

The Italian Army And Effects-Based Operations: A New Concept For An Army Of Use

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ABSTRACT

THE ITALIAN ARMY AND EFFECTS-BASED OPERATIONS: A NEW CONCEPT FOR AN ARMY OF USE by CPT Roberto Viglietta, Italian Army, 62 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to explore what part of the emerging concept of Effects-Based Operations is relevant to the way the Italian Army is heading towards the future. Specifically, given the experience of the Italian Army in stability and reconstruction operations, its organizational structure and the peculiar capabilities expressed by its soldiers, this monograph searches for a viable translation of the effects-based operations construct to facilitate ongoing and future operations.

Interest in, and contribution to, the development of the effects-based operations concept has great importance for the Italian military because in its adaptation process it might provide a framework that could drive further changes. Moreover, there is a constant necessity for the Italian Armed Forces, and the army in particular, to maintain a common doctrinal understanding with its allies and partners with which they combine to conduct operations, and who are also looking with interest at effects-based operations.

The method chosen is to compare the evidence on Italian experience in past and ongoing operations with the effects-based approach in order to derive a functional application of the latter in future operations.

The monograph will analyze the recent history of the Italian Army and the modifications and adaptations that it went through, with specific regard to the last 15 years. Particular focus has been given to describing the operations in which the army participated in order to collect enough evidence to discern a pattern that could lead to a generalization on the conduct of stability and reconstruction operations. Successively, the monograph will investigate the distinctive elements of effects-based operations, the problems related to the concept and the refined definitions that are available. Finally, the theory and practice will be merged, to see if Italian experience on operations can provide a nationally adapted form of effects-based operations.

The findings of the monograph, while chiefly prompting further research and investigation, argue that the Italian Army has conducted stability and reconstruction operations in a way that generally follows the effects-based approach. Therefore Italian established practice can serve as a model for effects-based operations conducted in the lower (non-war fighting) range of the operational spectrum. Moreover, Italian units can better achieve desired effects because they are modularly structured, based on a “pool of capabilities” model.

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INTRODUCTION

The Italian Army, along with its sister services, has undergone a dramatic adaptation process during the last 15 years and the recent abandonment of conscription can be seen as the closure of a phase, some even say of an era. During all these years the army has been engaged along four main axes: new structural designs of the forces; manning of the units with volunteer soldiers and all the training, welfare and administrative challenges related to their presence; a gradual modernization of equipments; and, whilst in this process, the deployments on operations at an increasing pace. The modernization of the military was both a consequence and a cause of the increasing engagement of military forces on operations out of the national territory. As a virtuous (or vicious, depending on the point of view) cycle, more engagements required more modernized units and, in turn, the availability of more units enabled the political leadership to commit the country to the participation to more international efforts. Overall, Italy has, therefore, turned from a net consumer of security under the NATO umbrella during the Cold War, to a net provider of security and support to national and international interests.

The Global War on Terror launched by the US Administration after the 9/11 terror attacks, found the Italian Army equipped with 10-years of experience in complex operations to face unstable international situations where it successfully employed a balance of determination, backed by credible force, social reconstruction skills and security enhancement. Many of the operations started in the past 15 years are still ongoing and there is thus far a comforting sequence of positive performance in terms of effects-to-objectives relation.

With this situation as a basis, the way ahead outlined by the Chief of Defense points at four main areas where the army and the other services need to concentrate their efforts: joint and multinational integration; expeditionary and campaign quality; improvements in the fields of precision engagement and command, control, communication, computer, intelligence,

surveillance, target acquisition, reconnaissance (C4ISTAR); and the assimilation of new operational and planning concepts inherent in net-centric warfare and effects-based operations¹.

This last focus point is of interest for this paper, particularly the emerging concept of effects-based operations. The paper will analyze the concept exploring its foundations and examining the different definitions but also surmising all the problems and contradictions of such an emerging concept. As will be seen in the following chapters, while there is still work to do to make the concept operative, and despite ongoing efforts the feasibility is still uncertain, it is certainly useful as a construct to design and plan a military operations.

In essence an effects-based approach concentrates on the study of the action-effect-desired end state relation in order to clearly define the desired ends, infer the effects that will satisfy it and recommend the most appropriate actions to produce such effects. The main feature of this relation, of interest for the military community, is that the most appropriate effects are not necessarily produced by military actions, and even if that is the case, the use of more traditional “kinetic” means might not be advised. This last condition is even more true in the current operational environment, characterized by threats loosely networked, adaptive in terms of responsiveness, with mutable structure and free from physical and moral bindings. Based on these traits, today’s “enemy” is difficult to identify and address only militarily, while it requires the adoption of an indirect approach, one that addresses the cognitive dimension where perceptions are central, in order to de-legitimize the threat elements in relation to their support base. To accomplish this, a more systemic approach to operations is needed, in which the employment of military forces, whilst necessary, is only a component used in close coordination with the diplomatic, economic and informational elements. Currently, the types of operation where these elements come together, or at least should do so, are the so called stability and reconstruction

¹ Stato Maggiore della Difesa, *Investire in Sicurezza: Forze Armate – Uno Strumento in Evoluzione* (Roma: Societa’ Editrice Imago Media, 2005), 9.

operations. They are based on the premise that by helping a country struck by war, internal strife, natural or human-made disasters, to recover and to reconstitute its social, political, economic and security infrastructure, in essence by reducing ungoverned space, there will be less opportunities for the current threat to find support and safe havens and its operations will be disrupted.

This is one of the fields where effects-based thinking can contribute to current operations, since, in the contest of stability and reconstruction, it provides a framework in which to synthesize desired effects and to choose the appropriate efforts to achieve them. Arguably, the conditions that characterize stability operations, while involving a certain level of violence, are such that more options are available to the senior leadership to create effects that address the problem at hand. *The Italian experience in the field of stability operations, its organizational structure and the peculiar capabilities expressed by its soldiers, represent viable translation of the effects-based operations construct into practice. What needs to be done is to rationalize the construct in order to maximize its impact on future operations.*

The preset work is articulated into three main parts. The first will be an excursus on the recent historical events regarding the Italian defense; also this part will deal with the adaptations that the Italian Army has undergone in the last 15 years and how these relate to the international events that were taking place concurrently; finally this first part will explore what specific skills and capabilities can the Italian Army provide in the conduct of multinational operations.

The second part will address effects-based operation, starting from the conceptual underpinnings, through historical development and will examine the different definitions available today. This part will also present several critiques to the concept and some problems in its practical applications.

Given the relevancy of the capabilities developed by the Italian Army in the conduct of stability and reconstruction operations and the growing interest towards the emerging concept of effects-based operations, the conclusion will address the record of performance of the Italian

Army in conducting such stability operations if an effects-based operations construct is applied. Moreover, the conclusion will deal with the functional quality of the modifications and organizational solutions applied by the army in the context of effects-based operations. Finally, the conclusion will leave to the reader the issues still in need of solutions and will recommend further research on topics relating to the subject of this work.

THE ITALIAN ARMY FROM PAST TO PRESENT AND HEADING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The Italian Army, similarly to the rest of the Italian Armed Forces, is currently in the later stages of a process that encompassed several reforms that substantially changed its structure, personnel system and doctrine. This process traces back to the beginning of the 1990s and was itself driven by the global events that occurred after the end of the Cold War.

Since the origins, span and motivations of the reforms that took place cannot be analyzed separately from the wider context of the Italian geographical position, its history and its role in the contemporary international community, the first part of this chapter will briefly examine these aspects. The second part of the chapter will take into consideration the characteristics of the reforms, their cumulative results and the main areas still undergoing change.

Geography and Historical Background

Geographically, Italy is part of the Mediterranean region, a crucial area for the Euro-Atlantic security system, enclosed between Gibraltar, the Bosphorus, Kerch, Bad el Mandeb, Hormuz straits and the Suez Canal. The area is strategically important to Italy, and the Western world at large, for its energy resources, both locally present and transiting through, and for several security issues, such as population pressure, ethnic tensions, potential terrorist breeding and illicit activities. Many of these problems spring from the particular quality of the Mediterranean area as a border between two the so-called Western and Middle Eastern worlds².

If on its south and east Italy is concerned with the stability of the Mediterranean region, to its north and west it can rely on the stability and security provided by its participation as a principal partner to the NATO and EU. The membership in these two major organizations has had

² Ministero della Difesa, *Nuove Forze per un Nuovo Secolo* (Roma: SPI, 2001), 15-16.

great implications for Italian foreign policy which today is very much interdependent with the decisions and strategies adopted in these two organizations.

Historically, although the Italian Peninsula can be acknowledged as central to the early and middle stages of the development of Western culture and way of life, Italy as a state and the Italians as a citizenry, are relatively young³. In fact, after the fall of the Roman Empire of the West, and until the final unification of the country in 1870, Italy remained a land of conquest and of divisive particularities⁴.

In the last 150 years and especially since unification, Italy's geo-strategic role as an independent nation has changed, and the focus of its military has followed accordingly⁵. The period under consideration can be divided in three sub-periods. The first from the Second War of Independence in 1859, which led to the reunification of most of what was to become Italian territory under the Savoia monarchy, to the end of World War I. During this time, Italy's main concern was the defense of new borders and the reunification of the territories still under foreign domination, namely the cities of Trento and Trieste and the surrounding regions. This period was characterized by three distinct international systems: the Crimean system, from the Crimean War in 1855 to 1863; the Bismarkian system from 1863 until the dismissal of the statesman from the Prussian *Reichstag* in 1890; and the Wilhelmine system from 1890 until the end of World War I⁶.

³ Giordana Canti, "L'Italia Come Idea", *Rivista Militare*, no. 2 (2002): 111.

⁴ For the history of Italy see also: Muriel Grindrod, *Italy* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1968) and Charles L. Killinger, *The History of Italy* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2002). For more general information see Rinn S. Shinn, ed., *Italy. A country study* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985).

⁵ For the history of the Italian Army and Armed Forces, several Italian sources have been consulted, integrated and translated by the author: Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, *L'Esercito degli Anni 2000* (Roma: Centro Publicistica, 1999); Crescenzo Fiore e Bruno Zoldan, *Esercito e Società* (Roma: Edizioni UNA, 1994); Aldo Alessandro Mola, *Le Forze Armate dalla Liberazione all'adesione dell'Italia alla NATO* (Roma: Ministero della Difesa-Comitato Storico "Forze Armate e Guerra di Liberazione", 1986); Comitato Tecnico della Società di Storia Militare, *Storia Militare d'Italia 1796-1975* (Roma: Editalia, 1990); Arrigo Pecchioli, *L'Esercito Italiano – Storia di uomini e mezzi* (Roma: Editalia, 1988); Giovanni Spadolini, *Gli anni della Difesa (1983-1987)* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1988).

⁶ For an overview of these three systems, see also Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Touchstone Book, 1995), 103-199.

The new Italian state found itself in the midst of an industrializing efforts taking place across Europe. That impacted the military sphere because the exploitation of the new possibilities offered by the said industrialization was coupled with the availability of large armies of conscripts. In such an international environment, the young Italian state struggled to advance itself economically, diplomatically and in terms of national identity⁷. In the unforgiving crucible of European politics, Italy needed to seek the support of a strong partner and so, after its entrance into the Triple Entente was jeopardized by its disagreement with France over Tunisia⁸, it halfheartedly joined the Triple Alliance until the beginning of WW I⁹.

During the second period, between the end of WW I and 1943, the armed forces witnessed the rise of the fascist regime of Mussolini while remaining loyal to the King. In the process they underwent a degree of modernization, mainly the creation of the air arm and armor corps, but were burdened with missions and expectations that far exceeded the resources devoted to them¹⁰. The initial alliance with Germany and the participation in a war of aggression, mistakenly reckoned to be only regional in scale and short in time, marked the traumatic end of this “expansionist” phase¹¹.

The third period, between 1943 and the end of the Cold War, saw the settlement of the need for a reliable alliance, through the joining of NATO, and the attainment of equilibrium between the different branches of the military¹². From this time on, the history of Italy and of its Army, is very much interconnected with the policies adopted by the Alliance. The participation of Italy in the European integration process and its access into NATO helped the country in its effort

⁷ Killinger, 117-124.

⁸ Ibid., 160.

⁹ Ministero della Difesa, *Nuove Forze*, 16.

¹⁰ Brian R. Sullivan, “The Impatient Cat: Assessment of Military Power in Fascist Italy, 1936-1940”, in *Calculations. Net Assessment and the Coming of World War II*, ed. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 107-112.

