

The occasional papers of the

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²¹THINKING ABOUT THINKING



INTRODUCTION: THINKING ABOUT ARMY THINKING

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Fighting Power, doctrine tells us, has three components: the physical, the moral and the conceptual. Napoleon famously observed that the moral is to the physical as three is to one, but what, I wonder, is the conceptual to the physical; or to the moral, for that matter? The main stories in the mass of sources and media coming out of the war in Ukraine concentrate on two things to account for the extraordinary Ukrainian resistance to a seemingly overwhelmingly powerful Russia: fighting spirit and weapons from the west; in other words, these are stories of the moral and the physical components. The more thoughtful analysts are, however, drawing our attention to the fact that the Russian military has also, on almost every level – tactical, operational and strategic – been out-thought, out-manoeuvred, out-understood and out-anticipated. For the less profound thinkers, the war in Ukraine has simply confirmed in our minds that good old fighting spirit, determination and morale, along with a bit of help from stalwart friends, can hold vastly superior forces at bay. That's true, as far as it goes, but, as every serious military analyst, historian or accomplished practitioner-soldier will tell you, those factors can only really prevail if they are underpinned by a foundation of sound strategy, and a bridge of operational art, to support the applied cunning, guile, analysis, and thinking of the talented tactician. Activities, all of them, which comprise parts of the conceptual component of fighting power.

There is no such thing as 'asymmetric war' in a separate compartment of its own, because, surely, all war is about carefully seeking out the asymmetries between protagonists, and for the more cunning to prevail by applying their strengths against their enemies' weaknesses. One is more likely to prevail if one genuinely understands one's opponent, and that means studying that opponent now, in person and in general, and studying their history, culture, geography, drivers, foibles, attitudes, and so on. Studying them. Not reading or writing a well-staffed paper about them, but studying them. One is more likely to learn the lessons of history if one actually applies oneself to history. We are more likely to prevail in a competition which depends upon our opponents being out-thought, if we practice thinking. Professional soldiers, rightly, put great emphasis on their own physical prowess and fitness – but shouldn't they put equal emphasis on the real war-winner, their own mental prowess and fitness? Soldiers, rightly, feel physically and mentally uncomfortable if they go too long without physical exercise. Do they feel equally uncomfortable if they have not been doing 'press-ups and knees-to-the-chest' for that essential military organ, the brain?

The job of the CHACR is, essentially, to help the British Army to think about those things that the pace and demands of operations, commitments, events, politics, external liabilities and the pressures of Army life may deflect the more thoughtful of soldiers from being able to give the attention that they deserve. This matters, both in terms of developing themselves better, and in terms of making better-informed

professional decisions, on and off the battlefield. Explicit in the CHACR's title are the requirements both to consider history and its effect on the unchanging nature of war and warfare, and to contemplate current events, especially where conflict has arisen or may arise, to help the Army to understand its context better. By combining these two insights into the nature and character of war on land, on a personal level our officers and soldiers should be better-prepared to tackle the heavy demands of their profession, and on a collective level the Army should not only perform its varied roles and tasks better, in and out of conflict, through a wiser and more professional workforce, but also be better placed to make judgements on training and force development.

Armies have a habit of generating large volumes of carefully-staffed papers, at speed and under pressure, to help to deliver concrete outputs and outcomes as rapidly and effectively as possible. Academia has a habit of generating large volumes of carefully-researched papers, more slowly and under less pressure, sometimes to help with practical issues, but equally often for education or interest's sake alone. Armies often seek to conduct research as a kind of 'decision-based evidence-gathering' (as opposed to evidence-based decision-making) in order to strengthen the provenance of decisions already made and considered of high importance. Academia often seeks to conduct research as a kind of end in itself, as opposed to research focussed solely towards a specific utilitarian end. I caricature, unfairly, both, for effect – but the point is made: both contrasting approaches have value, both have their weaknesses, but both are at their most effective when they are combined.

A study of military history, whether by soldiers or by academics, is of purely academic value (in both the pejorative and the positive/literal sense) if it simply concerns the gathering or preservation of narratives. Where such study is used, however, to do those 'mental press-ups' that help to strengthen the conceptual component of fighting power, it has considerable utility. It is almost certainly no coincidence that the so-called great captains of military history have almost universally been avid studiers of military history. Thinking about military thinking has not just been confined to the Sun Tzus and Clausewitzs, or, even, to the Fullers, Liddell Harts or Jominis; Caesar, Alexander, Guderian, Rommel, Scipio Africanus, Napoleon, Wellington, Slim – it doesn't really matter who one chooses to study, but those military leaders that have risen to greatness seem to have at least one thing in common, in that they have taken their professional understanding seriously, and have founded that understanding on a thoughtful and scholarly study of military history to provide that foundation. Then, and only then, upon that footing, have they built their personal edifice of success, based upon a better-informed examination of their current context, be that tactical, operational or strategic.

The same has applied, equally, to those who have been the successful military reformers with lasting impact. Whether Von Moltke, Scharnhorst or Bagnall, a scholarly approach to their profession is a consistent hallmark. The first article in this *Ares & Athena* pauses to take a look at the impact that



Field Marshal Nigel Bagnall has had on the modern British Army (**pages 4-8**): Bagnall is quoted, almost daily, by almost every soldier in the British Army today – I wonder how many of those quoting his words, ideas and philosophies know that they are so doing, let alone who and where they came from and how and why they developed?

If Sir Hew Strachan, in our second article (**pages 9-10**), is right that the evolution of the character of war has meant that, increasingly, the bucolic, stoic and obedient foot-soldier has been replaced, in every rank, by a genre of soldier that needs to be much more savvy, independently wise, technologically able, thoughtful and well-informed then the relative value of thinking skills (as opposed to physical skills) must, surely, be ever-rising. If the as-often-as-Bagnall-quoted General Charles Krulak was even half right about his 'strategic corporal' it follows that every NCO and officer needs to be strategically educated in order to be strategically savvy. Furthermore, and the British Army is wrestling with this at the moment, the march of technology means that Army personnel are going to need an increasing tool-box of cognitive and conceptual skill-sets in order to service the increasingly complex military machine.

Then in Alexander Falbo-Wild's excellent piece on playing mental games (**pages 11-13**), we get a general insight into how we might provide some exercise for our military brains. The art of brain games and of wargaming is, sadly, much neglected in the British Army. Time spent in this activity, still, in the twenty-first century, is looked at with suspicion – too geeky, not macho enough, not physical component enough... Yet, as this article so lucidly lays out, these are the 'playing fields of Eton' that really matter. Why does Army Sport consume an entire industry of effort and time, but Army Fight Club find itself as a neglected niche? (And, please, do not misunderstand this as an anti-sport rant – sport is a long-established and powerful tool in the building of both physical condition and our moral component. The more that soldiers can do on the sports field the better. It would be nice, however, if we also encouraged,

with the same commitment, the practice of other militarily useful 'games' beyond sport.)

It has long been argued that an army's moral component depends upon the strength and breadth of its NCO and junior officer corps. (Perhaps that, too, may help us to understand Russian troubles, not just in Ukraine, but in its long history of stumbles in war.) The physical component is everyone's business (from the general in charge of force development and procurement, to the individual officer and soldier as they train for war-readiness). But the conceptual component is the *raison d'être* of the officer corps – sure, strategic corporals need to think too, but the guardians of the conceptual component, in all of its guises, are the officer corps. In General Mick Ryan's article on strategic thinking (**pages 14-15**) we are offered some real clarity of message – the higher up the military tree one climbs, the more important becomes one's ability to think. In this respect, there is a need for efficient left-brain information evaluators and processors, and there is a role for right-brain imaginers and visionaries. Power comes when these skill sets are practised, through the length and breadth of individual careers, and then combined (deliberately, rather than by serendipity) and applied, tactically, operationally and, as General Ryan so clearly articulates, strategically.

We round this *Ares & Athena* off with two final articles to make a point. Matthias Strohn re-examines, generically, how the analysis of history can help the serious professional soldier to develop their martial skill (**pages 16-19**). To hammer that point home, in Andrew Monaghan's article on Russian history (**pages 19-23**), we get a specific insight into why a proper study of our opponents' histories might give us an understanding that, if wisely used, gives us leverage over them.

