forward line of troops. We have emphasized maneuver and flexibility in our doctrine. The offensive spirit in the defense has been rejuvenated in FM 100-5. Therefore, the preceding definitions and concepts suggest that certain conditions are necessary for operational art to be possible. The conditions are an operational mission, usually large military forces, sizeable terrain (theater of war/space), and commanders who genuinely understand the doctrine and are allowed to fight using operational art.

III. OPERATIONAL ART DURING THE GERMAN INVASION OF RUSSIA IN WORLD WAR II

Historically, it is instructive to look at Field Marshal Erich von Manstein during the German campaign into Russia during 1941-43 to see these conditions of operational art. Manstein was regarded as the ablest commander in the German army and a most gifted operational commander. Given command of an armored corps during Hitler's invasion of Russia, he moved from east Prussia to the Dvina in four days. This remarkable feat covered 200 miles in hostile territory. His accomplishments reflect unconstrained operational maneuver over huge expanses of land. Promoted to command of an Army, he continued to master large scale maneuvers in the Crimean Peninsula and then in northern Russia. In 1942, he was directed to relieve the German Sixth Army which was in Stalingrad after the main German offensive had bogged down.¹⁵ His winter campaign (1942-43) in Russia was another brilliant example of the operational level of war.

The southern flank of the Russian front was the primary locus of action for the 1942-43 campaign. The campaign plan envisioned a series of operations to retain the Donetz basin. Soviet forces were numerically superior. The situation around Stalingrad was critical.¹⁵

Manstein realized the decisive operational opportunity

facing the Soviets, principally because of their numerical superiority across the front and the fact that they were closer than his own forces to the vital links on the Dreper and at Rostov.¹⁷

The campaign plan specified four phases (see Map 1, page 11):

(1) Relief of 6th Army.

(2) Keep the rear of Army Group A free while it disengaged from the Caucasus.

(3) Prevent the German lines of communications to the southern wing from being "tied off".

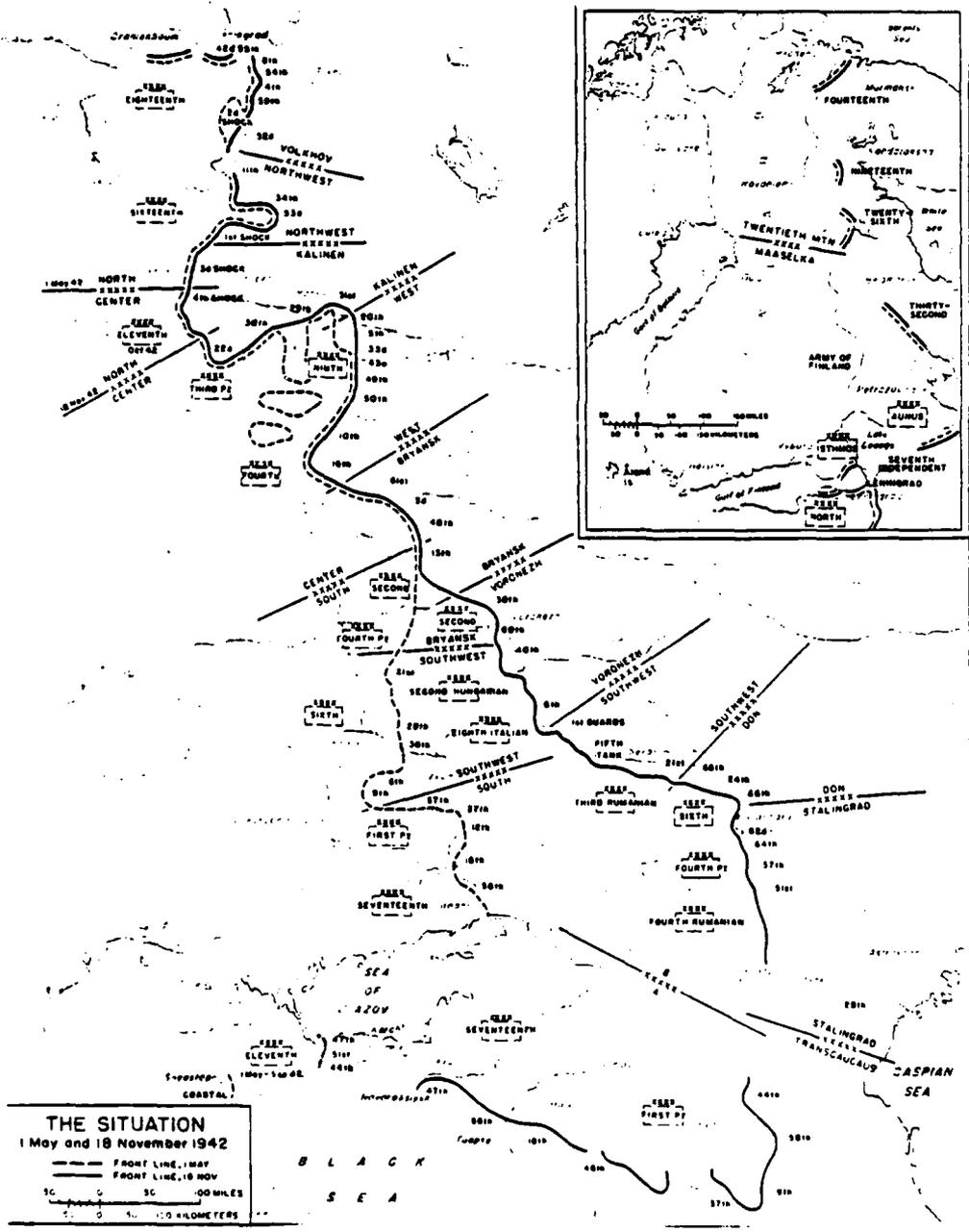
(4) Deliver a counterblow to the enemy and regain the initiative. ¹⁸