¹¹ Ministero della Difesa, *Nuove Forze*, 17

¹² Ibid.

to rebuild the nation, physically and morally, after twenty years of dictatorship and two years of occupation and civil war, from September 1943 to the end of World War II. The geo-strategic location of Italy changed as it became the southern border between democratic western Europe and the newly created Soviet block¹³. This peculiar position and the strength of the communist political forces in Italy¹⁴ were among the main reasons that contributed to the leniency of the occupation, reparation costs and restrictions to the numbers of its Armed Forces that were imposed directly after the war had ended¹⁵.

By the end of 1945, the Allied occupation also ended, and the defense of the country and its internal security shifted to an army composed of five infantry divisions, based on the combat groups which participated as supporting efforts to the liberation of Italy, and three internal security divisions. Equipments and armaments were heterogeneous ranging from remains of the dissolved units and surplus from the Allied Powers fighting in Italy¹⁶.

In 1946, when a national referendum decreed that Italy was to become a republic, the chain of command of the Armed Forces was also reformed, so that they were subordinated to the Minister for Defense, as opposed to the previous subordination to the Prime Minister¹⁷. The new Constitution, promulgated in 1948, set clear rules for the definition of the missions of the Armed Forces, as it stated that, “Italy repudiates war as an instrument of offense” and that the existence of the armed forces is legitimated only in a defensive role¹⁸. Concurrently with the ratification of

¹³ Mola, 13.

¹⁴ Bruno Vespa, *Storia d'Italia da Mussolini a Berlusconi* (Milano: Mondadori, 2004), 59.

¹⁵ Pecchioli, 22.

¹⁶ Mola, 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁸ This constitutional obligation was in line with the situation that originated from the war events and, in the bipolar confrontation that ensued after 1945, it represented a clear guidance and an appropriate mission for the Armed Forces and the Army in particular. However, while still maintaining its full value both in legal and substantive terms, this constitutional principle poses interpretation problems as today the defense of the homeland has taken new meanings. Enemy conventional formations lined up on the borders do not represent the threat anymore. Instead, the threat presents itself in asymmetrical ways and using unconventional methods. The whole concept of vital interests is blurred as they have transcended the national territory and lie where most high is the crisis level. Today securing one's territory as part of the

the new constitution, Italy signed the Atlantic Treaty as a fully integrated member in the Alliance's security structure, NATO. This was a crucial step in defining the Italian defense strategy because it provided a definite, and in a sense stable, framework in which to proceed in rebuilding the Armed Forces and the nation at large. NATO membership provided the opportunity for security cooperation initiatives with the major Allies, specifically the United States, which also clearly meant the transfer of equipment and resources, which would have otherwise lacked in the disastrous economic situation of the post-war years. Italy on its side made available its Armed Forces for the cases contemplated in the Article 5 of the Treaty and started a long progression of standardization of the services along the guidelines of the nascent military organization¹⁹.

Regarding the Army, it maintained the core structure based on five infantry divisions, further reinforced in the mid-sixties, and 3 smaller divisions, plus several separate specialized brigades and regiments. Parallel to the creation of the NATO integrated commands structure, the Army added the corps level, therefore providing NATO with three tactical command structures that could direct all the subordinated units stationed in the north-eastern part of the peninsula, along the border with Yugoslavia. In the mid-sixties, two armored divisions were also formed, as a response to the increased conventional capabilities of the Warsaw Pact forces. The territorial structure still represented a large portion of the force, its size a function of all the management requirements of a large conscript army and, not least, a function of several local political interests²⁰.

Alliance strategy is not enough while actively participating to international security is now premium. These friction points between what were the original intents of the constitutionalists and today's reality, cause great debates and force the political leadership to search for articulated formulas to rationalize in line with the constitutional obligation the employment of forces outside Italy.

¹⁹ Mola, 42-76.

²⁰ Comitato Tecnico della Società di Storia Militare, 155-196.

Participation in NATO opened opportunities that were quickly seized by the political leadership. Confident of the prompt response of the whole Alliance in case of an aggression to the Italian territory, and relatively secure under the nuclear umbrella provided by the Alliance and the United States, the Italian government devoted parts of its budgets to the Armed Forces which were deemed constantly inadequate to maintaining the services, and the Army in particular as the most numerous service, above a sufficient level of effectiveness²¹. This choice, while acceptable in the critical times of national reconstruction, lost its grounds during the economic boom that followed that period. Moreover, it initiated a practice that still has repercussions today. Of little comfort was the fact that other partners in the Alliance adopted similar questionable decisions.

The Italian Army During the Cold War

During the Cold War, while the Italian Army maintained a constant posture by concentrating its efforts in the northeastern part of the country, it went through two organizational changes intended to streamline and generate budget savings. In 1975, the regiment level was replaced by the brigade, which was structured to be a self-sustainable, more combined arms formation as opposed to a more homogeneous regiment. The overall number of units was reduced by almost one third and this reduction helped also to accommodate the slow procurement of more modern equipments and vehicles, which on their side were becoming consistently more expensive²².

In the meantime, every day life in the Army could not avoid being influenced by the national and international events. Specifically, the influx of conscripts ensured that all the tensions and contradictions that characterized the period between 1968 and the end of the 70s²³, came into play in the military organization. This period saw the Italian state struggling with the

²¹ Pecchioli, 66.

²² Comitato Tecnico della Società di Storia Militare, 204-210.

²³ Pietro Craveri, *Storia dell'Italia Contemporanea* (Torino:UTET, 1995), 73-119.

emergence and terrorist operations of the Red Brigades, a splinter cell of the protest movements that flourished in the universities and factories of the late 60s. The risk of infiltration by the Red Brigades of the enlisted ranks meant a higher level of alert in the security of the military infrastructures. On a more general level the Army had to face a class of conscripts that had lost sight of the utility of their military service and were prone to be ideologically imbued by political activism. Refusal to answer to the recruitment offices and other types of protests increased in number²⁴.

In the midst of these societal frictions in 1977, the government published the first Defense White Book, in which, for the first time, it clearly expressed the defense policy, the foundations and the missions of the Armed Forces. The book reaffirmed the choice of the full participation to the NATO defense structure but also stated the will to develop a complementary European defense policy more concerned with the crises that were mounting in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern area. If compared with a previous absence of any official, released document on the defense policy, this book certainly represented a positive advance. Moreover, the White Book initiated a Parliament decision to create a framework law that would bring together and synchronize the procurement processes taking it away from the predictable insular views of the services and the particular interests of the military industries²⁵.

The second major organizational change for the Army occurred in 1986 and it involved the debatable decision to eliminate the divisional level of command. Although justified by the need to streamline the command chain, it also made available several thousand of organic positions that were needed elsewhere. The mere fact that, for example, the V Corps assumed

²⁴ Vespa, 161-206.

²⁵ Spadolini, 13-27.

direct responsibility over nine brigades plus various support units, speaks to the dubious tactical efficacy of the formations affected by such a reform²⁶.

On the other hand, in the same period, the second Defense White Book appeared and presented several new and groundbreaking elements in Italian defense policy. It defined a number of joint missions, one of which was to contribute to peace and stability outside the NATO area. Furthermore, the White Book stressed the increased importance for Italy of the stability of Mediterranean area²⁷. This policy statement was among the many that initiated the realignment of military bases with an intense shift of the gravitation from the north-east to the southern part of the peninsula. Finally, the idea of a “European pillar” inside NATO appeared for the first time in an official document. The European pillar, while fully integrated and non-separable from the Alliance, could create a separate command and control structure to be used for missions of particular European interest²⁸.

The Italian Army After the Cold War

The end of the Cold War represented for the world a moment of liberation from the immediate specter of a third world war that could have resulted in a nuclear confrontation. Italy rejoiced in a special manner as the Berlin Wall came down since the continuation of that political and ideological wall to the south invested its frontier with Yugoslavia. With these events taking place, Italy joined the rest of the Western countries in a share of the so-called “peace dividend”. Moreover, in the years following 1989, conditions were such, as will be examined below, that Italy made a leap from being a net consumer of security under the NATO umbrella, to a net provider of security and support to national and international interests²⁹. This translated into an

²⁶ Fiore and Zoldan, 199-216.

²⁷ Spadolini, 43-64.

²⁸ Ibid., 101-179.

²⁹ Stefano Silvestri et al., *Nuove Concezioni del Modello Difensivo Italiano*, Roma: Collana CeMiSS, 1990, 3-21.

increased national responsibility and decision making capability in the all-encompassing transformational processes inside the European Economic Community (later EU) and NATO. An important result of this trend was that by having a stronger role in the definition of the objectives of the international community, both European and Atlantic, Italy's own national interests were affirmed and safeguarded³⁰.

The first implication of the said peace dividend for the Italian Army was the disengagement from the main mission of static border defense, a mission that throughout the Cold War era could not be compromised by any type of economy of force³¹. As a result of the new situation, whilst the army's first mission remained, and still remains, to defend the integrity of Italian territory, more forces could be made available and actively involved in the national security policy outside the Italian borders³².

The years that followed 1989 were characterized by an international fervor to invest this surplus of security assets into the somewhat idealistic "development" of peace and many humanitarian and peacekeeping missions were launched under UN mandates³³. These missions, accepted as they were by the Italian public opinion, represented great opportunities to reinvigorate the Italian Army's modernization, sometimes at forced march pace, across the whole spectrum from doctrine, to materiel, to personnel. The Italian Army underwent what will be called a dramatic "transformational adaptation" process³⁴ that in a matter of ten years, between

³⁰ Ministero della Difesa, *Nuove Forze*, 17.

³¹ Roberto Aliboni et al., *Le Minacce dal Fuori Area Contro il Fianco Sud della NATO*, Roma: Collana CeMiSS, 1993, 3-7.

³² Stato Maggiore della Difesa, *Il Concetto Strategico (2000)* (Roma: Societa' Editrice Imago Media, 2005), IX-X.

³³ Enrico Magnani, *Oltremare. Le Missioni dell'Esercito Italiano all'Estero* (Bari: Laterza, 1992), 135-153.

³⁴ Although the process is often generally referred to as transformation, for the purpose of this work, what happened to the Italian Army seems to be more an adaptation, since transformation etymologically implies a changing of form. Instead, although the Italian Army has gone through many changes in its personnel system, unit structure and equipment, as will be expounded below, all took place as contingent adaptations of the organization as allowed or called for by contemporary events and emerging possibilities. Some of the changes have had "transformational" strength in the sense that they gave rise to

1990 and 2000, comprised a series of reorganizations comparable only to the one which occurred after 1870 when, after the unification of Rome to Italy, the armed forces were restructured to meet the needs of the newly formed state³⁵.

As always happens during periods of profound change, there have been opposing views and dissenting voices, not all without merit, on the ways to proceed and the desired results. Yet the pace had to be so rapid, and the breadth so grand, that sometimes a "good enough" adaptation took pre-eminence over the perfect but distant solution. A factor in the speed of change was the political leadership, not so much for its support to change, but because it learned what a useful instrument the military was among the other elements of national power. Successive governments increased considerably their commitments in the international scene to provide troops for all the deployments that were taking place overseas. For the army, the missions multiplied without proportion to the actual rate of recruitment of volunteer soldiers³⁶.

Transformational Adaptations of the Italian Army

An all volunteer force

The transition to an all-professional force was the first and most important step of the overall transformational process. In fact, this was key to enable the Army to invest more heavily in human capital, in terms of education, professional training and equipment. There were various

new issues and possibilities that, in turn, called for further adaptations. An example can be the introduction of the volunteer soldier and the following suspension of conscription. The two decisions started a long series of successive modifications of the personnel system and a change in the approach taken in soldier management that, in particular, necessitated a cultural shift across the whole army. All the successive adaptations, be they transformational or not, that occurred through the years have added up to create a transformational trend that will produce more conditions for future adaptations. As of today though, the Italian Army, while looking different in many aspects from fifteen years ago, hasn't changed its form, its substance, and its values, which draw great strength exactly from being immutable to the constantly changing environment.

³⁵ Ministero della Difesa, *Nuove Forze*, 4.

³⁶ Virgilio Ilari e Pier Paolo Battistelli, *Storia del Servizio Militare in Italia. Volume Sesto: Il Terzo Dopoguerra (1991-2001)* (Roma:Collana CeMiSS, 2004), 47.

reasons for the abandonment of the draft. Among the most important was the said shift in the Italian foreign policy toward a more active engagement³⁷. The personnel management of conscripts was such that they couldn't be deployed outside of Italy unless they specifically gave their assent. Therefore, the creation of a national contingent for an operation abroad was a time-consuming process which imposed a great strain of the units that had to support the contingent in terms of manpower, with repercussions unit cohesion. As a term of reference, to deploy a battalion-size force for the UN-led Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia, an entire brigade had to be screened and its units deprived of about thirty percent of their strength³⁸. The move to a volunteer force took place in stages starting with one test-bed unit in 1991-92, and ending in 2004 when the last conscripts finished their duty. The tipping point was between 1995 and 1997 when engagements abroad were starting to grow in number. At the time though, the correct mix of volunteer and conscripts soldiers that had to coexist in the force was still under debate, since the possibility of an all-volunteer army was not yet envisioned. Therefore, in the late nineties, the so-called mixed model seemed to be the way ahead, with a number of units manned with volunteer soldiers and the remainder manned with conscript³⁹. The model had its rationale in the choice to devote the professionalized component for operations overseas and the rest of the army for the defense of the homeland. The model however presented immediate shortcomings, the most obvious being a two-track army, but that was a natural result from the political directives at the time⁴⁰. That has changed in 2004 when the conscription has been suspended, as a result of a groundbreaking political decision taken two years before. At the time of the present work,

³⁷ Gualtiero Mattesi, "La Sospensione della Leva nelle Forze Armate", *Informazioni della Difesa*, no.2 (2001): 16-18.