Hopefully, therefore, this 21st issue of *Ares & Athena* will give you, through a small collection of eclectic insights into the value of the conceptual component of fighting power, something to think about in respect to thinking about thinking.

A LATTER DAY ‘GINGER GROUP’

Maj Gen Dr A R D Sharpe
Director, CHACR

*We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams; —
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.*

– Ode by Arthur O’Shaughnessy

It will be of no surprise to those who understand what the CHACR was formed to address – that is to say a perceived lack of value being placed upon the conceptual component of fighting power within the Army – that the so-called ‘Ginger Group’ was raised in many different ways in the early discussions on the project between the author, the then CGS Designate and the various interested parties from the retired military cohort (such as Lt Gen Prof Sir Paul Newton and Maj Gen Mungo Melvin) and the Army-friendly senior academic cohort (such as Sir Hew Strachan and Sir Lawrence Freedman) with whom General Carter met as he considered the task ahead of him as CGS. It is, equally, no coincidence that when the CHACR was established it was decided by the Army Board that it should be delivered out of Robertson House (then known simply as The Former Army Staff College) precisely because it was in that building that so much of the thinking about Army thinking had taken place over the years and, particularly, because it was there that Field Marshal ‘Ginger’ Bagnall had set up the HCSC and held so many of his ‘away day’ sessions.

The CHACR mission statement was very carefully crafted by a small group, including the then CGS and DCGS, to make it clear that one of the CHACR’s specified tasks was to be a convening catalyst for ‘Ginger Group’ types of activity: “The CHACR is to conduct and sponsor research and analysis into the enduring nature and changing character of conflict on land and *to be an active hub for scholarship and debate within the Army* in order to support the development and sustainment of the Army’s conceptual component of fighting power”. One would hope that the only flicker of concern that that mission statement would have given to Nigel Bagnall was that it had taken until 2015, 30 years after he had become CGS, for it to be written and for such a body to be formally established.

At the RUSI Land Warfare Conference on the 28th and 29th of June this year the incoming CGS, General Sir Patrick Sanders, made it patently clear that the international context was such that ‘business as usual’ was no longer acceptable. His first public speech was not, in his own words, ‘the usual tour d’horizon’, but was a clear focus on the need to meet the current threat, to be ready to fight, and to win, tonight if necessary, with the Army of today. He was clear that those who seek to deter war need to be demonstrably good at war,

and demonstrably ready for war, in such a way that those seeking war would not wish to risk seeking it with them. In short, deterrence works when potential opponents are quite clear that you are a formidable adversary who is ready for a fight. It is no good building long-term plans to deliver exquisite solutions to the possible problems that may face us in the future if we were unable to deter and, if necessary, defeat, the problems of today. Operation MOBILISE was an impassioned call to arms to the Army (and, incidentally to wider Defence, Defence industry and broader national entities of all kinds) to understand the imperative for the Army to be fit for purpose: to protect the United Kingdom by being ready to fight and win wars on land. On the second day of the conference an observation was made that, if the new CGS was to achieve his agenda for urgent operational readiness, he would be well served by forming a ‘Ginger Group’ of his own. Rather depressingly, this exhortation and its accompanying reference was met with more blank looks than it was with nods of recognition and endorsement.

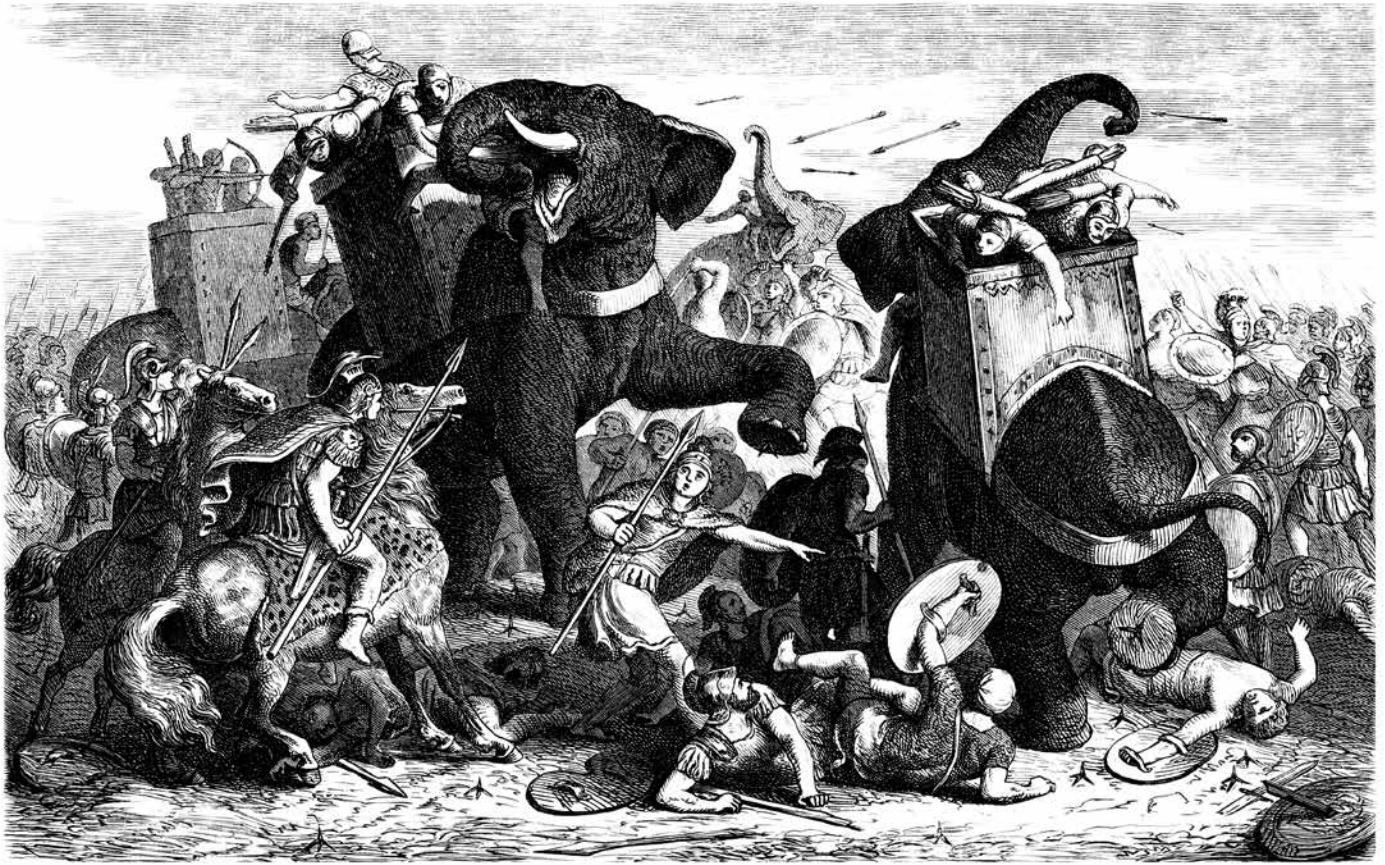
Filed Marshal Nigel ‘Ginger’ Bagnall had a profound impact on the Army that he led, and the Army that he left behind. It is a sad reflection of the study of its own history by the Army of the 2020’s that it is largely unaware that it owes so much of its central tenets of doctrinal philosophy to Nigel Bagnall. No self-respecting commander, staff officer or Staff College student would push back upon the importance of *Mission Command* as a guiding principle, but it seems that they would be unlikely to understand how it came to sit so centrally as a creed in our doctrinal cannon. So, who was Bagnall and what is this ‘Ginger Group’ stuff all about?

Nigel Bagnall saw out World War Two as a teenager at Wellington College, joined the Army in 1945 as a national serviceman and was commissioned as an infantryman (in the Green Howards) in 1946. Along with many of his peers from the line, he took selection for and served with, the Parachute Regiment, returning to the Green Howards as a captain some eight years later. In his infantry guise he served on operations during those turbulent days of ‘end of Empire’ seeing action in Palestine, Malaya (where he won the MC, twice), and Cyprus. But he understood enough of the military world in which he was moving to see that the emphasis of military professionalism was switching fast from colonial draw-down onto the confrontation on the North German Plain and the stand-off of the Cold War. He therefore transferred to the Royal Dragoon Guards, correctly foreseeing that armoured warfare in BAOR, under NATO and against the Warsaw Pact, would be the British Army’s *raison d’être* for the foreseeable remainder of his career. Apart from various staff tours, and a sally into Northern Ireland as a CO, the rest of his career, prior to becoming CGS was, indeed, spent serving in the British Army of The Rhine in various armoured command roles, from unit, to brigade, to divisional, to Corps and then, finally, as C-in-C BAOR and Commander NATO Northern Army Group.