Manstein's plan provided future vision which would culminate in his regaining the initiative. This ability to plan a campaign and fight offensively with initiative is the essence of operational art. However, great plans often go astray as did Phase I of this campaign plan when Hitler imposed constraints on operational maneuver:

In October, 1942, Hitler issued Operations Order #1, providing overall guidance for the upcoming winter. Again there would be no flexibility; no room for maneuver; no allowance for initiative by his Army commanders. In it he ordered all winter positions held at all costs; no withdrawals were allowed; encircled forces were to stay put until relieved.¹⁹

This crippling restriction was added to the operational plan. The effect was to limit the Sixth Army's maneuver because they could no longer breakout. They must wait for a relieving force.

OVERVIEW OF THE RUSSIAN FRONT (FROM: ZIEMKE, EARL F.
STALINGRAD TO BERLIN: THE GERMAN DEFEAT IN THE EAST, 1984.)



By holding all positions, the size of the relieving force available would be reduced considerably. Manstein could not generate enough combat power to relieve the Sixth Army whose fate was then sealed. The last of this Army surrendered on 2 February, 1943.²⁰

Manstein was successful in protecting the rear of Army Group A. The size of the salient was reduced and "he had kept open Rostov which served as the life line." These actions and some timely withdrawals gave him the "time he needed."²¹ He also launched the counterstroke (Phase IV) towards Kharkov, which fell to the Germans on 14 March.²² Although Phase I had not succeeded, the rest of the campaign was successful. This success can be attributed to Manstein's long range vision, his focus on enemy forces, his determination, his willingness to take risks and to maneuver, the superiority of German forces over Russian soldiers, and, most importantly, his skill as an operational commander.²³ Even so, the restrictions had been difficult to overcome.

Manstein's vision of the campaign differed from Hitler's. Hitler insisted upon holding territorial gains and allowing no withdrawal from the Caucasus region.²⁴ The impact of this territorial constraint would limit Manstein's flexibility. The mobile war he wanted to fight was denied. Initiative by his commanders was surrendered before the battle. "Most importantly,

it contrasted with Manstein's vision of how he needed to fight and almost cost the Germans the campaign."²⁵

Had Hitler rigidly insisted on these restrictions, Manstein would have been forced into a static defense. He would have faced a numerically superior force and ultimately been defeated. The operational master would be reduced to fighting a war of attrition at the tactical level. However, compromises by Hitler and Manstein's initiative allowed him to save the campaign except the relief of encircled forces discussed earlier.

This success can be directly attributed to Manstein who ". . . had a long range vision appropriate to a commander at the operational level."²⁶ His objective was to defeat the Soviet force through offensive action. He recognized the Soviet threat and designed an operational campaign. Although Hitler's strategic concept threatened execution of this plan²⁷, Manstein persisted, adapted, and succeeded. Similar problems surfaced in the following months as Manstein conceived "Operation Citadel" during the summer of 1943.