³⁸ Emanuela D'Alessio, "Verso Forze Armate Professionali", *Rivista Militare*, no. 3 (2000): 102.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁰ Domenico Villani e Sabato Errico, "Pacchetti di Capacita': la Funzione Combat", *Rivista Militare*, no. 3 (1998): 18-19.

soldiers, sailors, airmen and carabinieri are all volunteers and this is certainly a fundamental step towards the creation of a professional force.

Reform of the senior military leadership

Another crucial change that had transformational effects was the reorganization of the chain of command of the Armed Forces in 1997. Before, the Chief of Defense, although technically in charge of the military, was in all aspects a *primus inter pares*, while the service chiefs managed their service as separate entities and not as part of an interdependent whole. With the “Riforma dei Vertici della Difesa” this state of things changed and the line of subordination between the Chief of Defense and the service chiefs (Army, Navy, Air Force and, later, Carabinieri) was clarified and codified. In addition to that, the reform created a Joint Operational Command (Comando Operativo di vertice Interforze - COI) that was tasked to contribute to general defense planning, develop operational doctrine, conduct operational planning and lead joint operations and exercises⁴¹.

The sum of these two changes, the professionalization of the military and the jointness of the chain of command, had great implications for the Italian military, especially in terms of mental adaptation that the leaders at all levels had to go through. Everything, from operations to doctrine to procurement, had to be looked upon with a joint vision. In the units, the soldiers had to be managed not as low-cost manpower but as professionals who had to be nourished and administered efficiently⁴².

⁴¹ Ministero della Difesa, *Libro Bianco 2002* (Roma: Stabilimento Grafico Militare, 2001), 45-48.

⁴² Gen. Mario Arpino, “L’Adeguamento dello Strumento Militare Nazionale”, *Informazioni della Difesa*, no. 1 (2000): 8-9.

The task organization and the “Pools of Capabilities” model

A third adaptation that changed the structure of the Army units was the designing and implementation of the task organization model. The task organization construct has long since been in use in many modern armies and for the Italian Army it was not new either. However, in the mid-nineties, due to the previously mentioned increase in deployments, units were starting to be tailored to operate in the theater where they were being deployed, with reinforcement of high-demand, low-density assets, such as Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), railway engineers, NBC, military intelligence, bridging engineers, dog handlers etc. Moreover, while the unit deployed was nominally a combat arms brigade, the forces on the ground organic to it were almost invariably less than half, if that. The normal relationship between subordinate and parent unit was becoming less and less important while what counted was the flexibility to accommodate a varied set of missions, which required assets from many other specialties and branches⁴³.

The senior leaders of the Italian Army decided to reorganize the army. The model adopted, the so called “Pools of Capabilities”, aimed at considering what enabling capability each level of unit could bring in a package. From brigade to single squad all were classified based on the capabilities that they could provide so that units could be engineered according to operational needs. Every unit or formation represents a pool of capabilities. Some units were restructured to accommodate this, specifically the combat and combat service support units, which were more prone to be employed as sub-elements⁴⁴.

For the combat arms, Army leadership chose the brigade level as the standard command and control (C2) structure for a deployed contingent, because until recently that was the only level available short of the corps level headquarters (HQ). This circumstance notwithstanding, the

⁴³ Lt. Gen. Roberto Speciale, “Le Nuove Sfide dell’Esercito Italiano”, *Rivista Militare*, no.6 (2000): IX.

⁴⁴ Ivan Felice Resce, “Planning: Year One”, *Rivista Militare*, no.3 (1998) (English Version): 81-82.

brigade proved to be the fitting level of command for long term operations, since it provided adequate C2 capability, could sustain operational deployment for at least six months, and its commander, a one star general, had the rank, authority and the multinational “weight” appropriate to operating as contingent commander in many theaters abroad. The combat arms brigades in their regular posture normally have three to four combat arms regiments, an artillery regiment - except for the airmobile and airborne brigades - and an engineer regiment⁴⁵. The amount of units in a brigade enables each of them to have the availability of at least one combat arms regiment at any moment, while the others can be deployed, training or recovering. Inside the brigade, every regiment can be a stand-alone entity that, when properly reinforced, could be deployed on operations⁴⁶.

Alongside the combat arms brigades, several combat support and combat service support brigades were created as capabilities pools, so that they could provide “plug-and-play” elements as needed in the several theaters of operations. Moreover, the headquarters of such brigades can act as higher C2 structure in the event of a massive employment of the dependent units, such as in the case of a deployment of a large Italian force, like a division or the Italian NATO Rapid

⁴⁵ An elucidation is needed on the reappearance of the regiment level in the Italian Army from 1991/1992. At which time, almost all the battalions were "elevated" to regiment. At first sight the decision seems awkward and contains a certain amount of artificiality. In the Italian Army, the regiments had traditionally had at least comprised two battalions and support units while under the new structure they only have one battalion and a headquarter company organic to them. Nevertheless, the headquarters have been elevated as if the forces to be managed and commanded were stronger, since all the principal positions are for lieutenant colonels. The short-term effect of the return of the regimental denomination was that the colonels were able to command a unit, while until 1991 they accomplished their command requirements in the position of deputy-brigade commander or commander of a territorial district. The reasons for this change notwithstanding, it can be safely stated that the effectiveness of the somewhat awkward one-battalion regiment exceeded expectations. In fact, the organization has sufficient C2 capability and the rank of the commander is appropriate to allow the attachments of several elements, from a company to one or more battalions, and not necessarily of the same specialty or branch. This allows enough flexibility to the system, so that, when the situation permits, a brigade headquarters doesn't inevitably have to deploy to command and control more than one battalion.

⁴⁶ Domenico Villani, “The Operational Component of the Army”, *Rivista Militare*, no.1 (1998) (English Version): 56-59.

Deployable Corps (NRDC-IT), or, as has been the case until now, detach specialized C2 capabilities to the units receiving capabilities packages. Specifically, the support brigades/capabilities pools are artillery, air-defense, engineer, logistic support, RISTA (reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition) and signals⁴⁷.

Up to now this specific structure has proven valid, since the flexibility needed to task organize the forces for the different theaters was built into the units themselves with a system called Pre-Established Breakage, where the units are structured so that parts of the whole can be detached without influencing the latter. Moreover, these parts have all the assets to operate short of the logistic support, which would be provided by the receiving unit. Finally, after a force-to-task analysis, it has been derived what amount of that specific capability would be needed by a receiving unit, a regiment or a brigade, to operate in a standard scenario, and the composition of the sub-elements of the specialized unit has been structured accordingly⁴⁸.

The NATO Rapid Deployable Corps and division level headquarters

A further organizational change that occurred after 2000 was the creation of the Italian NATO Rapid Deployable Corps (NRDC-IT) and the reconstitution of division level headquarters. The decision to adopt such structures derived from the established trend in deployments abroad, which always saw Italian forces employed under other nations' command, except in the case of the Italian-led Military Protection Force in Albania during 1997. While contributing only subordinate forces had been a necessity for the absence of deployable headquarters higher than brigades due to the 1986 decision to suppress the divisions' HQs, in 2000 it appeared that the situation could be changed. NATO's request to the partner nations to make available corps level HQ provided the right departure point for this project⁴⁹. As the NRDC - IT obtained full

⁴⁷ Claudio Graziano, "L'Esercito per l'Europa e per il Paese", *Rivista Militare*, no.5 (2000): 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁴⁹ Speciale, II-IV.

operational capability and later deployed to Afghanistan, where it currently is, three division-level HQs were formed as the deployable element of the otherwise non-deployable Forze Operative di Difesa (FOD) headquarters (Defense Forces). The FODs provide training, administrative and logistic support to all the brigades stationed in their areas of responsibility but are territorial in nature. Embedded in them, the new division headquarters have been created as planning headquarters with no organic units other than the HQ battalion, similarly to what is happening today in the US Army with the development of the UEx/division framework. In line with the pools of capabilities concept, in case of deployment on operations, these division HQs would receive subordinate units based on the type of operation they have to accomplish⁵⁰.

Having been organized along the NATO standard table of organization, the divisions HQ are built to be multinationally interoperable and to accept subordinate units from other nations. As of today, the divisions are undergoing the NATO operational capability test and have not yet deployed on operations. However, the decision to re-establish a command level higher than brigade represents an expansion of options for commitment of forces to multinational operations. In fact, it represents the logical answer to what is happening on the ground, where the role of the Italian Army as force provider for such operations is now mature and the army is now ready to step up to assume the C2 responsibility of a greater portion of the operations in which its units are deployed⁵¹. Finally, the improvement in the flexibility obtained by the creation of such higher-level HQ certainly completed the process started with the development of the pools of capabilities concept.

⁵⁰ Ibid., IX-X.

⁵¹ Rocco Vastola e Fabrizio Santillo, "Il Corpo d'Armata Italiano per la NATO", *Rivista Militare*, no.2 (2002): 17.

Increasing Expeditionary Operations

As described, all these modifications happened as expeditionary operational deployments grew in number in a virtuous cycle (or vicious depending on the point of view) where improving joint integration, increasing professionalized unit availability and better organized forces, gave the political leadership more options for contributing to multinational operations, which in turn required more integration and more professionalized units.

The record of significant Italian expeditions after World War II starts in 1982 as the Italian Army, supported by its sister services, deployed a reinforced battle group to Lebanon, as part of the multinational effort to help the legitimate government in containing the violence that had ensued after the operations launched by Israel in southern Lebanon. Operations LIBANO 1 and LIBANO 2, which ended in March 1984, were a significant experience for the unproven Italian Army and the absence of sizeable hostile actions against the Italian contingent was unanimously interpreted as a sign of success.

The beginning of the said momentous increase of deployments abroad was in May 1991, when a force of 1400 men deployed to Turkey to provide humanitarian assistance to the Kurdish population that fled from Saddam Hussein's regime's repression. The Italian participation to Operation PROVIDE COMFORT ended late in July of the same year, as the situation was deemed to have returned close to normality⁵².

Only a year and a half later, following the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia, a brigade-level task force, 2400 personnel strong, took part to the multinational Operation RESTORE HOPE. The force later transitioned under the operational control (OPCON) of United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), and continued its effort to alleviate the suffering of the population and re-establish a minimum of social tranquility, amid increasing

⁵² Magnani, 150-153.

tensions between the Somali clans and the multinational forces operating in the country, that led also to several casualties in the Italian contingent⁵³.

At the same time, not far from Somalia, another battle group was deployed as part of United Nations Operation in Mozambique, from March 1993 to April 1994, to contribute to the peace process between the Government of Mozambique and the Mozambican National Resistance (Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana, RENAMO). The mission was to separate opposing forces, demobilize irregular formations, requisition and destroy arms, and to protect humanitarian assistance organizations working in the country. Additionally, the Italian contingent provided logistic and medical support to all the UN Forces present in theater, an indication of improving Italian operational capabilities⁵⁴.

The following year represents a turning point in the conduct of expeditionary operations by the Italian Army. In fact, until 1994, the forces being deployed consisted mainly of conscripts and that caused strains on the units as already examined above. However that changed in 1995, as an Italian all-volunteer contingent deployed to Bosnia as part of the Implementation Force (IFOR) that conducted the NATO-led Operation JOINT ENDEAVOUR. The Garibaldi Bersaglieri brigade (mechanized), the first formation to be manned with volunteer soldiers, along other multinational forces, had the mission to implement the Dayton Agreements, which aimed at separating the warring factions and at initiating a normalization process after the civil war that afflicted Bosnia for four years⁵⁵. The Italian sector, as part of the French Multinational Division's sector, included Sarajevo and Pale, the capitals of the two ethnic entities, respectively the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Srpska Republic. The operation was not an easy

⁵³ Claudio Graziano, "Lineamenti e Consuntivo dell'Operazione", in *1992-1994. Operazione Somalia*, ed. Ruggero Stanglini (Firenze: Edizioni Aeronautiche Italiane, 1994), 218-220.