Brave, competent, robust and highly experienced in all aspects

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Bagnall’s study of the Punic wars, surely, had taught him that you can fight and win as many Cannas as you want, but their tactically brilliant outcomes count for nothing if they do not combine to enable Carthage to defeat Rome in the final outcome. He understood that these positive campaigning outcomes could be achieved better by clever, wise, informed, thinking people who were comfortable in the chaos of war, than they could be achieved by those efficiently following doctrine in a dogmatic way, efficiently processing staff work to a timetable, and those who instinctively seek to produce order out of chaos.

of his profession, Bagnall was also a profound believer that that was not enough to make one a master of the military art. He was a lifelong student of history, military and otherwise, and had limited patience for fellow officers whose grasp of military history was limited to the engagement with narrative accounts, whether in support of the moral component of fighting power (through the teaching of regimental histories for example) or just for enjoyment. He understood the Clausewitzian notion that war has an enduring nature that does not change and a changing character. He understood that, before one seeks to understand what has changed or what may change, the serious soldier will do all that they can to seek to understand what will not change – and to build their tentative exploration of the changing present and future on their solid foundation of a comprehension of the past. It is no surprise that, on leaving the Army, Bagnall resumed his Defence Fellowship at Balliol College, Oxford (having first attended in 1972 for a year between 1* posts in Germany and the MoD), studied military history in (as Sir Michael Howard would have it) all of its breadth, depth and context, and published two profoundly insightful books on ancient warfare, one on the Punic wars and one on the Peloponnesian War.

So Bagnall deeply understood that a scholarly exploration of military history was a cornerstone of military competence, it wasn’t optional, especially if one sought to practice the

skills of senior leadership that required the linkage of tactical success to favourable strategic outcomes. He understood that there was little point in having brave men and women, well-equipped and trained, executing excellent tactics, techniques and procedures, if their courageous and competent endeavours were not orchestrated into campaign outcomes for positive strategic effect. His study of the Punic wars, surely, had taught him that you can fight and win as many Cannas as you want, but their tactically brilliant outcomes count for nothing if they do not combine to enable Carthage to defeat Rome in the final outcome. He understood that these positive campaigning outcomes could be achieved better by clever, wise, informed, thinking people who were comfortable in the chaos of war, than they could be achieved by those efficiently following doctrine in a dogmatic way, efficiently processing staff work to a timetable, and those who instinctively seek to produce order out of chaos. And it was this last point of understanding that led to his frustrations, and subsequent determination to re-invent operational art in the British Army, that in turn laid the foundations of the so-called ‘Ginger Group’ and all that sprang from it.

Having understood all of the above about Bagnall, it is easy to see how frustrating his professional experience must have been as he rose through command appointments in Germany. Every fibre of his martial spirit rebelled against the notion that

the British Army in Germany was there merely to die bravely and stubbornly as a tripwire for the threat of nuclear release against an unstoppable onslaught of Soviet-led Warsaw Pact military overmatch. Every fibre of his intellectual spirit rebelled against the unimaginative surrender to such a work-a-day, cerebrally shallow and, even, defeatist mindset. His understanding of the lessons of countless past confrontations told him that it was better to outmanoeuvre than to settle for an attempt to outfight; it was better that the enemy should be out-thought than simply out-fought. He'd read his Sun Tzu, so he knew that there was a role for both brute force and brain power, but that the acme of the general's art was to 'defeat the enemy without fighting' and, like water, to flow round obstacles instead of trying to batter them down. And, he argued, with mounting frustration, that if we were going to have to fight, was it not better to seek out ways to fight to win (not just tactically, but operationally too) such that strategic choices were not just limited to deterrence in place, tripwire diplomacy and nuclear escalation ladders?

Bagnall told Sangho Lee (who interviewed Bagnall for his 1994 KCL PhD thesis on Deterrence and Defence in Central Europe) that the first development of his thinking about the unsatisfactory nature of BAOR tactical doctrine (and, by extension, NATO doctrine) began in the early 1970s as a 1* Commander of the RAC in 1 (BR) Corps. His thinking had little impact, however, until, as GOC 4 Armd Div in 1975, he conducted a series of exercises that demonstrated how tactically flawed was the strategic concept of Forward Defence in 1(BR)Corps' case (and, by inference therefore, in the other corps' cases too). As the Corps Commander in 1981 he introduced an informal discussion group in the Headquarters called the Tactical Doctrine Committee. This was comprised of officers from a variety of ranks, posts and disciplines who Bagnall thought of as 'thinkers'. As his and his group's ideas began to gain some wider traction, office space was provided for these thinkers not just in Bagnall's Headquarters, but also within CGS's outer office and in the MoD. Such outside-the-established-chain-of-command behaviour inevitably did not meet with universal approval, with many feeling (probably rightly!) that Bagnall was stepping around those that he thought were not mentally agile enough, regardless of rank. 'The Ginger Group', in this respect, was used as much as a pejorative by those who resented his influence as it was an honorific by those who espoused his views and joined in. As Corps Commander, Bagnall was able to use the TDC to draw up ideas for Divisional exercises, experiments and studies to explore the relative merits of positional Forward Defence compared to ground-ceding counter-manoeuve, which led to the development (and broad acceptance within 1(BR)Corps) of the counter-stroke concept for operations.

Despite a degree of success in developing his concepts, and ensuring that they gained traction, Bagnall's frustration came to a head as C-in-C BAOR and Commander of NATO's Northern Army Group. British Army doctrine separated out general war (specifically in Germany against the Warsaw Pact) from limited wars and operations (of all sorts, from Northern Ireland to Kenya, Cyprus, Oman, Malaya and

all the other hot-spots of fading Empire). The doctrine of general war was codified, centralised, detail-dependant (and sometimes dismissed by Bagnall as 'a stately dance'); by contrast, the doctrine of his early operational experience was decentralised and relied upon initiative, understanding and imagination. Against that background, Bagnall watched the Falklands unfold from his position as Corps Commander in Germany: he read the reports that suggested that a higher degree of flexibility and agility of thought was required in the South Atlantic than was found typically in the process and pre-planned mindset of BAOR, with less centralisation of command and control to allow the remotely dispersed fighting units to operate to best effect.

The politics of NATO, not least of which was the imperative to agree to fight for every inch of West German territory, seemed to be stifling the tactical debate, regardless of the tactical imperative. Bagnall was frustrated because he felt that political imperatives out-of-war would lead to defeat (and so, perversely, to political catastrophe) in war. Forward Defence only made sense if you believed that you would never actually have to fight that fight to win. It was a policy-driven strategy that hinged upon the hope that deterrence would work, but, if deterrence failed, that would lead to tactical defeat and

thus a reliance upon the expectation of rapid nuclear release. Surely, he thought, tactically, operationally, strategically and even morally, it was better to find a way that could lead to NATO fighting to win first, and only relying on nuclear release as a last resort?

In 1983's WINTER SALES exercise series Bagnall unsettled his fellow Corps commanders, and their political leaderships (and especially the Germans), by demonstrating the efficacy of abandoning swathes of German territory from the Inner German Border to Hanover, in order to shape the battlespace for a decisive counter-stroke. Furthermore, in order to have best effect, the proposed counter-stroke plan not only ceded West German territory, but also crossed the Inner German Border in the opposite direction into the East. With this piece of military good sense, he rather publicly slaughtered a series of NATO policy sacred

cows. The reaction was unsurprisingly mixed and nervous, but the military debate was now started in earnest and, alongside the American 'Air/Land battle' debate, was gaining real pan-NATO traction. So, he could influence NATO doctrine from such a senior position, but he couldn't change it. He could influence British Doctrine but, because it was slaved to NATO doctrine, he couldn't substantially change that either. He could preach, but he couldn't direct. And preach he did, to anyone, military or academic, who was prepared to listen. As he had risen through the ranks, he had gathered around him fellow thinkers and fellow practitioners who 'got it': nothing formal, just like-minded souls (including Martin Farndale, who succeeded him as the Corps Commander and pressed on with Bagnall's reforming momentum in BAOR and NATO). Alongside the now well-established TDC(s) he had a nascent, informal, 'Ginger Group'.