Manstein recognized a Soviet salient in the vicinity of Kursk (see Map 2, page 14). He predicted that the Russians would use the salient as a starting point in the Spring against the flanks of the Central and Southern German Armies. Manstein therefore proposed to isolate the forces in the salient. He argued for an early offensive to catch the Russians unprepared. Ideally, his

pressure would force the Russians to commit armored units which had been hurt the previous winter. The proposed attack would begin in early May 1943 when the ground was dry and the Soviet armor had not been refitted.²⁸ The plan required realignment of many forces along the German front. It also necessitated abandoning occupied ground which was something Hitler had previously not allowed.

The strategic situation was critical. There were not enough German divisions to defend successfully from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. There were not enough forces to continue an offensive on the scale of 1941 and 1942.²⁹

It could only do so if it succeeded within the framework of a now inevitable - "strategic defensive" in dealing the enemy powerful blows of a localized character which would sap his strength to a decisive degree - first and foremost through losses in prisoners. This presupposed an operational elasticity on our part which would give maximum effect to the still-superior quality of the German command staffs and fighting troops.³⁰

German generals along the Russian front supported Manstein's plan (Guderian was the exception). Those who opposed it were accused by Manstein of not understanding the Soviet potential.³¹ Hitler remained preoccupied with the economic importance of the Donetz basin. Politically, Hitler feared that any territorial evacuation would adversely affect the attitudes of Turkey and Rumania. The biggest problem was that Hitler did not possess the mind of an operational commander. Manstein insisted that Hitler

had clung to the premise that "we must fight for every foot of the ground we had won from Stalin in the winter of 1941."³² Predictably, in early May, Hitler decided against his army group commanders and directed "Operation Citadel" postponed. In fact, the delays continued until July. Surprise was lost; flexibility had been denied; and operational art was frozen to territorial retention and political constraint. At one point, Manstein protested to General Zeitzler: "As long as I remain at this post, however, I must have the chance to use my own head."³³ In retrospect, Manstein stated:

If only it had been given this freedom of movement weeks earlier, the Army Group would have been in a position to fight the battle on its southern wing more economically. It could have freed formations for the vital northern wing and still halted the enemy advance on a shortened front. . . ³⁴

"Operational Citadel" was allowed to start, though greatly compromised, in July, 1943. Hitler soon stopped the operation because of deterioration in the Mediterranean situation and problems in Central Army Group. When "Citadel" was called off, the initiative in the Eastern theater of war finally passed to the Russians.³⁵

Large military forces were in the theater, ample space existed, and Manstein was a commander capable of delivering successful theater operations. Early in the campaign, he achieved operational success. However, the two historical examples cited above demonstrate that operational art can be

restrained to the point of compromise, resulting in battles of attrition. Territorial preservation, instead of focus upon destruction of the enemy, became the driving consideration. While one must assume that strategic direction will always influence operational art, Manstein ran perilously close to losing all operational flexibility because of Hitler's directions. One of the greatest operational commanders in history was frustrated in his efforts to fight an unrestrained campaign. Manstein could not persuade Hitler to fight battles of maneuver. Instead, German forces waited and lost the time essential for surprise. They allowed the Soviet forces adequate time to refit and to assume the initiative. The initiative was not taken by the Soviets as much as it was forfeited by the Germans. The force with superior combat power was now destined to prevail.

IV. DEEP ATTACK AND FOLLOW-ON FORCES ATTACK

There may be great application of Manstein's predicament as an operational commander in 1942-43 and our NATO defense posture in 1937. The Soviet strategy against NATO has stressed a quick surprise attack penetrating forward defenses and rapid advance to strategic depths of the Alliance. This would deny full American mobilization and bring early political and military capitulation.

By the mid 1970's, the Soviets had improved their conventional technology to the point that questions about NATO's defense were widespread. Certainly, the American doctrine of Active Defense was not viewed as a formidable position to fight outnumbered and win. The Active Defense was criticized as reactive, dependent upon lateral movement in the face of major Warsaw Pact penetrations, and unreasonable considering the demands placed upon forward defenses while fresh enemy forces poured into the defense. These criticisms were readily apparent in NATO and were instrumental in driving fundamentals of AirLand Battle.³⁶

The offensive spirit is well founded in AirLand Battle Doctrine. Instead of passively awaiting the enemy attacks, American forces would seize opportunities to attack the Soviets deep. The key NATO assumption driving a deep attack was that "NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in the first echelon are relatively evenly matched and that NATO can provide a credible forward defense at the conventional level if Warsaw Pact reinforcing echelons can be kept out of the forward battle or at least allowed into it when and where most advantageous to NATO."³⁷ As discussed before, deep attack implies an extended battlefield well forward of front line forces in the main defensive belt. It also suggests freedom to maneuver in the theater of operations as operational opportunities are exploited.