⁵⁴ Magnani, 135-147.

⁵⁵ Enrico Magnani, "L'Esercito nei Balcani, un impegno decennale", in *Nel Cuore dei Balcani*, ed. Andrea Nativi (Milano: Electa Mondadori, 2003), 72-87.

one and, under different denominations (JOINT GUARD, JOINT FORGE and EU-led ALTHEA), is still ongoing, although with much fewer multinational forces⁵⁶.

As more than 2000 troops were still deployed to Bosnia, another crisis hit the Balkans, as turmoil exploded in Albania in early 1997. The operation that ensued, Operation ALBA, is significant for the Italian Army because Italy, for the first time, was the lead nation of the multinational force (Forza Multinazionale di Protezione, FMP) that intervened to contain the crisis. For this reason, and for the considerations that will follow in the next chapter, Operation ALBA will be examined in detail.

At the beginning of 1997, Albania's already unstable political, economic and social situation worsened into a major crisis. Widespread criminality, corruption in the government and police forces, common people's savings lost due to the bankruptcy of dubious investment societies, all caused severe popular turmoil. The semi-anarchy that ensued, also fomented by the criminal organizations, caused a great influx of illegal immigrants to the shores of Italy⁵⁷.

The seriousness of the situation was immediately appreciated by the Italian government that set the tone by declaring the response to it as a matter of national interest. It promptly started diplomatic actions and directed the Chief of Defense to start planning and prepare for operations in support of the said diplomatic actions. All the shaping conditions were set: the formal invitation by the shaky Albanian government of multinational forces to intervene to restore order and security; the involvement of the European Union, in order to create a large international consensus as to the legitimacy of the intervention; the sponsoring of the United Nations Resolution 1101, that authorized such intervention; finally, the creation of a coalition of ten nations that agreed to contribute troops under Italian operational command, among which France

⁵⁶ Andrea Margelletti, "Le Missioni in Corso", in *Nel Cuore dei Balcani*, ed. Andrea Nativi (Milano: Electa Mondadori, 2003), 88-101.

⁵⁷ Gino Agnetti, *Operazione Alba* (Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini, 1997), 40-42.

and the unexpected coexistence of Greece and Turkey⁵⁸. The *aims* of the operation were to create a stable and secure environment that would allow for the delivery of international humanitarian assistance, the conduct of international assistance with democratization, human rights, and the electoral process. The *means* were a multinational force of more than 6000 soldiers, airmen and sailors, half of which were Italians, which ensured that the security situation improved and which provided a safe framework for the elections to take place in July⁵⁹. The *ways* were mainly the presence on the ground with enough forces to clearly demonstrate the determination of the coalition to carry out the assigned mission. Additionally, the multinational force conducted wide-ranging civil-military activities, made possible due to the reasonably permissive environment, with the aim of providing the population centers with goods and services, in order to defuse the tensions deriving from the economic crisis⁶⁰.

The operation started on the 15th of April and ended on the 8th of August, within the time frame authorized by the United Nations and with a very small number of non-combat casualties. Far from finally solving all the problems afflicting Albania, the operation kept the country from disintegration and from becoming a catalyst for more turmoil in a region already affected by conflict and ethnic strife⁶¹. In fact, a stable Albania helped in containing the Kosovo crisis, which could have easily spilled into an ungoverned space in Albania.

This leads to another significant year for the Italian Army, 1999, when Italy participated with a substantial number of troops and air assets in all the phases of the developing conflict in Kosovo between the Serbian security forces and the separatist ethnic Albanians, which degenerated into an ethnic cleansing against the Albanian population. Specifically, the Italian Army started by deploying a battle group to FYROM as part of the NATO Operation JOINT

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47-49.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 123-124.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 155-169.

⁶¹ Ibid., 172-184.

GUARANTOR. This task force had the mission to conduct emergency evacuation of the observers of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), if conflict should put them at risk. The mission crept in March 1999 as Operation ALLIED FORCE was launched to force Serbian authorities to halt the violence in Kosovo⁶². The Italian battle group was increasingly reinforced and by the end of the air campaign it had become a brigade, which then entered in Kosovo as part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) that conducted Operation JOINT GUARDIAN, aimed at stabilizing the Serbian province⁶³. In the meantime, between April and August 1999, another Italian formation, 2300 strong, deployed to the northern part of Albania in support of the NATO humanitarian effort to assist the ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing from war-torn Kosovo⁶⁴. The operations in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM are still ongoing, although all have changed in purpose throughout the years as the situation slowly improved. The forces deployed have also been reduced although more than 3600 Italian soldiers remain deployed in the Balkan region⁶⁵.

In late 1999 Italy another crisis developed, this time in South East Asia, a region of the world far from Italian normal sphere of interest. In September, violence erupted in East Timor following a referendum that sanctioned the independence from Indonesia. Muslim irregular forces, opposed to the independence, committed atrocities against the East Timorese population, mainly Christian, causing a humanitarian crisis. After pressures on the Indonesian Government to accept international help to restore order, the United Nations authorized the intervention of a

⁶² For a brief overview of the involvement of NATO in the Kosovo crisis see: Kosovo Force, "Background to the Conflict"; available from <http://www.nato.int/kfor/kfor/intro.htm>; internet; accessed 22 March 2006. For a more detailed account see: Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly. NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

⁶³ For an overview of the Italian participation to Operation JOINT GUARDIAN see: Ministero della Difesa, "Le Operazioni Militari. Kosovo Force – KFOR"; available from <http://www.difesa.it/Operazioni+Militari/operazioni+in+atto/Kosovo++JOINT+GUARDIAN/>; internet; accessed 22 March 2006.

⁶⁴ For an overview of the Italian participation to Operation ALLIED HARBOUR see: Esercito Italiano, "Missione Allied Harbour"; available from http://www.esercito.difesa.it/root/attivita/mix_allied.asp; internet; accessed 22 March 2006.

⁶⁵ Margelletti, 95-97.

multinational force (International Force East Timor, INTERFET) under Australian leadership. Italy participated to Operation STABILISE with a joint task force, with the land component being an army battle group, from September 1999 to February 2000. The operation, although not different in kind from the previous ones, represented a challenge for the Italian military due to the overextension of the LOCs and the requirement to sustain a force so far away from Italy. The positive results in overcoming such difficulties, especially through joint efforts, demonstrated that the ongoing force modification process was being successful.

The expeditionary operations of 1999 required a considerable effort by the Italian Army, the major contributor to deployed personnel that at a point reached 11,000. It must be considered that at the time the army was only partially professionalized and many units still had non-deployable conscripts. Moreover, for every contingent abroad there were two corresponding set of forces in country either ready to deploy or just recovered and therefore in need of time for reconstitution and rest.

It should come as no surprise if the level of commitment reached in 1999 has been chosen as a benchmark for the current force structure in terms of number of personnel and units. Indeed, the army is working today on an assumption that it's maximum "level of ambition", short of a general national or NATO emergency in terms of a threat to the territorial integrity of both the nation or the Alliance, is to deploy and sustain for a long period of time a brigade-level force in two areas of crisis and a regiment-level force in a tertiary operational theater. Alternatively to the two brigade-level engagements, the army could deploy and sustain a division-level headquarters with two subordinate brigades, in a major theater of operations. With a four-month rotation base for the units throughout these theaters the total operational component of the army adds up to a

total of nine brigades, adequately supported with combat and logistic supports, plus one brigade as strategic reserve, which is the model the army is meeting today.⁶⁶

After the events of September 11, 2001, the Italian Army became greatly involved in the multinational stabilization effort in Afghanistan. While conducting homeland defense operations in support of Italian police forces, the army contributed to the International Security Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) with a battalion-level force from December 2001⁶⁷. Furthermore, from March to September 2003 it deployed a battle group to Khowst, in the eastern region of Paktia, in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM⁶⁸.

The Italian efforts in Afghanistan increased as ISAF came under NATO responsibility in mid-2003. Specifically, since April 2005, the Italian Army established a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Herat and, most importantly, a Regional Area Coordinator/Commander (RAC), responsible for the PRTs in Herat, Farah, Badghis and Ghor⁶⁹. Furthermore, since mid-2005, the Italian Army provided the command structure for ISAF (COMISAF), based on the NRDC-IT, and the forces for Kabul Multinational Brigade (KMNB), now based on an Italian infantry brigade, bringing the overall number of personnel operating in Afghanistan to more than 2000⁷⁰.

Finally, in mid-2003, the Italian Army deployed a brigade-level task force to southern Iraq, in support of the multinational stabilization and reconstruction effort in that country. Although the contingent, with more than 3000 troops on the ground, is not directly involved in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, it has nevertheless established close links with the coalition forces

⁶⁶ Graziano, 9. See also Lt. Gen. Roberto Speciale, "L'Organizzazione dell'Esercito Italiano in Rapporto agli Impegni Internazionali", *Rivista Militare*, no.1 (2002): VII.

⁶⁷ Giorgio Battisti, "I Soldati Italiani a Kabul", *Rivista Militare*, no.4 (2002): 38-42.

⁶⁸ Giorgio Battisti, "Il Tenace Volo di Nibbio I", *Rivista Militare*, no.2 (2004): 55-61.

⁶⁹ Ministero della Difesa, "Le Operazioni Militari. Afghanistan: RAC, PRT, FSB"; available from <http://www.difesa.it/Operazioni+Militari/operazioni+in+atto/Afghanistan+PRT++FSB/>; internet; accessed 22 March 2006.

⁷⁰ Ministero della Difesa, "Le Operazioni Militari. ISAF"; available from <http://www.difesa.it/Operazioni+Militari/operazioni+in+atto/Afghanistan++ISAF/>; internet; accessed 22 March 2006.

in theater, providing elements to augment the Multinational Force Iraq (MNF-I) headquarters and the Multinational Corps Iraq (MNC-I) headquarters, in this last instance, providing also the deputy commander⁷¹.

All the above operations gave and are still giving great impetus to the transformational adaptations that the Italian Army adopted and that greatly changed its aspect from the early 1990s. From an army deployed on the frontier, with units created ad-hoc for the environment in which they lived, which was the same as the one in which they would eventually fight, it changed into an army that operates in distant environments and with capabilities much more differentiated from the combat-heavy emphasis needed by a conventional fight against the Warsaw Pact.

Stability and Reconstruction Operations

In his book *Waging Modern War*, General Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, described the tactics employed by SFOR in Bosnia as “a modern way of war” by “using forces, not force.” Clark states that “NATO forces were not at war in Bosnia, but did everything military forces do short of firing their weapons. This included deploying troops and using intelligence, presence, movement, observation, and intimidation to influence events”. Clark concluded that in modern war there are: requirements for police activities, ranging from investigating crime through reaction to civil disturbances and urban violence⁷². This prominent analysis certainly gives credit to all the adaptations that were implemented by the Italian Army. In fact, it has adequately adapted itself to meet what Clark mentions as the current set of challenges of the operational environment. The structure of the force today allows it to resource the contingents deployed on operation with a wide range of assets to achieve a certain range of effects. The men and women on the ground have enough professional skills to be both proficient

⁷¹ Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, “Army Report 2004”, *Rivista Militare*, no.2 (2005): 59-67.

⁷² Wesley Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2001), 458.

soldiers and clear expression of both national and international efforts⁷³. In general, this could be pointed to as a success story for the army because in a relatively short period of time it has shifted the focus of its training and force structure to meet this new challenge. What is more, in the various theaters of operations where Italian units were deployed, the local authorities and populations praised them for their behavior and the international partners to the operations respected their professional skills⁷⁴.

While this speaks to the progress made, some clarification is needed on this aspect to avoid any unmerited self-congratulation. First of all, the operations in which the Italian Army has taken part over the last twenty years have been almost entirely of the stabilization and reconstruction type. Ranging between the definitions of peacekeeping, peace enforcing or crisis response operations, they have as a common denominator that they involve a low level of residual conflict and possibly an agreement of some nature between the parties in conflict. Therefore, the level of success must be related to the contingent situation that the Italian units found on the ground. The validity of all the adaptations and the real value of the new volunteer soldier, have not been tested in combat, fortunately. On the other hand, the complexities of high intensity combat operations notwithstanding, stability and support operations present a high level of challenge and intricate relationships that have to be taken into account.

As will be seen in the next chapter, this might be the proper realm for the application of effects-based operations⁷⁵ because effects achieved in these kinds of operations are far more difficult to define, and involve assets that are often outside the military domain. It is here that Italian units have contributed greatly in recent years because in all the operations where Italian

⁷³ Giuseppe Maggi, "The Land Forces, as Foundation of Stabilization and Reconstruction", *Rivista Militare*, no.1 (2004) (English Version): 70-71.

⁷⁴ Mattesi, 22.