But when he became CGS, finally, he could genuinely call the shots – he could decide just how closely British Army

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It is no coincidence that those first Higher Command and Staff Courses had a sizeable military history component, because Bagnall had personally involved himself with the design of the course. He believed in historical analysis and in conflict research.

Picture: Crown copyright

doctrine should be slaved to NATO doctrine. He could direct, instead of just encourage, the teaching of offence beyond being just an essential element of defence. He could direct that the Staff College (still an Army-only institution until the birth of the JSCSC at the turn of the Century) should explore and teach ‘exploitation’ and ‘the counter-stroke’. He could direct that staff training should not end at Major, but that, for the selected few marked out as operational and campaigning artists, that it should include a course designed entirely to teach operational campaigning (HCSC). And it is no coincidence that those first HCSC courses had a sizeable military history component, because Bagnall had personally involved himself with the design of the course. He believed in historical analysis and in conflict research. He consulted with those great names of British military study – Michael Howard, John Keegan, Hew Strachan, et al. He appointed, with great prescience, the young, up-and-coming star Richard Holmes (very much part of the informal ‘Ginger Group’) to be HCSC’s continuity man and guardian of the spine of military history upon which the course was framed. He directed that the British Army, at all levels, was to study the art of ceding ground to shape the battlespace for devastating counter-strokes. He directed that those destined to be senior Army officers should be trained and educated in operational art, mental and physical manoeuvre, and in campaigning. He continued to push back against the NATO unshakeable doctrine of refusing to cede an inch of West German soil and, by intellectual debate and persuasion, demonstrated that better operational outcomes could be achieved by out-manoeuving the enemy than by attempting to beat them off in a toe-to-toe bludgeoning contest.

As a key enabler to this form of warfare, he preached the

delegation of initiative to the lowest appropriate tactical commander. He breathed new life into the ancient British habit of delegating authority to relatively junior folk that the remote business of running a globally dispersed empire had demanded (and that he had personally experienced and enjoyed in his early years as an infantryman on post-colonial draw-down operations). He encouraged the study of the Franco-Prussian War and of the campaigns and operations of the Second World War. He encouraged the study of Frederick The Great’s juxtaposition of an insistence that the ‘thinking should be done in the mind of the King’ with his habit of delegated authority to light infantry and cavalry formations. He encouraged the study of the birth of multi-corps continental operational art and campaigning under Napoleon, with enormous delegation to individual marshals within a bigger campaigning army. He encouraged the study of the switch from attrition to manoeuvre, first by Germany, and then by the Allies, in 1918. He encouraged a proper understanding of the term ‘auftragstaktik’. He made the notion of ‘Mission Command’ a foundational principle of British military thinking: widely used in the late 1980s and formally codified in British doctrine in 1989, a year after Bagnall had retired, the term had generated its own head of steam though repetitive use by those around him who espoused the thinking.

Thus, where he could direct change, he did so – doctrine; tactics, techniques and procedures; staff training, and so on. Where he could influence change, he did so – among his NATO peers; with his generals; with political leaders; within academic circles, and so on. But, where mindsets were just that – set – he realised that, as with his approach to operational art, manoeuvre was superior to a bludgeoning approach. You cannot order people what to think – you

need to persuade them. Undoing an entire generation of thinking within the British Army (and NATO) concerning positional Forward Defence, attritional warfare and escalation ladders could not be done by draconian direction or shrill insistence. Bagnall, wisely, realised that the best way to ensure a more rapid and universal change of mindset was to gather allies who already ‘got it’ – regardless of rank or job title. Like an insurgency, he would do better in meeting his transformational aims if he were to manoeuvre those who remained reluctant into growing agreement, rather than simply to order them to agree. He would flow round the obstacles until they became irrelevant, rather than try to wash them away. In order to have the best effect he encouraged debate, discussion and the interchange of ideas between those likeminded officers who could, disciple-like, help to spread the thinking from within. All this generated supporting momentum for those who either were already considered, or wished to be considered, part of the wider ‘Ginger Group’.

So, while it would seem that the first formal coining of the term ‘Ginger Group’ was used to describe the Tactical Doctrine Committees that he formed when he was the Corps Commander in Germany, and then Commander NORTHAG, whose remit was simply informally to examine other ways, alternatives, to the current NATO doctrine for the Central Front, the term has come to have had much broader meaning. Heresy and unorthodoxy were allowed in the TDCs and in his wider initiative groups (encouraged even) and thus the term continued to be used, both positively (by those who shared his views) and pejoratively (by those who did not) when he became CGS, and it lingered in the Army thereafter as a label for those who had been closet to him in his endeavours.

As with the confrontation of all orthodoxies, Bagnall’s innovative operational thinking had been resisted not just because it challenged tactical dogma, but also because those fighting for resource in the endless MoD competition with the Treasury, and between Services, saw his ideas (regardless of whether they were militarily sound or not), as being ‘unhelpful’ in the resource and Defence Review arena. Bagnall’s predecessors had argued strongly that the only way to prevail in this expected attritional fight was to have more resource (in terms of personnel and equipment). A series of Defence reforms (with no new resource) had been railed against as undermining the Army’s ability to fight on the Central Front. Bagnall combined a pragmatic acceptance of the political reluctance to furnish the Army with more resource, with an absolute belief that the tactics of the Central Front were profoundly flawed. Trying to win by attrition struck him as tactically and morally wrong. Furthermore, if one couldn’t win by attrition because politics would not provide the required resource, then it made less sense still. The tactical and political nonsense of Forward Defence would have to be challenged. By doing so, Bagnall argued, and allowing manoeuvre, the Army would be able to ‘do more with less’. To the more enlightened thinkers, his was seen as a Damascene rallying cry to do things differently (and better). To those who did not share Bagnall’s thinking, his exhortation to do more with less

was condemned as a naïve and impractical general’s ‘wilco’ approach to solving a political resource issue – and therefore to be opposed. He was, his opponents said, a thinker but not a pragmatist, so was unrealistic. Thus, like so many reforming CGSs, Bagnall was not without his opponents, both from outside the Army and from within, and the true weight of his reforms were not felt until the super-tanker had caught up with the now long-retired Captain’s directed changes of course.

Those who had served in and embraced the thinking of the 1(BR)Corps and NORTHAG TDCs, along with the now growing number of HCSC graduates, and the debating partners in and out of uniform, being largely comprised of converts to Bagnall’s thinking, were now all labelled members of the ‘Ginger Group’. The momentum generated by this group of individuals, linked some by post, some by formal education, and some by association or informal debate, began to have considerable positive effect. The buzzwords of ‘Mission Command’ and ‘The Manoeuvrist Approach’, for example, were born of this thinking. By the end of 1989 and the issue of the first British

Army doctrine covering operational art (The Design for Military Operations), Bagnall’s concepts had become ‘direction’ even if many still needed persuasion. Bagnall’s successor as Corps Commander (Martin Farndale) and two successors as CGS (John Chapple and Peter Inge) all bought into his thinking and built on this change of direction. By the early 1990s being labelled as having been a member of the ‘Ginger Group’ had become, pretty universally, an honorific. Those who had been quick to espouse and adopt this new approach to operational art, to the positive linking of tactical acts to strategic effects, to the use of operational manoeuvre to achieve positive campaign outcomes, to an intellectual approach to soldiering, to the espousal and promotion of the conceptual component

of fighting power, and to an imaginative, aggressive and ambitious alternative to the hidebound and limited dogma of Forward Defence and an obsession with defensive operations at scale, were those who ‘got it’, and had had varying degrees of accelerated career success. Those who had not, had not. Today ADP Operations still has Bagnall’s core tenets at its heart.