General Bernard W. Rogers, formerly Supreme Allied Commander

Europe, tasked his staff to develop a plan to hit Soviet follow-on-forces with conventional fires prior to their arrival in forward defensive positions. The SHAPE concept "seeks to locate and track Warsaw Pact forces during their entire process of deployment. . . . The concept aims at exploiting particularly critical enemy vulnerabilities in the reinforcement process, the rigidity of his planning for an echeloned offense, the density of forces along limited attack routes, and critical transportation facilities."³⁸

NATO does not consider this concept of Follow-On Force Attack (FOFA) identical to AirLand Battle, although the deep options are obviously similar. One interpretation of a major difference between FOFA and AirLand Battle is:

While AirLand Battle seeks to synchronize the deep battle with the ground commander's scheme of maneuver, the SHAPE concept focuses simply on the centralized application of all deep attack assets to separate first echelon and second echelon forces in order to maintain NATO/Warsaw Pact combat force ratios in the first echelon at a manageable level.³⁹

The concepts of deep attack and follow-on forces attack are actually quite similar. The distinction is made because AirLand Battle is the United States Army doctrine and not NATO doctrine. The principle of attacking second echelon forces makes great sense and would appear very agreeable for our allies. However, as with Manstein and "Operation Citadel", political restraints impact significantly on actual implementation of the doctrine.

This debate is waged because of genuine concern by our NATO allies that AirLand Battle doctrine violates two politically motivated constraints: (1) crossing of the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) international border and (2) the strategy of forward defense. These two restrictions will affect operational planners for years to come.

V. THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER AND FORWARD DEFENSE

The Federal Minister of Defense White Paper published in 1985 emphatically addresses the potential disconnect between our new doctrine and the political premises fundamental to the Alliance. First, the paper stresses the anticipated continued use by Soviets of "military force as a political instrument to achieve the objectives of their (Soviet) power policy."⁴⁰ Furthermore, NATO forces are "not capable of offensive warfare. Their force structure and the nature of their logistic system alone do not permit the Alliance to use its ground forces for counterattack deep into the opponent's territory."⁴¹ The paper emphasizes the desirability of strengthening NATO's conventional defense forces; yet, "the most important goal is to enhance one principle of Alliance strategy which is elementary for the Federal Republic of Germany: to strengthen forward defense"⁴² The position regarding the international border is equally clear on one page

of the White Paper:

The strategy of Flexible Response requires in particular that our conventional forces be able to initiate defense early and conduct it close to the border.

Limitations of objectives means that our military options are tailored to the purpose of defense... The objective of NATO strategy is to maintain or restore the integrity and security of the North Atlantic area. This requires a capability for cohesive forward defense near the border.

The principle of limitation of objectives laid down in the NATO strategy rules out any kind of aggressive forward defense by ground operations in the opponent's territory. Neither a preemptive war, nor offensive and preventive thrusts into the opponent's territory aimed at gaining space for our defense, are politically conceivable or militarily practicable concepts for NATO.⁴³

Further emphasis on the imperatives of forward defense and international border limitations is directly tied to FM 100-5:

NATO's operational plans and concepts are based on the valid strategy of the Alliance. National operational doctrines such as U.S. Airland Battle doctrine, laid down in Field Manual 100-5 are only in so far applicable in Europe as they are reconcilable with the underlying principles of NATO defense. There can be no question of any intention of the United States to revise the principles of NATO strategy by national operational doctrines.⁴⁴

The reader can find twenty-four references to forward defense in the paper. "Through forward defense, loss of territory is to be prevented and the damage to be limited to the greatest possible extent. This political requirement has become a strategic principle of NATO."⁴⁵ Significantly, the paper recognizes the terrain restriction:

The geographical situation and the military preparations of the Warsaw Pact leave the defender only little room to offset the advantage of time and space enjoyed by the

aggressor. The lack of space impedes in particular the operations of land forces.⁴⁶

General Glenn K. Otis, Commander-in-Chief of United States Army Europe, envisions three battles synchronized for success - "one of them in the enemy's rear, one of them at the front, and one of them in our own rear."⁴⁷ However, he further states that "because the US Army will operate as part of NATO, there is no thought of applying those parts of AirLand Battle doctrine that are at odds with NATO guideline."⁴⁸ Again, we can see the sensitivity to our desire to fight deep and yet maintain the territorial integrity which is limited by a forward defense behind the international order. A question arises that given the strictures of forward defense, what will remain of AirLand Battle doctrine in Europe?