⁷⁵ Edward A. Smith Jr., *Effects Based Operations: Applying Network-centric Warfare in Peace, Crisis, and War* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program, 2002), 42.

soldiers have been deployed, they brought something with them that was different from just combat training and technical skills.

The absence of an overaggressive war fighting posture was probably instrumental to the success achieved. Italian units are widely acknowledged to have a certain “cultural sensitivity”, which somehow managed to gradually reduce some of the tensions that normally afflicted the areas where they operated. Far from being definable, this characteristic belongs beyond doubt in the sphere of the “intangibles”, cognitive elements that affect the behavior of human systems in ways that are very difficult to predict and replicate. In the particular situation of the Italian soldiers, it might be surmised here that their positive results in dealing with the intricateness of the operations that they conducted were also made possible by the unique history of the Italian people⁷⁶. It could be that it has been easier for the Italian units to be accepted positively by the parties to the conflicts that they had to conciliate because their presence might have been seen as unsuspecting, that is to say not related to some non-explicit national agenda. At the “strategic corporal” level, this influence on perceptions constitutes a marked advantage compared to, for example, a US soldier that, often unwillingly, is the bearer of his or her country’s policies, noticeably different in scope and scale from Italy’s.

A hypothesis for this cognitive dissonance on the acceptability of the two mentioned soldiers might be the absence of the Italian military outside the country for a long time after World War II. This long period, may have helped to present the renewed involvement of Italian units outside of the national boundaries in a different light. If seen under the lens of military theory this “capability” of the Italian soldier is certainly of little help for the development of a sound doctrine for stability and reconstruction operations. However, it remains an advantage in the cognitive realm that Italian soldiers have when they deploy anywhere in the world and

⁷⁶ Gen. Giuseppe Orofino, “La Politica Estera ed il Peacekeeping”, *Informazioni della Difesa*, no.1 (2002): 20.

something to take into consideration when an operation is conducted in line with the concept of effects-based operations.

The Italian Army has, arguably, also benefited from another factor, multinational participation in all the operations in which it has committed. Specifically, every time Italian soldiers are deployed on operations abroad, they are always part of a greater multinational force, either belonging to NATO, EU or to a coalition that is formed to address a crisis. Of course, this state of affairs springs out of a double necessity. It is a political necessity, because the internal political situation and the established attitude of Italian public opinion, realistically accepts only the deployment of Italian forces as part of an international effort and not for a unilateral action. It is a military necessity, because some of the assets needed to mount a unilateral operation, even only for stabilization and reconstruction purposes, are outside Italian capabilities in terms of quantity and certain categories⁷⁷. Nevertheless, making an advantage out of necessity, the multinational characteristic of an operation provides a net gain under the effects-based approach because it gives political viability and presents the operation as a concerted action of many rather than a unilateral move of one or few, which can be easily portrayed as national aggression. Again, the “trick” is at the level of perceptions, but on the ground this is what the soldier needs in order to operate in a more permissive environment.

New Operational Planning Concepts for an Army of Use

As a concluding remark, the following paragraph will examine the way ahead for the Italian Armed Forces. The “Strategic Concept” of the Chief of Defense, released in April 2005, states as the main missions of the Armed Forces as being to,

defend the vital interests of the Nation against any possible aggression [...]; to safeguard the European-Atlantic area, within the framework of the Nation’s strategic and/or vital interests [...]; to contribute to the management of

⁷⁷ Giorgio Cuzzelli, “Forze Multinazionali: la Nuova Frontiera dell’Esercito”, *Rivista Militare*, no.3 (2000), 11-14.

international crises, by participating in crisis prevention and management operations with the goal of guaranteeing international peace, security, stability and legitimacy, as well as affirming fundamental human rights in the spirit of the United Nations Charter, within the framework of international organizations – above all NATO, the EU and the UN – and/or bi- and multi-lateral agreements, with particular regard to Europe’s capability to manage crises autonomously. [...]⁷⁸

The formulation of the third mission, if compared with the missions given to the Armed Forces during the Cold War era, contrasts sharply in terms of breadth and scope, since it expands the responsibilities of the Armed Forces well beyond national boundaries. From the analysis conducted, the statement is really the formalization of what has happened in the last fifteen years, and as such it represents a moment of synthesis and a call to what will be expected from the Armed Forces, and the Army in particular, in the near to mid-term future.

Indeed, the point at which the Army finds itself in the transformational adaptation is only half way to the desired objective, which is of a joint, expeditionary professional force. Now the main focus areas remain: joint and multinational integration; an expeditionary and campaign-quality army; exploitation of the additional capabilities offered by the technical developments in the fields of precision engagement and command, control, communication, computer, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, reconnaissance (C4ISTAR); and the assimilation of new operational and planning concepts inherent in net-centric warfare and effects-based operations⁷⁹.

The interest of the Italian Chief of Defense in the emerging concept of effects-based operation has particular significance for the purpose of this work. The next chapter will therefore analyze the theory behind it and will attempt to synthesize its distinctive elements in order to set the stage for a viable translation of the concept into practice, with the purpose of facilitating ongoing and future operation.

⁷⁸ Stato Maggiore della Difesa, *The Chief of the Italian Defence Staff Strategic Concept* (Roma: Societa’ Editrice Imago Media, 2005), 15.

⁷⁹ Stato Maggiore della Difesa, *Investire in Sicurezza*, 9.

EFFECTS-BASED OPERATIONS

This chapter will analyze the effects-based operations (also in the acronym EBO) concept from its historical background and its theoretical underpinnings through to a critique of its applicability. It will conclude by examining working definitions from several prominent authors engaged with the study of effects-based operations.

Key Elements of Effects-Based Operations

At its core, the concept of effects-based operations suggests that by analyzing the cause-effect relationship of an action, military or otherwise, operations can be designed, planned and executed in a more effective way, reducing unintended and negative secondary effects. Moreover effects should be nested toward the accomplishment of an objective coherent with a defined end state.

Even a broad consideration of the concept points at a new way to understand military operations. As a start point, the approach recommends the adoption of the term effects within the doctrinal lexicon, rather than the current practice of using tasks. In an ideal effects-based construct, the commander would tell the operator what effects are needed to reach the immediate, subsequent and final objectives and the operator, much more familiar with the tactical environment, would select and execute the appropriate actions to attain such effects. Within this process, the technique of defining the desired effects is critical to success, since, if the commander determines and directs unintended effects, the subsequent actions will fail to achieve the desired objective. On the other hand, such an emphasis on defining the desired effects needs to be accompanied by systemic flexibility to allow the exploitation of unforeseen, but nonetheless useful, effects that would still lead to the objective, or even shorten the road to it.

The most original feature of EBO, and possibly the major departure from both traditional and more recent Western military practice, is that the list of potentially desired effects is not necessarily limited to military doctrinal outcomes, such as defeat, secure, destroy etc. The

language of effects-based operations extends also into the non-military domain, often calling for other actors to operate alongside, or even in substitution of, military forces. In this sense the effects-based approach prompts operational commanders towards solutions that are broad in scope. It is applicable to military operations but, equally importantly, it also has implications for combined, joint and interagency planning up to, and including, the strategic level. Edward A. Smith argued that the employment of effects-based operation should be the strategy of choice in the initial part of an operational continuum that he depicted as starting from peace operations in an asymmetrical context and ending in the symmetric confrontation between two adversaries seeking total victory⁸⁰.

Origins of Effects-Based Operations

The expression effects-based operation dates back to the First Gulf War, when the Coalition's air planners sought to take advantage of the combination of modern precision munitions, stealth capabilities, and electronic countermeasures to conduct simultaneous attacks on Iraq. The identification of the critical nodes of Iraqi air defense system resulted in a carefully planned attack on the first night of the war that caused a systemic collapse of the ability of Iraq to defend itself from Coalition airpower⁸¹. Strong of the success of the Gulf War air campaign, Lt. Gen. David A. Deptula and Colonel (ret.) John A. Warden III, two US Air Force officers that took part to the campaign, became the two main vocal promoters of the effects-based operation construct. In their works, they advocated the systemic nature of the enemy social, economic and military organizations, and affirmed that, similarly to what happened during Operation DESERT

⁸⁰ Smith, 41-42. In the final part of Smith's operational continuum, total victory would very likely be defined as enemy unconditional surrender, obtained using the complete arsenal even at the cost of the enemy's annihilation

⁸¹ Williamson Murray and Kevin Woods, *Thoughts on Effects-Based Operations, Strategy, and the Conduct of War* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses - Joint Advanced Warfighting Program, 2004), 1.

STORM, such systems could be defeated through a synchronized attack on selected critical nodes in order to cause a collapse of those systems⁸².

Although the effects-based vocabulary is relatively recent, the concept underlying effects-based operations is not. In the words of Smith, “good generals, admirals and statesmen have always tried to focus on shaping the adversary’s thinking and behavior rather than on simply defeating its forces”⁸³. Past military thinkers such as Sun Tzu, Macchiavelli and Clausewitz, while accepting the violent nature of war, all emphasized the centrality of knowing oneself and the enemy in order to understand how to best influence his perceptions and decision making. The goal would be, eventually, to bring about functional paralysis on the enemy without necessarily resorting to actual fighting.

Re-looking at modern history, a perfect use of military force with the real intent of not engaging the enemy can be identified many of 18th century European wars between state monarchies. At that time the main limiting factor was the need to preserve a costly professional army, difficult and lengthy to rebuild in the case of defeat, and maneuverable only as a whole. Campaigns often developed into lengthy maneuvers designed to avoid the risks of battle and to set the conditions in which the adversary was compelled withdraw and concede to the opponent’s terms⁸⁴.

Thus, effects-based thinking is arguably a modern systematization of a pre-existing idea, although rarely implemented, where the use of military power to defeat the opponent’s forces remained the only means to a strategic end, rather than one of many different options. In this

⁸² For the works of these two officers, see: David A. Deptula, *Effect Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare* (Arlington, VA: Aerospace Education Foundation, 2001); David A. Deptula, “Firing for Effects, The important measure is not the targets destroyed but rather the effect on the enemy’s capabilities and actions”, *Air Force Magazine* Vol.84, no.4 (April 2001): 46-53; John A. Warden, “The Enemy as a System”, *Airpower Journal* (Spring 1995); available from <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/warden.html>; internet; accessed 22 March 2006.

⁸³ Smith, 103.

⁸⁴ Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon’s Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 15-18.

sense the cognitive effect of war on the adversary acquires greater importance than physical force and the will to fight becomes the central element to be attacked or defended. The ways to attack the will could be different, based on which targets must be influenced, be it the senior leadership, for example the dictator, the military, the population or certain parts of the it, such as aristocracy, upper class or business class⁸⁵.

An important contribution to the development of the effects-based thinking can undoubtedly be attributed to air power thinkers and strategists. Giulio Douhet's very idea of the creation of an offensive independent air force, capable of seizing command of the air and of striking directly at enemy sources of power, such as cities and industrial complexes⁸⁶, in order to break the will to fight, is in itself the essence of effects-based operations. The triggering causes for this shift in thinking were a combination of the horrors of World War 1 and the revolutionary impact of industrialization and the combustion engine. Today, Douhet's solutions seem overly-optimistic and morally bereft but at the time, if anything could bring about the capitulation of the enemy without putting humanity through another long, attritional, industrialized war, it seemed worthy of whole-hearted pursuit.

However, though in World War II mobility was restored to the battlefields, the presence of well developed air forces on each side didn't bring about rapid victory as envisioned by the theorists of air power. Moreover, historians and analysts are still debating the real effects of the bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan. In those instances, the air planners relied on the industrial-web theory, which articulated the essential connections required in a modern industrialized state economy, which ensured that every sub-element fit the industrial system so that it could function properly. These links were posited to be finite and, therefore, if targeted the war production capability of the enemy country in question would be increasingly reduced until

⁸⁵ Murray and Woods, 2.

⁸⁶ Giulio Douhet, *Command of the Air*, trans. by Dino Ferrari (Washington D.C.: Office of Air Force History 1983), 143 - 208.

collapse⁸⁷. The problem when relying on “scientific” targeting is the need for the conduct of an accurate damage assessment which even today, with more sophisticated technology, proves very difficult to perform. Later on, by shifting the bombing raids to communications hubs and oil facilities the intended effects were supposedly achieved⁸⁸, although, it may be argued, in WW II there were only a few operations where a clear-cut action-effect relationship can be identified.

One could be the bombing campaign preceding operation “Overlord” in Normandy, which targeted the French transportation system. The effect was that it deprived the Germans of the flexibility to maneuver forces to react to an invasion, while forcing them to move their reserves close to the French coast therefore reducing their space for maneuver. Another clear-cut action-effects relationship may be seen in the unconditional surrender of Japan, following the employment of the atomic bomb by the United States.