So, what might be a ‘Ginger Group’ for 2022? It doesn’t really matter how one goes about it, but providing a catalyst for people, attitudes, permissions, facilitation, environments, encouragement and reward in order to stimulate professional curiosity for practical ends can only be a good thing. This is not a new idea. It was on that basis, after all, that the CHACR was created. Those who wish to challenge orthodoxies, those who wish to exercise the conceptual component of their profession, those who are the dreamers of dreams who would love to be the movers and shakers, surely, must yearn to be part of such a project.

“The only thing that we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.” – Georg Hegel

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” – Jean-Baptiste Karr

“””
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FIGHTING POWER: THE CONCEPTUAL COMPONENT

Sir Hew Strachan

Britain was the first country in the world to industrialise. From 1850 industrialisation began to transform the conduct of war, both strategically and tactically. The introduction of the steam engine enabled warships to defy wind and weather and armies to move and supply large formations by rail. In combat, rifling and breech-loading enhanced the range, rate and accuracy of fire – first of small arms and then of artillery. For all the allegations of conservatism, levelled not least at the armed forces, the British state knew which side its bread was buttered. Advanced technologies became a force multiplier, a compensation for the lack of mass enforced by the strict orthodoxies of economic and political liberalism. In 1898, Hilaire Belloc made an important point in *The modern traveller* about the military advantages conferred on advanced economies by new technologies allied to precision production: ‘Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim Gun, and they have not’. In the first half of the twentieth century Britain pioneered the introduction of the Dreadnought all-big gun battleship, the tank and – in due course – the long-range heavy bomber.

By then more than half of Britain’s working population was resident in cities and earning its living less through the sweat of its brow and more through applied skills and even applied thought. And yet the archetypal soldier came from the land. Agricultural labour was deemed to make him strong and resilient, inured to the rigours of weather and outdoor life. Prejudice confirmed preference: Henry Marshall, an otherwise perceptive army doctor who in 1839 wrote on recruitment, argued that those enlisted from ‘the manufacturing districts and large towns are frequently idle and dissolute’. That was not just a British view; it was common across most armies before the First World War. Germany, which by 1914 had overtaken Britain in terms of industrial production and had also just passed the tipping point at which the majority of its population was urbanised, still preferred to take its recruits from rural backgrounds. For European states which relied on conscription, as Britain did not, industrialisation seemed to be undermining their armies, not making them more effective. City dwellers were deemed degenerate, physically unfit and – worst of all – infected by socialism and so politically unreliable.

More enlightened minds had realised that industrialised war might require, not country bumpkins who would be even more scared than those who worked on factory production lines by its effects on the battlefield, but those familiar with machinery and its uses. Another early-19th century British army doctor, Robert Jackson, had argued that artisans made good recruits, since mechanical work accustomed them to the handling of arms and made them quicker to learn. The army of his generation had set up the Highlander as the model soldier, but after 1800 the flow of men from the north of Scotland dried up as the clearances took hold. By the early 1830s the majority of those joining the 42nd Highlanders (the Black Watch) were artisans and skilled labourers, a class with near-universal levels of literacy. Although they were less physically fit, they proved mentally better prepared for the demands of modern war.



Picture: © IWM B 15772

The argument for rural recruits assumed that the infantry was the dominant arm. It constituted 64 percent of the British army at the beginning of the First World War but 58 percent by its end, while artillery had risen from 19 percent to 24 percent. At the end of the North African campaign in 1943 infantry had fallen to just over 40 percent of the 8th Army, while artillery had risen to just short of 40 percent.

In 1916 Rear-Admiral Bradley Fiske of the US Navy, an engineer with a series of inventions to his name, published *The navy as a fighting machine*, a book which focused on the crushing defeat of the Russian Baltic Fleet by the Imperial Japanese Navy at Tsushima in 1905. Fiske argued that ‘the difference between the Russian and Japanese fleets... was a difference in trained intelligence’. He went on: “A fine intelligence at the top will so direct the men below, will so select men for the various posts, and will so co-ordinate their efforts, that the organizations will resemble a veritable organism: all the various organs fulfilling separately yet accurately their allotted functions; all the fire-control parties, all the gun crews, all the torpedo crews, all the engineer forces properly organized and drilled; all the hulls of the vessels, all the guns, all the torpedoes, all the multifarious engines, machines, and instruments in good material condition and correctly adjusted for use.”

Navies in the Dreadnought era maximised scientific innovation, technological competence and high levels of training to a degree that armies had barely glimpsed. The two world wars changed that. First, the argument for rural recruits assumed that the infantry was the dominant arm. It constituted 64 percent of the British army at the beginning of the First World War but 58 percent by its end, while artillery had risen from 19 percent to 24 percent. At the end



Picture: UK MOD © Crown copyright 2021



An army which is smaller, reliant on cyber capabilities, and seeking to bring fires to bear from deep and dispersed positions, cannot afford to optimise the values of rural recruits fitted for close-quarter infantry combat

of the North African campaign in 1943 infantry had fallen to just over 40 percent of the 8th Army, while artillery had risen to just short of 40 percent. As the army also increased its demand for signallers, combat and electrical engineers, supply and transport services, so it drew on the civilian skills and educational attainments which conscription vouchsafed it. More backward societies did not have that resource. In 1939 the expansion of even the German army was held back by the lack of qualified drivers entering it from civilian life.

Secondly, with skills appropriate for industrial warfare came higher educational levels and greater capacities for the exercise of initiative and independent thought. Citizen soldiers had to be treated as citizens as well as soldiers. To teach them about the reasons for the war and the aspirations for its outcome, in 1918 the British army appointed Lord Gorell, a former editor of the *Times Educational Supplement*, to establish the foundation for what in the Second World War became the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. By 1945 all the major belligerents acknowledged that political education was a vital element in soldiers' motivation.

With the ending of conscription after 1960 the British army's approach to education and training grew more inward looking, more self-referential and more ready to revert to professional and hierarchical orthodoxy. True, a large proportion of a career soldier's time was spent in education

and training but, as British universities expanded in the 1960s and other employers looked to increase their graduate intake, the army dragged its feet. Although that has now changed, the army still struggles to adapt its career paths and its promotion prospects in ways that maximise the potential of its members or draws in the best of those aptitudes which civilian society has to offer.

In 2010-11 the New Employment Model looked at lateral entry, the sharing of cognate skills across the three services, the separation of rank from tasks and their requisite qualifications, and the opportunities for career breaks, not least for professional development. Devised as part of an integrated package which included pay, promotion, pensions and accommodation, it was too ambitious to secure political approval. The vision of future military employment outlined by the Chief of Defence Staff in 2019-21 can only be delivered by a career pattern which puts the conceptual component of fighting power as its dominant principle, not as an optional addition. An army which is smaller, reliant on cyber capabilities, and seeking to bring fires to bear from deep and dispersed positions, cannot afford to optimise the values of rural recruits fitted for close-quarter infantry combat. The army will still have to do that, but it won't have the numbers to do it at any scale or for very long. If it wants to win, flexibility of thought and adaptability of mind will have to be more than stock phrases.

WHAT'S IN A GAME?: THE USMC PLAYS CHESS

Alexander A. Falbo-Wild

Persistent wisdom teaches that there is no substitute for combat experience. To say that such an education is expensive, however, is a quintessential English understatement. Simulation and training will always remain a vital part of the soldier's profession. Much of it focuses on physical conditioning, building strength, and learning muscle memory with benefits including decreased reaction time with reflexive drills and mitigating fear impulses. Then there are wargames and decision-games designed to hone cerebral acuity for complex situations spanning tactics to strategy. For the greater part of military history these understandably remained the domain of officers. But the US Marine Corps (USMC) finds this tradition and expectation inadequate for dealing with the emergent high-stakes proxy challenges of the 2030s and beyond.

It contemplated this once before during the 1990s. In that decade, the US military found itself increasingly handling humanitarian operations with low-intensity combat conditions and intense media coverage (Somalia, Haiti, Sierra Leone, etc). This gave rise to the oft espoused, but much misunderstood, "Strategic Corporal" and "Three Block War" concepts of USMC Commandant, Gen. Charles Krulak. Once more, the Corps is looking to adapt its training to anticipate this kind of operational environment with greater frequency and intensity. Its answer lies in an experiment with raising a so-called thinking force down to the private riflemen hitting the beaches and kicking in the doors. As such, the Corps' School of Infantry (SOI) recently created a pilot programme that includes playing chess.