Colonel Trevor N. Dupuy argues that defense in depth is essential to stopping a Warsaw Pact attack. A linear or cordon defense with lateral repositioning is an "invitation to defeat."⁴⁹ Yet, we are deployed linearly behind the international border because of the political issue. "That in fact, is the most important issue. On the other issues, there can be little serious argument. . . . most soldiers will agree that it is better to have reserves than to have a cordon defense"⁵⁰ Colonel Dupuy further presents mathematical evidence that the forward defense is lost unless depth is achieved.

Defense in depth can only be accomplished if German politicians examine the problem of a policy which concedes no territory.⁵¹

Retention of the international border restriction by NATO politicians will hinder any effort at deep attack. Operational maneuver will be compromised as Soviet forces will have closed into the tactical battle. As seen in the Manstein example, a war of attrition will result with the advantage favoring the numerically superior force. Additionally, the forward defense restriction places a wall to the defender's rear. Positions are not prepared beyond tactical depth. Operational maneuver behind the main defensive belt is not in agreement with the forward defense concept that allows no penetration of German territory.

Strategically, the objectives of the NATO defense may not be supported by Airland Battle doctrine. One Allied author translates the objective of FM 100-5 as "winning the war by destroying the opposing enemy force."⁵² Although he recognizes FM 100-5 was not intended to prescribe military strategy, the manual implies this objective. He states the dilemma as:

NATO, however, talks neither of winning wars nor of the destruction of the enemy force. NATO's objective in war is to preserve or restore the integrity and security of NATO territory. Keeping in mind that there is no disagreement about the fact our most important task is to deter war in peacetime, it is obvious that the two wartime objectives differ.⁵³

He further believes public support would diminish if NATO advocated a more offensive strategy, "one aimed at winning a next

war and destroying the Soviet forces."⁵⁴ Much of this feeling derives from the horrors of World War II, an experience Europeans do not want repeated. Secondly, a more offensive strategy in NATO may further antagonize Warsaw Pact countries and increase the possibility of war.⁵⁵ Although this is one European's view, it shows the resolve which will legislate against the operational commander trying to plan major operations. Operations that are restricted to territorial concerns have little to do with enemy centers of gravity and destruction of his force. Philosophically, there are major differences in strategic objectives and operational intentions.

Another author believes that the Follow-On Forces Attack is not in conflict with NATO priorities. He denies major ground operations east of the West German border. The author states that General Rogers would not use preemptive attacks into eastern Europe. Any questionable response to the Warsaw Pact attack would be cleared through the Alliance. The author continues by emphasizing that the 1976 version of FM 100-5 prioritizes policy and strategic concerns over operational matters. He asserts that Airland Battle doctrine has been aligned with NATO's Allied Tactical Publications, ATP 35 (A), "Land Force Tactical Doctrine." "Whether or not these major clarifications will satisfy the European objectives to Airland Battle must await the passing of time."⁵⁶

Whatever its final outcome, this argument is important because of the impact of time on the operational commander. Nothing is more critical to the operational commander than the effective application of military force across the spectrums of time and space. Forward defense and the international border impact on space and time, and therefore, upon a commander's freedom of action. If we have not cleared operational plans with Allied governments prior to the initiation of hostilities, we will greatly restrict the operational commander. To wait until a conflict started would deprive the operational planner of time just as Hitler's vacillation led to the failure of "Operational Citadel." Operational art would be sacrificed in favor of a huge tactical melee. AirLand Battle doctrine, arguably our first workable and realistic doctrine in years, could be compromised by delay.

Another important concern about operational art in NATO is surfaced by Christopher N. Donnelly, a noted British analyst. Mr. Donnelly theorizes that the Soviets most likely course of action is a major effort across the front by the first echelon. Reserve forces would be minimal. He contends their major effort would be in northern Germany where terrain favors the armored force and the Alliance is perceived to be weaker.⁵⁷ Operational Maneuver Groups (OMG) would be timed to strengthen and to exploit efforts by the first echelon. The OMGs would attempt to

penetrate quickly "into the NATO rear to disrupt and destroy logistic infrastructure targets, nuclear delivery means, transportation networks, command and control centers and artillery units - a deep strike in reverse."⁵⁸ This denies the previous assumption of a stepped attack by echeloned forces. In this scenario the Warsaw Pact would better achieve a critical aspect of their attack - surprise. A massed attack across the front would negate many of the deep attack opportunities sought by AirLand Battle.