According to Mann et al. the same shortcomings were experienced 50 years later during the Gulf War, when, again, a targeting process thought to bring about the collapse of Saddam’s regime by the exasperation of it’s population, failed to do so because it didn’t take into account the fact that the dictator cared little or nothing about the conditions of prostration of the Iraqi population⁸⁹.

These setbacks notwithstanding, the vision of the destruction, or, ideally, the temporary immobilization, of an enemy system’s critical nodes without the need to destroy all the infrastructure around it and without undesired effects, such as civilian casualties, is still of great value and, to this day, an agent exploiting the third dimension still retains the potential to accomplish this idea.

⁸⁷ Edward C. Mann and others, *Thinking Effects: Effects-Based Methodology for Joint Operations* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2002), 20.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 18-20.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 17-23.

Drivers for the Emergence of the Effects-Based Approach

The question is what triggered the emergence, or rather the re-emergence, of the effects-based approach? The main reason, as detailed above, was the aspiration to depart from a paradigm where physical destruction of the enemy's forces was seen as the most efficient, or only, method to reach desired strategic ends, when it is really only a single means amongst many for the imposition of one's own will in order to reach a political goal. Mann et al. referred to the inefficiency of the old paradigm, which they addressed as the "conquest paradigm", where force is used when every other option has failed but as combat operations begin the military must have control of events until final victory, after which control of events is returned to the political domain⁹⁰. More recently, Smith defined the attrition-based model as one where the opposing forces fight against each other in a symmetric context and try to deprive the opponent of the physical means to continue to fight, therefore bringing about its capitulation. Smith doesn't place this model in the past but affirms that, in a situation of symmetry, even today this would be the strategy of choice⁹¹. The models seen above all fit the experiences of the Napoleonic wars, the American Civil War, the two World Wars, the Arab-Israeli wars and also, in some aspects, the two Gulf Wars.

This model is rapidly becoming less *politically* acceptable in western liberal democracies. But why can't armed forces continue to think in terms of defeat by destruction of the enemy, leaving every other consideration to the aftermath of a war and only regulate themselves along the established *jus in bello*?

Three agents of change can be pointed out that both forced and allowed this shift: society, technology and threat. The societal changes are maybe the more pervasive and can be summarized in the increasing diffusion of welfare in democratic industrialized countries, and the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁹¹ Smith, 41-42.

omnipresent free media and its influence as a consent-building and pressure instrument on this wealthy, liberal public opinion. Looking more closely at the consequences for the military, the larger presence of the media in areas of crisis or in actual combat brought about a “spectacularization” of the battlefield that takes away a consistent part of freedom of action from military commanders that are bound to devote more and more resources to information operations than in the past. Exposed to images of combat and human suffering, in the comfort of its relatively secure houses, the public has become increasingly intolerant of death and destruction without clearly revealed justification. This phenomenon is both a pressure on the political leadership and a constraint on the military in terms of time and the nature of proposed engagement. The air campaign conducted in Kosovo by NATO in 1999 is a demonstration of this general attitude: the Atlantic Alliance decided to act under mounting pressure that built on instances of a relatively low number of casualties but that made the news as a new ethnic cleansing. In the end, the morality of witnessing idle another refugee crisis or, worse a repetition of what occurred in Bosnia few years before, was weighted against the morality of going to war at all.

The second agent of change, technology, is taken into consideration especially for the consequences that it has had in the control and communication domain: not only has it enabled the media as a political, economic and social source of pressure, in the military domain it has provided the commander with unprecedented rapidity and accuracy through the use of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and real-time intelligence-gathering instruments. In a self-perpetuating feedback loop, the political-military leadership started looking at military operations as “surgical” events that could accomplish their ends through ways acceptable a mass media-informed public. The scourge of attrition-based warfare is more and more remote, or so it seems.

The third agent of change, the threat, is clear to most of the world, especially after the terror attacks in the US, Spain, UK, Saudi Arabia and Bali, just to name the most spectacular. No peer competitor is likely to challenge the Western countries with conventional, symmetric threats

to their territories or to their security, at least in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, asymmetric and non-conventional conflict has become the norm and failed states represent greater danger than rouge states, due to their inability to control their own space and its subsequent exploitation by terrorist or, even, insurgent forces. In such an environment, the definition and identification of the enemy is increasingly challenging especially due to the terrorist's ability to dissolve among civilian populations and to leverage their active or passive support. Therefore, targeting the enemy has lost much of its classical epistemological meaning of destroying, defeating or neutralizing it. Conversely, as will be elaborated below, the psychological domain is today much more relevant for the conduct of military operations, and actions directed at consent building, perception management, and civilian support have entered in force the lexicon and the options available to the operational commander.

The results of the interaction of these agents of change showed clearly in Iraq during 2003. The coalition's political leadership gained public support through the media, by presenting the reasons that called for an armed intervention in Iraq, its alleged support to terrorist organizations and the threat of employing weapons of mass destruction so clearly sought by international terrorist organizations. Without such consent building, which required presenting the American people with a "coalition of the willing" in order to legitimize the intervention, operations could have hardly been initiated. The operation that ensued was executed by a pseudo-networked land force, combined with precision air strikes and brought about the capitulation of the state in a matter of weeks, while cameras shot footages of tank moving in the desert and engaging enemy in a context more akin to a reality show than the depiction of global news.

On a more theoretical level, something else contributed to the emergence of the effects-based thinking: a new scientific appreciation of complexity and General System Theory⁹².

⁹² For more information on General System Theory see Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory* (New York: George Braziller, 1968). Bertalanffy rejects specialized empirical investigations, such

Adaptation of this theory, adopted by military theorists, provided a model for the description and understanding of the interconnections ongoing in the operational environment between all its components: friendly and opponent forces, civilian organizations, populations and neutral actors.

There are some disagreements between authors and organizations on which specific branch of complexity theory fully inspires an effects-based approach. On an early discussion on the topic, the adversary is “understood as a *complex adaptive system* driven by human interactions and not only as a group of physical targets”⁹³. Smith, Murray and Woods,⁹⁴ and Davis⁹⁵ also agree on the use of the term complex adaptive system; and Smith went further and argued that effects-based operations concentrate on the human dimension of conflict and that they take into account the interactions between two or more of the most exemplary complex adaptive systems, human decision-makers and human organizations⁹⁶. In a recently released draft publication, United States Joint Forces Command’s (JFCOM) Standing Joint Forces Headquarter (SJFH) rejects the view of founding effects-based operation on the Chaos Theory or Complex Adaptive System methods addressed in the mathematical sciences. Instead, SJFH points at General System Theory, which addressed the interaction (links) between tangible elements (nodes) as better rationalizing what faces the operational commander⁹⁷. Echevarria proposed an additional admonition on the use of the concept of complex adaptive systems, because it can generate a bias of the enemy as reactive, defined as, “innovating within the constraints of their environment”, rather than proactive. There is inherent risk in characterizing his behavior only as

as those frequently found in natural sciences, in favor of a more general systemic approach to knowledge. He categorized systems using the three parameters of number of nodes, species of nodes, and the nature of relations between them.

⁹³ Dennis J. Gleenson and others, *New Perspectives on Effects-Based Operations: Annotated Briefing* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses - Joint Advanced Warfighting Program, 2001), 4.

⁹⁴ Murray and Woods, 9.

⁹⁵ Paul K. Davis, *Effects-Based Operations: A Grand Challenge for the Analytical Community* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 24.

⁹⁶ Smith, 251.

⁹⁷ United States Joint Forces Command - Standing Joint Force Headquarters (JFCOM – SJFH), *Commander's Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations - Draft* – (Norfolk, VA: The Joint Warfighting Center, 2005), 65.

non-cooperative and not also of as a “thinking agent”, which would entail the initiative to step out of the abstract cognitive boundaries set by constraints and restraints⁹⁸.

Critiques of Effects-Based Operations

While the theories of choice are different, the end result still poses problems. In fact, Smith insisted, “the behavior of complex adaptive systems is, by definition, non-linear”⁹⁹. This non-linearity characterization reduces the intelligibility of the relation between the action and the subsequent behavior of human decision-makers, therefore adding, according to Davis, a layer of “unpredictability and mysteriousness”¹⁰⁰ to the cause and effect linkages between a particular stimulus and a particular response. In short, humans reason and how they do so defies any external prediction of cause and effect, so essential to effects-based operations. SJFH is of the same opinion and it warned that systems such as governments, populations, economies and cities, cannot “be manipulated with anything resembling deterministic mastery or precision”¹⁰¹. Instead, they will “often exhibit unpredictable, surprising and uncontrollable behaviors”¹⁰².

What, then, of the basic idea of effects-based operation, that the outcomes of an interaction can be precisely influenced by a specific action? If this relation is as loose as described above then the complexity in anticipating an effect of an action becomes an impossible challenge.¹⁰³ The sheer number of possible human reactions to a stimulus, however carefully crafted, can never be reduced to a simple cause and effect logic chain. There are too many variables involved in the process of moving from perception, to decision, to discernible behavior

⁹⁸ Antulio J. Echevarria, *Rapid Decisive Operations: An Assumptions-Based Critique* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute - USAWC, 2001), 8.

⁹⁹ Smith, 252.

¹⁰⁰ Davis, 24-28.

¹⁰¹ JFCOM - SJFH, *Commander's Handbook*, 67.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Smith, 232.

and the process is, thus, too complex to be rendered into such a neat chain¹⁰⁴ other than, maybe, at the tactical level¹⁰⁵.

The utility of the effects-based approach is at stake as this last issue brings up an enduring debate over the precision attainable by social sciences in trying to describe and predict human interactions. The assertion that by creating effects we shape the behavior is very much the same dilemma with which the social sciences struggle: the argument as to whether a general law of the causation of human actions can even exist.

The heart of the problem is whether human actions, or human behavior, can be explained in the way that natural science explains phenomena in its domain: if that is the case, then the predictability of the effects of a certain military action, exerted in an effect-based framework, would be similar to the predictability of the fall of an apple from a tree once its stalk is cut from the branch. In other words, if it is surmised that there can be an empirical demonstration of what effects unquestionably follow a certain action, then it would be possible to devise the engineering of the behavior of an agent.

Following this line of thought, effects-based operations aspire to being deductive-nomological in nature or, in other terms, the occurrence of the effect should be derivable from one or more general laws and a statement of “initial conditions”. The explanation of the effect, in terms of human reaction, obtained by certain actions would also have a predictive power¹⁰⁶. The problem with this is that the “initial conditions” in a social science environment are very difficult to define, because they entail knowing personal, or collective, desires and beliefs, which might be as well hidden, not declared¹⁰⁷, unknowable, or, as noted by Smith, too great in number to be measured. A possible way would be to observe the visible expression of desires and beliefs,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 251.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 252.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 37.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 38.

human behavior, but that adds a challenge in the military realm: the enemy is by definition inscrutable and often one's own judgment is biased by cultural differences that tend to create little more than mirror images of oneself.

A similar view is shared by Beagle in his statement that, "often strategic success is less the result of physical or even systemic damage than it is the way those things impact enemy decision makers psychologically ... the human psyche routinely defies objective examination"¹⁰⁸. In his view, although technology has greatly improved human capability in measuring and analyzing physical expressions of effects obtained on the battlefield, it will not help in photographing psychological effects, which are those that are often the most sought after¹⁰⁹. The same skepticism on the improvements that technology can bring to the art of war is shared by Martin Van Crevald, who doubts that technology and war can operate along the same logic and actually the logics on which they are grounded are, in reality, opposed. He argued that, "the conceptual framework that is useful, even vital, for dealing with the one should not be allowed to interfere with the other"¹¹⁰.

Accordingly, the most pertinent feedback on operational and strategic effects frequently come from atypical, and indirect, measurements, such as changes in the enemy nation's gross national product, analysis of enemy manpower devoted to repair efforts and varied enemy dependence on imports. In short, drawing from Colonel Boyd's observe, orient, decide, act (OODA) loop language, observing and orienting is increasingly complex, if not impossible, because it is done with the wrong means and with little idea of the language and culture of those who are observed¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁸ T. W. Beagle, *Effects-Based Targeting: Another Empty Promise?* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 91.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Martin Van Crevald, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1989), 320.

¹¹¹ Beagle, 91.

All the reservations expressed above are still without a clear solution and will probably remain that way for some time to come. Again, while the terms are recent, the problem of understanding and predicting the systemic effects of military actions was explored in the past by Clausewitz, who understood that, “seeking exact analytical solutions does not fit the non-linear reality of the problems posed by war and hence that our ability to predict the course and outcome of any given conflict is severely limited”¹¹². On his side, Smith proposed that the application of effects-based thinking shouldn’t translate into the quest for very specific action-to-effect linkage, which, from the result of the previous analysis, would prove unfeasible. Instead, he looked at a more general relationship between the potential actions described by the variables and various kinds of effects, bounding the problem of a potentially infinite number of effects and the potentially infinite number of actions. This would lead to a result, which would be in line with Aristotle’s teachings “be satisfied with the degree of precision that the nature of the subject permits and not seek exactness when only approximation is possible”¹¹³.