Some military readers sardonically wondered if the announcement was a headline in *The Onion*.¹ But the game's

inclusion is very real and deadly serious. It also possesses merit which will be argued momentarily. SOI West in California began its programme on 25 January 2021. The experimental 14-week course aspired to impart 150 Marines with greater mental independence. Based on a pedagogical model which turns away from the industrial era's mass production of citizens into soldiers, it aims to cultivate the finite personnel resource of the All-Volunteer Force with student-centred learning. In the words of one SOI instructor, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Paschuiti, they're looking for autonomy over automation.² The bigger strategic picture points towards its necessity.

The leadership of the school is responding to the USMC Commandant Gen. David Berger's initiative to pivot training towards a near-peer focus as per the US National Defense Strategy (NDS) of 2018. From the muddy trenches of Donbas to the tear gassed streets of Hong Kong, Berger notes that "despite our best efforts, history demonstrates that we will fail to accurately predict every conflict".³ According to the NDS 2018, ensuing protraction of future 21st century engagements will likely take a littoral, and increasingly expeditionary character – especially in the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean. A character which emphasises dispersed but high-intensity combat that would rely on battalion-level action. These areas also feature mega coastal cities as possible areas of operation.

Emphasising the point, the commandant of SOI-West Col. Coby Moran said, the burden will be expected to fall even further to non-commissioned officer (NCOs). As such, he's looking to build "an understanding of mission type orders for those future sergeants and staff sergeants" who are Private

¹ Fuentes. Comment from Chief Warrant Officer 3 Amatangelo Paschuiti at SOI West. See also Jody Barto et al., "The Innovative Instructor Workshop: Facilitating Learning for Higher-Order Thinking," *The Marine Corps Gazette*, June 2019, 65.

² Berger Commandant's Planning Guidance. p.1.

³ See Comment section in, Gidget Fuentes, "Marine Infantry Training Shifts From 'Automaton' to Thinkers, as School Adds Chess to the Curriculum - USNI News," *US Naval Institute News*, December 15, 2020, news.usni.org/2020/12/15/marine-infantry-training-shifts-from-automaton-to-thinkers-as-school-adds-chess-to-the-curriculum.





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‘How do you manipulate a set of 16 resources of different abilities, in order to capture your opponent’s most valuable asset, while simultaneously protecting your own?’ This could apply to almost every military strategy ever conceived. The asset need not necessarily be the capture of a leader or a capital. It could simply be whatever politically identified objective would compel the hostile force to submit.

First Classes right now.⁴ So where does chess come into play? Admittedly, the USMC is still discerning this through its study of the pilot programmes based on the broad mental independence objective. However, it’s the author’s view that the game’s key contribution is the ability to repeatably test and refine a player’s situational analysis and decision-cycle whilst playing a real human opponent. Its history for serving this function is long.

Chess is effectively the original wargame. Although drawn from the 7th century BC Indian game chauranga, the evolution of chess’s European iteration grandfathered the 18-20th century Prussian Kriegspiel ultimately giving rise to the modern hex and free map wargames now all the rage in the defence schools and departments across the Oceanic alliance.⁵ Chess taught monarchs, regents, and warriors to contemplate strategy, to conceptualize terrain and movement and, most importantly, to make an effective decision. There are more complex turn based games such as the Chinese Go and others. However, chess remains easy to learn but difficult to master. Although chess lacks multiple simultaneous movements, scenario setting, and dice rolls simulating chance, it retains nearly endless opportunities to

challenge one’s analysis and decisiveness. Especially if played in earnest.

As summarised by Dr. Jane McGonigal, the object of chess asks: “How do you manipulate a set of sixteen resources of different abilities, in order to capture your opponent’s most valuable asset, while simultaneously protecting your own?”⁶ This could apply to almost every military strategy ever conceived. The asset need not necessarily be the capture of a leader or a capital. It could simply be whatever politically identified objective would compel the hostile force/nation to submit.

In an effort for SOI West Marines to find relevant application, they draw parallels to those sixteen pieces. “Rooks are like direct-fire weapons. Bishops are like enfilade fire” Chief Pascuiti said in the *US Naval Institute News* just before the programme began. “Knights are indirect fire weapons since they can jump over other pieces and aren’t limited to specific boundaries. Pawns are the light infantry that can block, defend, and become queens if they reach enemy territory. Queens are special operations, since they are few but move freely. The king is your commander.”⁷ But there are some limitations and drawbacks.

The number of positions in a game is said to be greater than

⁴Phillip Athey, “Chess during Downtime: How the Corps Wants to Increase ‘Thinking’ in Marine Infantry,” *Marine Corps Times*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/marine-corps-times/2021/01/26/chess-during-downtime-how-the-corps-wants-to-increase-thinking-in-marine-infantry/>

⁵Jon Peterson, *Playing at the World: A History of Simulating Wars, People and Fantastic Adventures, from Chess to Role-Playing Games*, 2nd edition (San Diego: Unreason Press, 2012), 207, 210, 224.

⁶Jane McGonigal, *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*, Illustrated edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 313.

⁷Fuentes, “Marine Infantry Training Shifts From ‘Automaton’ to Thinkers, as School Adds Chess to the Curriculum - USNI News.”

the number of observable electrons in the universe. This claim is based on a raw calculation of factoring all possible positions the pieces can take. This significantly includes all illegal and senseless movements which when discounted, reduces the figure to around 10^{41} according to mathematician Claude Shannon's assessment from the 1950s. Newer studies bring the figure even lower when considering opposition.⁸ Then there is the problem inherent in all wargames.

Healthy scepticism of wargaming is not only good for game design, but for achieving useful training objectives in professional military education (PME). PME instructor and British Army veteran William Owen has rightly criticised the tendency for wargaming to be capriciously applied and practised without consideration for training objectives. Playing wargames becomes a question of gaming the system of rules or strict puzzle solving instead of confronting the infinite variables and shifting sands of war's reality in realistic scenarios. Owen identifies the issue of misapplied wargaming lying with "the models and the rule sets." He clarifies that "problems occur when those approximations generate false lessons that would not aide understanding or experience in the real world."⁹ In other words, the students are strictly playing a game, not winning a war scenario.

What is critical to remember about the Marines playing chess in the PME context, is that the game can achieve two clear and essential ends – refinement of the mind's analysis and honing the will's decision. It is unclear if the SOI instructors have these goals specifically in mind. But the push for PFCs to be ready for leadership in NCO positions, with the expectation that they will find themselves making high-level decisions in remote yet critical areas of operation, points to such a consideration.

In playing chess, the Marines are pitted against another human being who will be challenged with manoeuvring their pieces under the pressure of time and space. Mistakes will be made. The plan will likely unravel in the first few moves. As the USMC *Warfighting* manual states: "War is shaped by human nature and is subject to the complexities, inconsistencies, and peculiarities which characterize human behaviour. Since war is an act of violence based on irreconcilable disagreement, it will invariably inflame and be shaped by human emotions."¹⁰ Therefore, one could encounter illogical moves and oversights which reflect military blunders. Feints, manipulation, and deception are all part of the game between duelling intellects. The game further trains the mind and will to focus on maintaining a strategy whilst recognising and acting on opportunities or countering threats.

Finally, it can teach the management of limited resources and to maximise their effect, which Sergeant John Basilone did in his defence of the vital Henderson Field on Guadalcanal in 1942. During two days of October combat, he famously held off an entire Japanese infantry regiment (3,000 soldiers) with the management of the two water-cooled Browning machine-



Feints, manipulation, and deception are all part of the game between duelling intellects. The game further trains the mind and will to focus on maintaining a strategy whilst recognising and acting on opportunities or countering threats

guns of his weapons section. This was based on the strength of the USMC's technical machine-gun drill training but also his mental ability to employ the weapons to achieve maximal lethality by scanning and commanding critical approaches with motivated Marine gunners. In this case, we see an NCO making critical decisions in the heat of a world war of high intensity.