A greater concern for the operational commander is the "deep strike in reverse." The implications are apparent as the concept of forward defense has denied much of the depth in the theater of operations available for conventional defense. A surprise attack by a large first echelon, which quickly ruptures the defense, would seriously reduce the ability of the United States to mobilize and deploy reserve forces. Such a penetration is conceivable because depth in AirLand Battle is seriously constrained by forward defense. If a penetration does occur, some action must be taken to counter it. The operational commander must have flexibility. During the Russian campaign of 1942-43, Manstein lacked sufficient forces to maintain an adequate operational reserve. Likewise, in NATO today, an operational reserve in position is essential. Historically and in line with AirLand Battle's operational level of war, an

operational reserve of sufficient size would be a necessary condition to practicing operational art.

The retention of some forces in depth is especially vital early in a campaign when flexibility is most important to the defender.⁵⁹

Because the attacker will normally attack to push forces into the depths of the defended theater early in the campaign, the defending commander should hold operational reserves in depth.⁶⁰

A successful surprise attack by the Warsaw Pact preempts a force deployed from the United States. Currently, there is no major force available as an operational reserve permitted to maneuver and to fight well to the rear of NATO's forward defense.

VI. CONCLUSION

Conditions desirable for effective operational art are a large military force, space (theater), and time to execute major operations in consonance with the campaign plan. The connecting link for forces, space, and time is AirLand Battle doctrine. AirLand Battle doctrine in NATO is adversely affected by the politically driven constraints of forward defense and the international border. The main issues in this study are whether AirLand Battle is compatible with NATO politics, and whether operational art be practiced in NATO?

AirLand Battle doctrine recognizes the numerical superiority

that the Soviets are expected to have at the start of a future conflict. Operational fire and maneuver are designed to help offset this disadvantage. The doctrine provides for positioning forces in depth and seizing the initiative with deep offensive maneuvers. The operational potential of available forces is reduced if depth and maneuver are restricted. The resulting dispositions tend to be linear and commanders would be unable to execute operational maneuver. The absence of an operational reserve further reduces the operational potential for the commander. Commanders could position some of their forces to achieve the necessary depth and to constitute an adequately positioned reserve if the forward defense constraint were lifted by the politicians. To accomplish this, the military must better articulate the operational conditions necessary to defeat the Soviet.

This linear positioning of forces would return our Army to the problems of the Active Defense. While our doctrine has advanced in the 1980's, the real effect will be minimal because units are not organized with operational depth. They would also be massed across the front with reserves able to operate only at the tactical level. Repositioning will, out of necessity, be lateral across the front. AirLand Battle doctrine will be reduced to ideas impractical in NATO. Despite a decade of protests, the passive nature of Active Defense would prevail

again. This predicament is easily deduced considering many current writings in NATO. To deny the problem would be to operate in an intellectual vacuum.

Time is also critical to the operational commander. Yet, in NATO, the decisions to cross the international border or to fight in the rear of forward positions do not belong to the operational commander. These are political decisions that are tediously complicated and not conducive to our AirLand Battle doctrine.

This translates to reduced flexibility and lost initiative. It possibly will lead to a repeat of "Operation Citadel" which was "a question of operational flexibility"⁶¹ and lost initiative which eventually resulted in the bleak epitaph:

Within twelve months of unleashing the counter-offensive at Stalingrad, the situation had taken a profound turn in favor of the Russians. Stalingrad itself brought premonitions of disaster to the Germans, but the killing-ground at Kursk, the miles of fire that consumed the Panzer divisions and burned out the infantry, brought the full reality of vast destruction. The last offensive and the lost victories of the German Army in Russia had come and gone forever.⁶²

Manstein waited for permission to launch "Operation Citadel." While he waited, the advantages of operational maneuver were lost. Political restraint handcuffed the commander. Today, we optimistically discuss AirLand Battle doctrine. Much is written about how commanders will use "deep attack" and practice operational art. Yet the political messages are clear: (1) NATO forces will not move offensively across the international border,

and (2) Defensive positions will be forward to protect the German countryside from the ravages of war. Changes to these positions must be made by the politicians. If we wait until a war starts, valuable time will be lost. The operational commander could lose a critical window of opportunity. Additionally, our Allies are denied interoperability training in AirLand Battle. The significance of the Federal Republic of Germany's statement that AirLand Battle is not NATO doctrine is obvious. We are losing preparation time in peace and operational time in war.