Refining the Concept

The remaining part of this chapter will examine how several authors and organizations, that have studied, researched, and helped developing the concept of effects-based operations, have tried to rationalize and define the concept, in order to “come to grips” with some of contradictions analyzed above.

There is as yet, no single definition of the concept of effects-based operations that is widely agreed upon. A survey of the literature confirms this trend. The issues under contention span from the definition of the concept as a whole, to the specific definition of what is an effect,

¹¹² Alan D. Beyerchen, "Clausewitz, Non-linearity and the Unpredictability of War", *International Security*, Vol. XVII, no. 3 (Winter, 1992): 60.

¹¹³ Smith, 233.

and to the level of application of the concept, for example whether it should be applied only at the strategic level.

Among the most prominent organizations involved in the development of effects-based operations is USJFCOM. In its first formulation of the concept JFCOM described the effects-based operation as a process for obtaining a desired strategic outcome, or effect, on the enemy through the synergistic and cumulative application of the full range of military and non-military capabilities at all levels of conflict¹¹⁴. The basis of JFCOM's reasoning is very simple, "if we can anticipate with any degree of certainty how an intelligent adversary should, can or could act to compensate for our actions; and we can plan, execute, assess and adapt our actions in terms of the effect we desire, then we can identify and execute the most effective course of action in bringing about the desired change in the adversary's behavior"¹¹⁵. The soundness of the reasoning notwithstanding, what the commander faces is no little feat and this first formulation of the concept doesn't develop sufficient detail to suggest to the operational commander how he should proceed with such an approach. In later analysis, published in a follow-on pamphlet on "Operational implications of effects-based operations", JFCOM adapted its definition, by drawing from the Standing Joint Forces Headquarters (Core Element) (SJFH(CE)) SOP, and gave more detailed points of reference on how to apply the concept. According to this new formulation, effects-based operations are, "operations that are planned, executed, assessed and adapted based on a holistic understanding of the operational environment in order to influence or change system behavior or capabilities using the integrated application of selected instruments of power to achieve directed policy aims"¹¹⁶. JFCOM highlighted several contributions that effects-based approach brings to the development and conduct of operational art: improved agility and

¹¹⁴ United States Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), *Effect Based Operations White Paper Version 1.0* (Norfolk, VA: Concepts Department J9, 2001), 5.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ii.

¹¹⁶ United States Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), *Operational Implications of Effect Based Operations (Pamphlet 7)* (Norfolk, VA: The Joint Warfighting Center, 2004), 2.

flexibility at the strategic level in achieving national and theater strategic objectives; improved unity of effort and integrated planning adaptation at the operational level; enhanced economy of force and more precise execution at the tactical level¹¹⁷. In reference to this last point, an effects-based approach to joint operations translates strategic and operational objectives into tactical actions through the design, organization, integration and conduct of a joint campaign¹¹⁸.

Following the cited JWFC Pamphlet 7, the SJFH (CE) recently released a draft publication where it essentially restates the previous definition, underlining the importance of a “system perspective and understanding of the operational environment”¹¹⁹ by all the agents operating in the said environment. On a more general level the SJFH (CE) interpreted the effects-based approach as a way to, “thinking differently about the adversary, the operational environment, and how best to employ national instruments of power”¹²⁰. In a view similar to Smith’s description of the operational environment that will be explored below, JFCOM enumerated among the components of the system-of-systems that the operational commander needs to be aware of, friends, adversary and the unaligned, that Smith called neutrals. Moreover, it calls on the commander to use the military instrument beyond just force-on-force engagements. This, to the eyes of a professional soldier, is a major departure from what is the common language found in doctrine until recently, although the same soldier is already going beyond “traditional” use of military units, as he or she are deployed to regions of the world where combat actions are more and more an option of last resort.

According to Davis’ research conducted for the RAND Corporation, effects-based operations, “are conceived and planned in a systems framework that considers the full range of direct, indirect, and cascading effects that may, with different degrees of probability, be achieved

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁹ JFCOM-SJFH, Commander's Handbook, 6.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 12.

by the application of military, diplomatic, psychological, and economic instruments”¹²¹. The definition is a variation of JFCOM’s, and takes into consideration particularly the psychological instrument as a leverage that is available to the operational commander.

Smith carried on the considerations on the role of the psychological component in effects-based operations, as he framed an operational continuum that went from peace operations in an asymmetrical context to total defeat of the adversary in a symmetric war: “Along this continuum, the mode of warfare toward which opponents will be drawn is a function of the degree of difference in their respective sizes, military capabilities and determination”¹²². In a situation of symmetry, as stated above, the opponents will engage in an attrition-based conflict, where national resources are committed toward reaching victory, while in the initial part of this continuum an effects-based approach to operations would be the more efficient¹²³. The two approaches differ in the ultimate end of combat and destruction of the opponent’s forces: in the symmetric, attrition-based contests, the destruction of the physical capacity to wage war gradually deprives a foe of the physical means for continuing a struggle that he is otherwise determined to pursue; in the asymmetric contests, effects-based scenario, the destruction is aimed at creating a psychological or cognitive effect¹²⁴. Actually, affecting a target in a particular way, not necessarily implying military action, might have psychological effects well beyond simple destruction or degradation of the target set. “In this situation, an effects-based strategy is conceived and executed as a direct assault on an opponent’s will and not a by-product of destroying his capability to wage war”¹²⁵. In synthesis Smith saw the recourse to effects-based operations as a necessity coming out of the current operational environment, where a symmetric confrontation with a state actor is less probable and instead current engagements are against

¹²¹ Davis, 7.

¹²² Smith, 41-42.

¹²³ Ibid., 42.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 108.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 45.

enemies that cannot be targeted and destroyed with the method proper of the attrition-based approach, in which realm the western countries, and the United States in particular, are unchallenged dominant.

In defining effects-based operations Smith remained general and took into account all the factors analyzed above. He stated that, “effects-based operations are coordinated sets of actions directed at shaping the behavior of friends, neutrals and foes in peace, crisis and war”¹²⁶. As it appears, Smith delineated the importance of effects-based operations in gaining the support of neutrals and strengthening the resolution of the allies, and in that sense he agrees with other sources that the use of military force might often be subsidiary to other elements of power, such as diplomatic, informational and economic.

As a corollary to his definition Smith considered effects-based warfare as a subset of effects-based operations, pertaining to combat or wartime operations, while effects-based targeting (at least of the kinetic variety) would be in turn a subset of effects-based warfare¹²⁷. By making this distinction Smith solved many issues arising on the nature of effects-based operations, often blamed an excessive focus on the kinetics of target selection process.

Mann et al. stressed the fact that effects-based operations are needed to change the approach that saw military forces pursuing military objectives, “without direct reference to appropriate effects that would create the conditions for achieving them and with little consideration of other effects that would be created along the way”¹²⁸. Mann et al. also saw this as not possible anymore since, “today military actions often require considerable restraint, not necessarily using every available weapon and not attacking every possible target but understanding the full political context of all actions. In such situations, the demands of military

¹²⁶ Ibid., 108.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 109.

¹²⁸ Mann, 17.

efficiency often will have to be sacrificed in favor of more important political concerns”¹²⁹. Effects must be thought of up front in the planning process and should guide the execution and assessment of every action, “and the actions of other agencies as well”¹³⁰. In their search for a common lexicon for the application of the effects-based thinking, they defined effects-based operations as, “actions taken against enemy systems designed to achieve specific effects that contribute directly to desired military and political outcomes”¹³¹. It is clear their emphasis on the process for deriving desired effects from political objectives, which requires in turn the, “foreknowledge of specific achievable conditions believed necessary for attaining specified objective”¹³². Therefore, an important feature of the effects-based methodology is the linkage to the said political level and in this emerges the “non-novelty” of the concept since it is part of the western military heritage since at least Clausewitz’s work on the theory of war.

Along the same lines, are the results of a study conducted by the Joint Advanced Warfighting Program (JAWP) at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA): effects-based operations should lead to coherent linkage between strategic goals, operational effects and tactical actions and their success will require cooperation and coordination across all elements of national power¹³³. On a more general level, effects-based operations are possible thanks to the combination of the new strategic context and new tools and capabilities¹³⁴, although their adoption will not lead to overall peace or quick and bloodless conflicts, as ongoing operations demonstrate. In contrast, it was Gleenson et al.’s optimistic belief that the adoption of effects-based thinking can bring about “less costly mission accomplishment”¹³⁵, in terms of friendly, adversary and neutral lives. Moreover, “through early recognition of and agility to adapt to

¹²⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 26-27.

¹³¹ Ibid., 96.

¹³² Ibid., 46.

¹³³ Gleenson and others, 7.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 36.

unexpected effects, effects-based thinking holds the potential of lessening the possibility of catastrophic surprise or miscalculation”¹³⁶. Finally, EBO should confer agility, adaptability and a greater willingness to change plans and actions “to ensure that they adapt to battlefield conditions and contribute to desired outcomes”¹³⁷.

In their work for IDA, Murray and Woods expanded more on the relevance of effects-based thinking and insisted on concentrating its application primarily at the political-strategic level because that is where wars are won or lost: “no matter how impressive the tactical effects might be, they will rarely overcome the negative impacts of a fundamentally flawed strategy, as mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever”¹³⁸.

The basic question posed by Murray and Woods is how effects-based thinking can help political-strategic decision-makers in utilizing military power coherently in the achievement of national goals. The first condition envisioned is, of course, the articulation of a vision of the strategic outcome that should guide the use of military force: every military campaign must then begin with the “development of a realistic set of goals that will lead to an understood political outcome”¹³⁹. At this point there must be a set of interactions, synthesized in the term “discourses”¹⁴⁰, between the strategic decision-maker and the operational commander, in order for him to articulate a coherent effects-based campaign¹⁴¹. These discourses must be a “learning experiences for the participants not only in the planning but in the execution phase of a campaign

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Murray and Woods, 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁰ The term “discourses” is also present in the ideas and works of Dr. Shimon Naveh, Director of the Israeli Defense Force’s Operational Theory Research Institute. In particular, discourses are the main thread to operate Systemic Operational Design, which he is developing with the participation of the US Army.

¹⁴¹ Murray and Woods, 6.

as well”¹⁴². Examples of failure to take these two vital steps abound throughout history. None of the powers pitted against each in the Great War started it with a clear end state and the more resources and human lives they committed to the war, the less they were willing to admit this state of affairs. Twenty years later, the Second World War started with the same basic absence of strategic goals, when the Germans embarked on an impossible attempt at world domination and France and England half-heartedly sought the containment of Adolf Hitler. Only the German dictator’s suicidal management of the war, namely the invasion of France and the Soviet Union, helped in the formulation of the clear cut unconditional surrender strategy. Twenty years later, the US entanglement in Vietnam was again an example of lack of strategic vision. This example in particular is useful to show the above-mentioned primacy of strategic viability over operational and tactical success. In fact, it is common understanding that American forces displayed impressive military effectiveness and lost very few engagements with the opposing forces. Nevertheless, the uncertain politico-strategic conduct of the conflict and the limited political guidance given in terms of objectives, other than the nebulous containment of communism, brought forth the defeat of the US military in the long run¹⁴³.

Murray and Woods envision other conditions for the conduct of effects-based operations, namely flexibility of the discourse system, to allow the ensuing dynamism as military operations unfold and the political context changes¹⁴⁴, and, “realistic understanding of the nature of the opponent”¹⁴⁵. Regarding this last condition, according to Murray and Woods, the intangibles, most importantly *will*, have primacy over the calculation of forces, materiel and other resources, as Clausewitz realized almost two hundred years ago¹⁴⁶. This principle finds even more

¹⁴² Gleenson and others, 8.

¹⁴³ Murray and Woods, 6-7.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 77.

application in the contemporary operational environment, where the definition of the opponent is vague and subject to political bias, let alone the accountability of their weaponry. Consequently, the highest level of leadership, while exploring the possible “strategic and political effects that potential military courses of action might have”, must always take into account that the enemy will not react as a monolithic entity. Instead, defined as a complex adaptive system, its actions will be a function of the interactions of the components of the system itself, of the international pressure and chance, an ever-present element in human history¹⁴⁷.

In conclusion, while Murray and Woods do not proceed to give a formal definition of effects-based operations, they pose at the heart of the effects-based approach the translation of political ends into political, economic, diplomatic and military means. The discourses undergoing between the political leadership and the various agents, military among others, should contribute greatly to this process and success is greatly a function of “a serious effort at give and take”¹⁴⁸. Historically these discourses have not been easy and will remain so also in the foreseeable future but however painful, these discourses are the only way to connect strategy to the effects that military forces must seek. And without that connection, strategy will remain divorced from the realm of military power¹⁴⁹.