Sixty years later, in an operational scenario more akin to what is shortly anticipated, a USMC mortar platoon corporal led a four-man fire-team rotation at a weapons confiscation checkpoint in Kosovo. His mission was to enforce a peace treaty between Serb and NATO forces. It was a complex conflict under intense media scrutiny. The operational area covered multiple towns over 25 kilometres. His decision to quickly engage a hilltop sniper, call in a quick reaction force (consisting of a Light Armoured Vehicle Platoon and AH-1W Cobra Flight Section) inspired his commanding officer to essay on the action as an exemplar of Gen. Krulak's notion of the Three Block War. Whether the corporal was correct in summoning such resources to deal with a single sharpshooter is debatable. But the example served to underscore why his platoon commander led a tactical-decision game every evening with his NCOs before they made land. As he wrote, "developing decision-making with Marines takes practice".¹¹

Hard decisions about whether a rook or knight is worth sacrificing for a better possibility for checkmate will need to be made. And that decision is the essence of command, regardless if the leader is wielding a knight, a mortar platoon, or an infantry division. With the completion of SOI West's programme, SOI East begins its courses in the late spring of 2021 followed by four more throughout the year. All will be evaluated with further comment pending.

⁸Stefan Steinerberger, "On the Number of Positions in Chess without Promotion," *International Journal of Game Theory* 44, no. 3 (August 1, 2015): 761, 766–67.

⁹William F. Owen, "Owen: What's Wrong with Professional Wargaming?" *PAXsims* (blog), April 27, 2020, <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2020/04/26/owen-whats-wrong-with-professional-wargaming>

¹⁰*Warfighting: US Marine Corps, MCDP1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 13

¹¹Paul C. Merdia, "Kosovo Writing Contest: 5th Place" (USMC Association, 2000), <https://mca-marines.org/blog/gazette/the-strategic-corporal-in-kosovo>

THINKING ABOUT STRATEGIC THINKING: AN ANTIPODEAN VIEW

Maj Gen Mick Ryan, *Australian Army*

*Our planning machinery has been much improved in coordination. Its weakness still lies in a too routine approach to the problem, on conventional lines. Under pressure of war, much greater use has been made of scientists than ever before. But adequate application of the data requires a mind that is both scientific and military, while for thinking ahead imagination is also needed – to complete the trinity of planning qualities. – Basil Liddell Hart, *The Revolution in War*, 1946*

*The intellectual edge for an individual is the capacity for that person to be able to creatively out-think and out-plan potential adversaries. – Mick Ryan, *An Australian Intellectual Edge for Conflict and Competition in the 21st Century*, 2019*

In the past several years, strategic thinking about national security in the West has been absorbed with multiple challenges: dealing with violent extremism; appreciating the possible impacts of climate change; responding to accelerated geopolitical change driven by COVID19; dealing with Russia; and, understanding a re-emergent China. Each challenge, in and of itself, poses extraordinary imposts on the resources a wide range of nations, and challenges the policy development of their governments. Together, these issues pose a profound set of dilemmas for contemporary strategists and policy makers.

At the heart of the important work of Western nations to preserve their sovereignty, minimise malign foreign influence and build more prosperous societies is the capacity for strategic thought.

Leveraging the cognitive capacity of our peoples is a

profoundly important element of the myriad of strategic competitions that we now find ourselves in. While the threat posed by countries such as Russia, Iran and North Korea represent competitions of a sort, the strategic competition most consequential to us all in the 21st century is that of the United States and China.

There are many dimensions to this competition. There is an economic dimension as well as information, alliance and diplomatic elements. Technology is one of the most significant factors, both in the civil and military arenas (although these are becoming blurred through programs such as China's civil-military fusion approach). Time is also an important factor – this is likely to be a competition that will play out over decades and will demand patience from governments and societies.

But perhaps the most important aspect of this grand strategic competition is the cognitive one. In a 2019 paper on generating the intellectual edge, I argued that traditional advantages for Western nations such as technology, geography and economic power have been diminished (but not entirely negated) by the extraordinary growth of China. We must therefore increase our investment in another source of strategic advantage – the ability to out think our competitors and potential adversaries. I have called this the intellectual edge.

How might we better leverage the creativity and imagination of our governments, military institutions and broader societies to generate such a cognitive edge in the 21st century? This is the subject of my recent paper, published through the Australian Defence College, on the topic of strategic thinking. The paper, titled *Thinking about Strategic Thinking*, is neither a first nor last word on the topic. But it does aim to drive change

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and improvement in how military organisations define what they require from strategic thought, and their development of strategic thinkers. And while the paper is set in a military (or Defence) context, it is also relevant to a range of other non-military entities. Importantly, *Thinking about Strategic Thinking* begins in Part 1 with a diagnosis. In essence, it begins with the question of “what is the problem?”. It finds four key challenges – admittedly in the Australian context – with strategic thinking.

First, there is a *challenge of ‘definition’*, with no clear understanding of what the Australian Defence Force or wider Department of Defence believes a strategic thinker is and what is required from such an individual. Second, *there exists a challenge with strategic culture*. There are several elements of this including incentive structures that reward mainly short-term performance; minimal incentives for people to develop an understanding of organisations or subjects outside their day-to-day responsibilities; and, a problem with limited time. Additionally, we have a problem with curiosity, with many of our most senior people insufficiently curious about the world outside their extant appointment.

The third and fourth challenges are *with talent identification* and the *development of strategic thinkers*. Extant talent-management systems are not well attuned to identify people with a talent for strategic thinking. And, it is not clear that demonstrated strategic-thinking skills are prerequisites for selection to strategic leadership and planning appointments. While our organisation has invested significant effort to develop specialists in complex program management, logistics and personnel, there is no focus on any formal pathway for those with strategic aptitude. We need to better nurture those who are capable of being developed as intelligent, connected and ethical strategic thinkers.

In the second part of the paper, I offer recommendations on how our institution might address these challenges. It

encompasses initiatives for both military and civilian personnel – we cannot afford any intellectual disconnect between the military and civilian elements in our Department of Defence. While these recommendations comprise an extensive suite of initiatives, their financial costs are low. The key resources required to address the challenges in the paper are good leadership, cultural adaptation, time and (you guessed it) good thinking.

It is encouraging that our leadership have been very quick to act on this paper. Less than two weeks after it was released, it was tabled at a senior committee chaired by our Chief of Defence Force. The findings of the paper were accepted, and the Australian Defence Force (and wider Department) have commenced planning for its implementation over the coming year.

The profession of arms is a thinking profession. The price for not paying attention to building our strategic intellectual edge can be high. As Williamson Murray writes in *Strategy and Military Effectiveness*, “the cost of slovenly thinking at every level of war can translate into the deaths of innumerable men and women, most of who deserve better from their leaders.” We cannot afford slovenly thinking, at any level, in the 21st century. This generation of political and military leaders owes it to their people, and their societies, to maximise their investment in identifying and nurturing those who can think through the difficult problems of 21st century war and competition. I hope *Thinking About Strategic Thinking* has provided some small contribution to that vital endeavour.

SOME HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONCEPTUAL COMPONENT OF FIGHTING POWER

Professor Matthias Strohn
Senior Associate Fellow, CHACR

As British Army doctrine tells us, the conceptual component is an integral part of an army's fighting power. As such, it should receive just as much attention as the other two areas (the physical and the moral components), so that this trinity can prepare the Army to fight effectively. And yet, it seems that at times the conceptual component has lived a life in the shadows of the other two components. There are reasons for this; it is very easy to measure an army's fighting ability by counting tanks or guns. It is perhaps slightly less easy, but still very much achievable, to judge the 'fighting spirit' by analysing units' and individuals' actions on the field of battle. In contrast, the conceptual component can be somewhat 'woolly' and might even appear detached from the day-to-day business of the Army. What value does, for instance, the analysis of wars and battles gone by have for the Army of the 21st century?

Does the intellectual engagement with complex matters make you a more effective soldier or commander? The answer is, of course, yes it does. The complexity of the world demands military personnel who are able to think in broader contexts and to embed the military action within this. Such action is, after all, not detached from the political sphere or questions of society (the famous Clausewitzian trinity). The devil's advocate would now say that this is fair at the strategic level, but that it does not help the Army on the field of battle. The contrary is true. The British Army senior staff ride conducted in 2018 analysed the battle of Berlin in 1945 and drew lessons for urban operations in the 21st century that are now being implemented in the British Army. The conceptual component is also pivotal at the lowest tactical level. For good and effective mission command at this level you need trained and educated soldiers and officers who can think and react independently and quickly to new and emerging situations and threats.