The theater of operations is physically reduced by both forward defense and the international border. Returning to our earlier theoretical model, the application of means to achieve the desired end is portrayed in Illustration #2 (see page 31). This graphic representation shows the theater compressed and the operational commander extremely restricted. The deep battle is compressed because of the restriction of crossing the international border. The rear battle is compressed by the forward defense mandate. The operational theater of operations is reduced to the area normally associated with the tactical level of war. A total appreciation of the space restraint can be obtained from Soviet General Kardashevsky who analyzed brigade densities of NATO mobilization during the first thirty (30) days of hostilities. His article graphically predicted our brigades linearly deployed and restrained both forward in the Federal

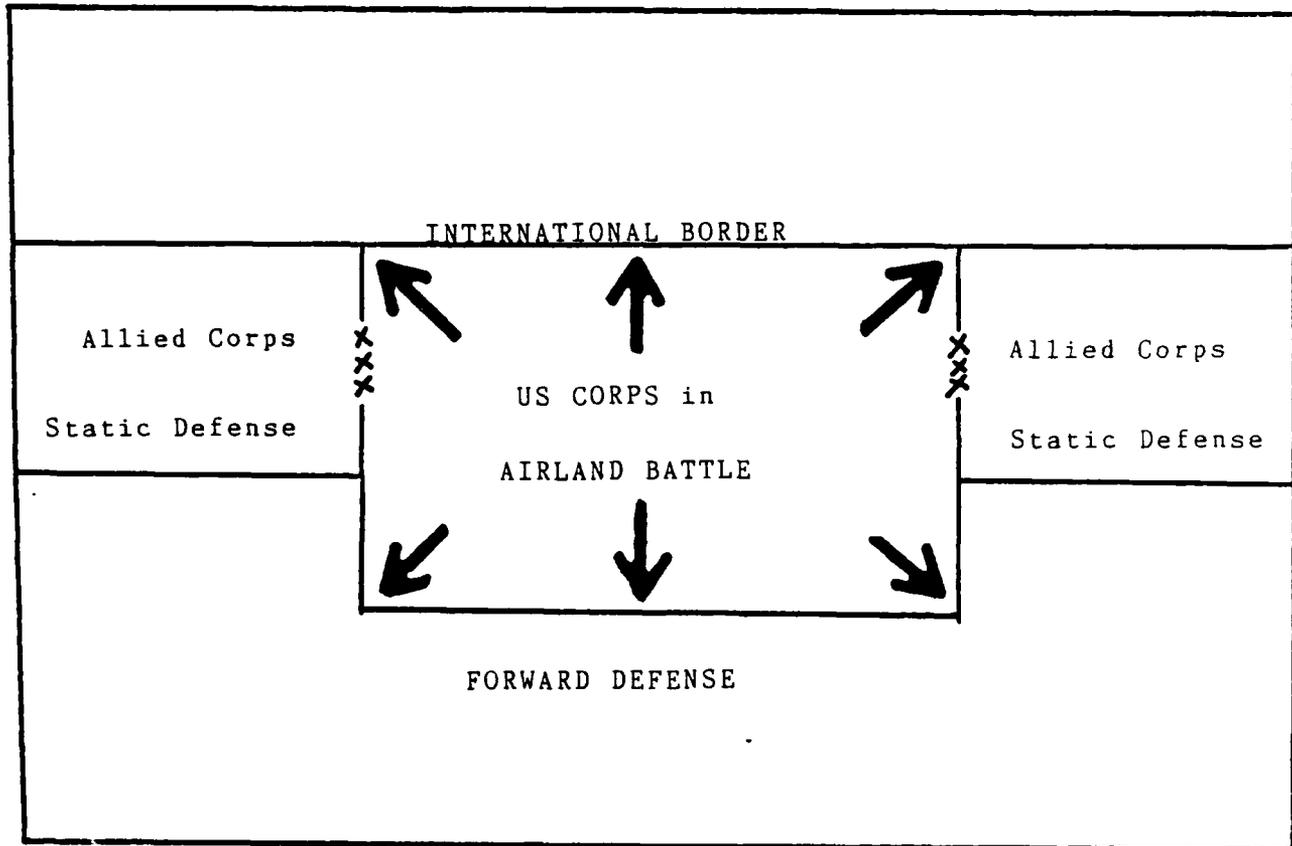
ILLUSTRATION #2: Constraints to Operational Freedom of Action

END (Defeat of Warsaw Pact Attack)

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Republic of Germany and behind the international border.⁶³ His description illustrates how strongly the Soviets believe the operational commander will be restrained. It also confirms that the Soviets have acknowledged our limitations in operational depth (forward defense and absence of strong operational reserves with preparation in depth) and in deep attack potential (international border).