Summary

From the analysis of the sources conducted, it is apparent that there is not yet clarity on the concept of effects-based operations and all the corollaries to it. Debates are ongoing between those that see them as the new frontier of military thought, enabled as they are by the technology available, and those that are skeptical about them because they feel that understanding the connections between causes and effects when dealing with human organizations is hardly

¹⁴⁷ Murray and Woods, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 17

possible and is of scarce utility in planning operation. While the aim of this work is not to solve this debate, it is useful to understand what part of the concept and which ideas are viable and can be applied to a military organization like the Italian Army.

CONCLUSIONS

The profound changes in the international situation that took place after the end of the Cold War impacted greatly on the Italian defense organization. The main focus of the armed forces shifted from static border defense integrated into the larger scheme of the European theater of operations under the two-block confrontation construct, to more active participation in the international security system. The successive adaptations that took place occurred alongside evolving international events, and were partly driven by them, as Italian units were more and more involved in multinational operations along the lines of what was called the peace operations model (redefined today as stability and reconstruction operations).

In the process, Italian Army units proved to possess the appropriate capabilities and earned recognition among international partners for their capability to manage the critical situations in which they frequently found themselves¹⁵⁰. Specifically, although these operations didn't entail the complexities involved in warfighting, where the risks inherent in a kinetic encounter with the opponent are very high, they nevertheless require a great number of capabilities to confront crises without using force, and to avoid an undesired escalation of violence. The Italian Army demonstrated good aptitude for executing peacekeeping, stability, and reconstruction in a way that they would deter aggression without increasing tension.

It can be stated safely that part of the reason for this performance resides in a well developed task organization system which ensured that the most appropriate pool of forces operated on the ground¹⁵¹. Secondly, part of it is an aptitude that ensured the comprehension of the cultural dimension in which such forces were to operate. Thirdly, part of it is the image of themselves that Italian forces brought with them when deployed on stability operations, as an army that was the expression of a people that had little interest in hostile expansion and that saw

¹⁵⁰ Maggi, 71-73.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 65-70.

its intervention abroad as genuine interest in the development of peace or at least in reducing the level of conflict¹⁵². Finally, part of it is the posture of the forces on the ground that, while equipped with enough combat power to respond to an escalation of violence, tried to keep that characteristic at a low profile and instead attempted to give a benign representation of their presence.

Some of these characteristics can find a place in the development of a doctrine for the conduct of stability and reconstruction operations, while others are more difficult to synthesize, especially the so-called intangibles that derive from personal conduct and its reflection on the behavior of the people affected by that conduct.

As these operations were unfolding, the army tried to capture the modifications that it needed to apply to the organization to better meet the challenges posed by the recurring deployments. As a result the army implemented the task organization model, where the units were “reinterpreted” as pools of capabilities; it proceeded with the professionalization of its personnel, which led to the suspension of conscription; and it modernized its equipment, as much as it could amid the rising costs of technologically advanced kit, within the constraints of its budget. All throughout these adaptations, the army has always tried to maintain a satisfactory level of interoperability with the European and NATO partners, so that it could continue to contribute actively to multinational operations in which each of them brought their particular expertise, in a reciprocal exchange of capabilities that allowed each of them to operate as a coherent whole.

Today, the Italian Army, along with its sister services, is postured to look into the future with more than 15 years of experience in stability and reconstruction operations; with an all-volunteer force; organized into interoperable units and parent headquarters that allow for

¹⁵² Gianluca Sardellone, “Geopolitica Senza Confini: Italia-Timor Est”, *Informazioni della Difesa*, no.3 (2001): 35.

seamless “plug-and-play” recombinations; fitted with sufficiently modern equipment, adequate at least to accomplish the missions with which it is tasked.

The Italian Armed Forces and the army in particular need now to consolidate the progress made since the end of the Cold War to better meet the challenges of the current operational environment, mainly characterized by the participation of the military in the struggle against violent extremism and in the stabilization of those troubled areas where such extremism finds fertile ground¹⁵³. Moreover, continuous adaptation is also required in order to maintain interoperability that greatly contributed to, if not enabled, the active participation of Italian units in multinational operations.

This last point is central to the Italian military with its increasing interest in the emerging concept of effects-based operations. From the examination of the sources that deal with effects-based operations and from the analysis of their conceptual underpinnings, both conducted in the previous chapter, it appears that the effects-based operations construct is still very much under debate. The main area of contention is the difficulty in demonstrating the cause-effect relation in a human environment and replicating it for operational purposes. Actually, such cause-effect link is hardly comprehensible because, more often than not, it is obscured by the inherent irregularity, and even capriciousness, of human behavior. On the other hand, the effects-based operations construct proves to be useful as a framework in which to ensure that operations are linked coherently to strategic ends. A broadly shared effects-based thinking conducted at the strategic level when embarking in an operation, campaign or conflict, is important to ensure that all the means employed, not necessarily all military, are the most appropriate to reach the desired effects. A prerequisite to that is then, as Murray and Woods believed, that there must be a frank interchange of vision, guidance, opinions and expertise between the political and military leadership, to reduce the possibility of inconsistencies between means employed, effects

¹⁵³ Stato Maggiore della Difesa, *Strategic Concept*, 9.

generated and desired ends. Of course, the participants in these discourses must accept criticism, and also the possibility that the military might not be the best means to address a crisis.

The interest in and, possibly, the contribution to the development of the effects-based operations concept has great importance for the Italian military because in its adaptation process this could provide a framework that could drive further changes. Moreover, as said, there is a constant necessity for the Italian Armed Forces, and the army in particular, to maintain a common doctrinal understanding with its allies and partners with which they combine to conduct operations. This being the case, how can the established operational practice in the Italian Army, its current doctrinal framework and its organization, reconcile with the emerging concept of effects-based operations? Can the Italian Army contribute to its development? Can it provide a model?

The answers to these questions certainly require further research and the involvement of high-level military leadership. However, for the purpose of this work, some clear conclusions can be drawn.

Established Italian Military Practice and the Effects-Based Approach

The first consideration deals with the relation between the established practices in the operations conducted by the Italian Army and the effects-based operations construct. In essence, by the analysis of current and recent operations conducted above, can it be safely surmised that the Italian Army is conceptually and practically equipped to conduct effects-based operations? At a general level, the answer could be a positive one. Indeed, Smith affirmed that the lower range of the operational spectrum, namely the one of asymmetric contests more common to stability operations, is the one where effects-based operations are most relevant¹⁵⁴. Therefore, the operating approach that the Italian Army adopted while accomplishing conflict prevention, peace

¹⁵⁴ Smith, 108.

enforcement and stability enhancement in the last 15 years, can be reframed to accommodate the effects-based model. The army's main effort in these operations was “aimed at creating a psychological or cognitive effect”¹⁵⁵ on the actors that were involved in the crisis by means different from traditional tactical combat. If in the latter case the weight in terms of risks to human life and physical destruction are immensely greater than other kinds of operations, success is nevertheless achieved at the strategic level¹⁵⁶, probably as a result of the political interactions that are so much inherent in post-conflict and stability operations, as the current situation in Iraq obviously demonstrates. The importance of this fact appears in all its breadth if it is considered that, at the optimal level, the effects that stability operations aim at achieving are actually to prevent, defuse and solve crises before they spiral in an uncontrollable conflict.

Italian-led Operation ALBA can be adopted as a test case on how stability operations fit the effects-based operations model. Even though discussion of an event in retrospect might seem simplistic, it is still valuable to see how an operation similar to the ones that are ongoing, some even in the same theater, can provide a set of actions that in that situation generated positive effects. As examined, the elements that contributed to the success of Operation ALBA were: the rapidity of the process that led to the deployment of the forces very early into the crisis, before it developed into complete anarchy or incontrollable civil war, as had been the case for the Bosnian conflict; the clarity of intent that started at the political level; and the multinationality, that ensured that the operation would not be tainted with unilateralism. These can be interpreted as strategic level actions that produced effects of the same level, and ensured that any hostile action could be addressed with full political support and international legitimacy. Moreover, the clear political directives within the resolutions and agreements, provided the operational commander with guidance on the effects that he had to achieve, and he always knew that he had political

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Murray and Woods, 2.

backing and international consensus in his interactions with Albanian authorities, either providing support or compelling them to adhere to the agreements undertaken. At the tactical level the unity of effort that the image of a coalition inherently inspires, provided a framework for the troops on the ground in their daily relations with the local authorities and population.

Using the interpretation that Murray and Woods provided for effects-based operations, as a process of clear and realistic determination at the political level of the desired outcomes supported by appropriate actions at the same level in order maximize the effects at the operational and tactical levels, the case just examined provides an adequate example of effect-based thinking in a stability and reconstruction scenario. The sensible decisions that the Italian political and military leadership took at the strategic level, shared and supported by the international community, generated positive effects in terms of unity of intent and legitimacy of efforts. In addition, the desired effects expressed in the resolutions and agreements, provided clear guidance to lower levels and ensured that successes at the tactical levels would be in line with and amplified by a coherent strategic framework.

Italian Army Structure and the Adoption of Effects-Based Operations

A second consideration about the application of an effects-based operations construct in the Italian Army relates to its organizational structure. As discussed above, today the operational part of the army is structured into a corps-level headquarters, with multinational elements and permanently assigned to NATO, three division-level headquarters and several maneuver and combat support brigades. Although the two types of headquarters maintain a traditional denomination, division and corps, they are under every aspect something different and possibly with wider scope and functions.

Actually, there was a duality in the reason for their establishment. In a more traditional tactical setting they have the capabilities to command and control several divisions and brigades respectively. In the current operational setting, characterized by the preponderance of stability

and reconstruction operations, at least for the Italian Army, they must fill the gap that in recent years has been identified at the operational level. In fact, in the environment under consideration, the role of the traditional tactical headquarters has expanded to include elements and functions that habitually belonged at the political and strategic level, such as joint-national capabilities, interagency and coalition integration, economic and social administration. These have become critical functions for the conduct of stability and reconstruction operations in which effects sought after are mostly in the cognitive and perception domain and the center of gravity is closely related to local population support and international legitimacy. In this sense, by standing up headquarters higher than brigade, the Italian Army acquired critical assets that improve its capability to conduct effects-based operations. And that is even more so since these headquarters have been designed to integrate on a regular basis joint and multinational elements. Interestingly, this characteristic is *per se* an “effects generator” since, when deployed, these headquarters are intrinsically legitimated, rightly or wrongly, by their multinational attribute.

Finally, as specified above by having division and corps headquarters the Italian Army has corrected a trend that saw it as a force provider for multinational operations, except for the case of ALBA and, currently, of Afghanistan where the Italian NRDC is deployed. In all other cases the operational responsibilities rested with the highest national component at the tactical level, be it a battle group, a regiment or a brigade.

The Role of Technology

The last consideration regards the importance of technology in the development of the effects-based operation concept in the Italian Army. Generally, in combat operations, the role of technology is important as it contributes to the precision and rapidity of the neutralization or destruction of targets, the swiftness of maneuver and the seamless command and control of every component, in order to achieve cumulative, systemic effects to cause the enemy to collapse. However, in the contemporary operational environment the role of technology appears to have a

marginal, and at best supporting role, in regards to reaching the threat's center of gravity, while the interactivity in the human dimension and the cultural understanding are critical to achieving desired effects and operational success. With its austerity of budgets, the Italian Army needs to find the right balance between developing human capital and developing and acquiring technology. At the same time it must not lose sight of the weapon and command and control systems interoperability issues, as extensively observed above. The challenge is not a small one, but it is central to current operations and those of the foreseeable future.

Future Implications

Far from being compelled to further adaptations, the Italian military is nonetheless concerned with interoperability issues with its main allies, especially inside NATO and the EU. Since it is a safe assumption for Italian forces to anticipate always being deployed and interoperating with allies and partners, any military policy not receptive to what is being developed in terms of operational concepts by such countries would be short-sighted and would take unnecessary risks.

Further research could therefore concentrate on how to better integrate new concepts and capabilities with allies and multinational partners. Moreover, it should focus primarily on how to formalize Italian best practice in the field of stability operations and to integrate it with the emerging effects-based operations concept, in order to exploit the latter as a framework for the former.

Finally, it is important to mention the implications and the utility of this work for the United States military. Far from aspiring at being a pioneering study of effects-based operations in stability operations, this work aims at exposing the capabilities that the Italian Army can bring as an ally or coalition partner. Effects in these scenarios relate predominantly to the human sphere, and the Italian Army has the potential to achieve those effects that shape behavior without resorting to coercion or kinetic actions.

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