This Soviet article is important. Soviet use of norms combined with such critical intelligence about our forward dispositions would have a major impact during the early stages of a future war. A linear forward defense restricted by the international border is an inviting target for an army very much familiar with depth in operational art. Despite our insistence that we will fight with operational depth and "deep attack", this article shows the Soviet interpretation of our predicament. They are predicting a tactical battle. It is apparent that operationally the NATO commanders are significantly restricted. Theoretically, operational art is not conceivable in NATO defense as presently configured. The tactical battle is set. Any move to an operational level of war can only be made if restraints are removed, forces repositioned, operational depth achieved, an operational reserve constituted, and flexibility and initiative returned to the operational commander.

The Federal Republic of Germany's current national position

must be clearly understood by our military as we move ahead in our discussions of NATO's defense. The existence of political restraint in NATO and, for that matter, any theater is very real. These restraints cannot be easily dismissed, particularly in the context of an operational level of war. The issue of doctrinal compatibility remains paramount. As we prepare for NATO's first battle, it is important to remember:

....that doctrine may entail a kind of commitment that closes minds to alternative possibilities, and that failure or difficulties in applying doctrine may do less to change the doctrine than to strengthen the commitment; stubbornness and moral courage are qualities more easily distinguished from one another on paper than on the battlefield.⁶⁴

AirLand Battle and operational art are important and logically useful doctrinal concepts for our Army. However, what questions should we be asking? What are the implications for the future? How can we adapt to the requirements in NATO?

General von Mellenthin posits that NATO can win the forward defense if the following conditions are met:

(1)...the NATO high command is willing to unleash commanders by giving them mission-type orders, (2) the commanders have the inner confidence, independence, and initiative to undertake bold and risky battles of decision, and (3) the troops possess both combat spirit and zeal in the defense of their way of life.⁶⁵

After forty years of peace, the NATO "bureaucracy and careerist qualities" will oppose revision or change.⁶⁶ If interoperability is going to work, it must move beyond the tactical level and include operational and strategic oneness. Discussions must

continue nationally, within services, and by field commands.

The alignment of AirLand Battle, FOFA, and NATO's strategic objectives must be improved. Current publications skirt the issue by denying the problem as AirLand Battle is not NATO doctrine;⁶⁷ yet, our manuals say FM 100-5 is "compatible with and will serve as the U.S. implementing document for NATO land forces tactical doctrine. . . ."⁶⁸ One author states "the history of NATO suggests that the outcome of these controversies will be ambiguous and that NATO strategy will evolve not by radical change but by gradual modification."⁶⁹ This is not an optimistic forecast for the operational commander who is restricted from using a doctrine that historically has achieved remarkable results. It also suggests a casual approach to the problem. Time is not the ally of the operational commander so restrained. We must resolve the problem. We must continue to improve our understanding of the operational level of war. Operational terms such as center of gravity, culminating point, line of operation, theater of operations, and deep attack must be more widely understood. Consensus at army schools and in the field is important. Yet, continuous debate in the field intended for improved understanding and doctrinal change must occur. The current level of understanding of operational art is embryonic. We must internalize the doctrine and include our Allies who are also involved in the operational level of war. If anything,

their current understanding and concurrence are essential to the combined mission we share.

Failure to gain an acceptable level of understanding will result in poor operational decisions as when Manstein was unsuccessful in convincing Hitler that the way to defeat a numerically superior force is by operational maneuver.⁷⁰ Today, we also face a numerically superior force. "To have a doctrine in print only is not to have a doctrine in the relevant sense. We must ensure that every level of our officer corps understands the doctrine and can execute both tactical and operational levels of war."⁷¹ General Carl E. Vuono, Army Chief of Staff, issued the challenge, "much remains to be done as we continue our doctrinal development. AirLand Battle doctrine can only achieve its full potential if we have knowledgeable leaders, effective and reliable command and control, well trained forces and lethal, efficient weapons systems."⁷²

This challenge begins in our service schools and continues to our forward deployed forces. It must also involve our allies to ensure the doctrine is agreeable to NATO military and political leaders. Any intellectual vacuum must be attacked so future applications of the doctrine are predicted and refinements made. We should not continue our training and studies without a clear understanding about the impact of political restraints. Empowered with flexibility and the opportunity for initiative, the operational commander can fight outnumbered and win.

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