The army that is often used to show the importance of the conceptual component is the Reichswehr, the German Army in the inter-war period 1919 to 1939 (although it changed its name to the more familiar Wehrmacht in 1935).¹² The German Army was reduced to a paramilitary defence force as a consequence of the Versailles Treaty. It did not have any modern equipment; tanks and aircraft were banned and the entire artillery arsenal consisted of 84 medium-calibre guns. The size of the Army was restricted to 100,000 men. This might sound not too bad in the context of 2021, but it was a very small force indeed in the inter-war period,

and the Reichswehr was numerically outnumbered by every potential enemy in Europe. The ban of tanks led to scenes that some people, especially the international military attaché community based in Berlin, found absurd or even comical. Card-board constructions were placed on cars and sometimes even bicycles to represent armour on exercises. Ammunition was so scarce that sometimes rattles were used to substitute for machine gun fire. And yet, it was this army that, only a few years later, conquered Europe in swift military campaigns. How was this possible? One argument that is heard often is that the rapid re-armament that took place during the Third Reich gave the Germans numerical superiority.¹³ This is not true. During the 1940 campaign in the west, the Allies had more men and material than the Germans.¹⁴ Still they lost the campaign. What the Germans had was the 'better' conceptual component. As the vanquished of the First World War, they had invested heavily in the conceptual component of fighting power, and

this paid off during the Second World War. Training and education were the corner-stones of this success, and these two elements were seen as complementing each other. Every man (and there were, of course, no women in uniform in those days) was trained at least one, often two levels up, which facilitated the expansion of the Wehrmacht in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War. Joining the elite general staff was not achieved through merely obtaining a certain rank, but through a rigorous selection programme, which included testing military knowledge and wider education. This is still the case in the Bundeswehr today and the 2-year course for future officers on the general staff is restricted to 100 'students'.¹⁵ In 1964, only 4 percent of all Bundeswehr officers were classed as 'on the general staff', while today this figure is approximately 10 percent.¹⁶

Now, naturally, not every person wearing the Reichswehr uniform was a Clausewitz, but the number of 'thinkers' was disproportionally high compared to other armies. This also meant that the Reichswehr had a culture of open debate, not least expressed through military publications, such as the 'Militärwochenblatt'. This weekly was widely read, and officers of all ranks, right to the senior leadership

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What value does, for instance, the analysis of wars and battles gone by have for the Army of the 21st century? Does the intellectual engagement with complex matters make you a more effective soldier or commander? The answer is, of course, yes it does

¹²On this matter, see Matthias Strohn, *From Defeat to Rebirth: The Enlargement of the German Army in the Interwar period (1918-1939)*; in, idem, ed., *How Armies Grow. The Expansion of Military Forces in the Age of 'Total War' 1789-1945*, Oxford 2019, pp. 53-68.

¹⁴See on this, Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend. The 1940 Campaign in the West*, Naval Institute Press 2005.

¹⁵www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/weitere-bmwg-dienststellen/fuehrungsakademie-der-bundeswehr/nationale-und-internationale-stabsoffizierausbildung [accessed 25/07/2021]. In addition to this course officers can be selected for the 'international general staff course' which prepares the personnel for international postings, such as defence attaché.

¹⁶www.spiegel.de/politik/rot-am-kragen-a-a884e4e9-0002-0001-0000-000046175672?context=issue [accessed 31/07/2021].

¹²For an in-depth discussion of the Reichswehr and the importance of its conceptual component, see Matthias Strohn, *The German Army and the Defence of the Reich. Military Doctrine and the Conduct of the Defensive Battle 1918-1939*, Cambridge 2011.





Here [in Britain], knowledge and education carry far less weight as such; they are more seen as a necessary step in order to enter the labour market, or, traditionally, were seen as a necessary part of forming ‘gentlemen’. This even applied to the beacons of the British educational system such as Oxford and Cambridge, which were more finishing schools for gentlemen than academic institutions in the continental European sense of the word.

of the Army, used this forum to engage in debates of military matters. Practically all of the famous German generals of the Second World War can be found amongst the contributors to this weekly. This culture was perhaps best summed up by Hammerstein-Equord, the German Chief of the General Staff between 1930 and 1933, when he categorised the Army’s staff officers (and the general idea applies to everybody in uniform, not just officers):

I distinguish four types. There are clever, hardworking, stupid, and lazy officers. Usually, two characteristics are combined. Some are clever and hardworking; their place is the General Staff. The next ones are stupid and lazy; they make up 90 percent of every army and are suited to routine duties. Anyone who is both clever and lazy is qualified for the highest leadership duties, because he possesses the mental clarity and strength of nerve necessary for difficult decisions. One must beware of anyone who is both stupid and hardworking; he must not be entrusted with any responsibility because he will always only cause damage.¹⁷

Laziness should not be interpreted here as a disinterest in one’s work, but as the ability to stand back from the grind of daily tasks and to allow time for contemplation and thinking rather than immediately springing into action when this is not required.

Now, a comparison between the Reichswehr and a modern army of 2021 can only go so far. There were specific

parameters that worked in favour of the Germans with regards to the development and enhancement of the conceptual component of fighting power. The Versailles Treaty prescribed long periods of service in order to prevent the build-up of reserves. Officers had to serve for 25 years and other ranks for a minimum of 12 years. This gave enough time to establish training and education programmes. The small size of the Army, combined with the high social prestige of the military and job security in the economical unstable times of the Weimar Republic, meant that the Army could choose from a wide pool of applicants. The Army was not fighting before 1939, which meant that operational disruptions did not take place. Lastly, the Reichswehr knew that the next war would be a major war in Europe. It therefore only had to prepare for conventional operations and did not have to worry about other forms of warfare. This makes it difficult to draw a direct line from the inter-war period to the modern day. However, the underlying attributes of education and open discussion, and their contribution to the conceptual component and thus to fighting power on the whole, should be analysed in detail and taken seriously by armies of the 21st century.

In addition to pure military aspects, the net has to be cast wider if one wants to understand the effectiveness of the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht. An army never exists in a vacuum, and it is always a mirror of the society it stems from. In the context of the conceptual component one factor is of particular interest. In German (and indeed continental European and US) philosophical thinking,

¹⁷ Quoted in Horst Poller, *Bewältigte Vergangenheit. Das 20. Jahrhundert, erlebt, erlitten, gestaltet*, Munich 2010, p. 140.

education and knowledge have been of much greater importance than in the UK. Going back to the writings of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and the educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), education and knowledge are part of a process of personal maturation. This process then naturally contributes to the enrichment and development of society as a whole. Thus, the value of these attributes is a value per se – one does not educate oneself for a specific purpose, but to contribute to the general enlightenment of oneself and society. As a consequence, school and university education have tended to be very broad and diverse. It is no coincidence that the German educational system of the 19th century became the model for most other European nations. Britain, and, in particular, England, have always adopted a different system. Here, knowledge and education carry far less weight as such; they are more seen as a necessary step in order to enter the labour market, or, traditionally, were seen as a necessary part of forming ‘gentlemen’. This even applied to the beacons of the British educational system such as Oxford and Cambridge, which were more finishing schools for gentlemen than academic institutions in the continental European sense of the word. Or, as a German author wrote in 1925: ‘The German universities educate

¹⁸ Wilhelm Dibelius, *England*, 2 vols., II, Leipzig 1925, p. 92.

¹⁹ See on this, Edward Smalley, ‘Qualified, but unprepared: Training for War at the Staff College in the 1930s’, in *British Journal for Military History*, Vol 2, No. 1 (2015), pp. 55-72.

scholars and members of learned professions, Oxford and Cambridge train gentlemen’.¹⁸ Higher degrees were only introduced at Oxford after the First World War, not least because of a demand from foreign students who had traditionally studied at German universities. This general distinction permeated through to the military. The Staff College at Camberley was known in the inter-war period as a riding school for gentlemen rather than a place for sincere military education and preparation for modern war.¹⁹ Even today the British Army is one of the very few major land forces which does not make tertiary education a requirement for its officers, although several programmes now exist to enhance the level of formal education within the Army.

Even if Britain or the British Army will not sign up to the educational ideals of Hegel and Humboldt, it should not be forgotten that the conceptual component is an integral component of the Army’s overall fighting power. The continuous enhancement of it, across the entire rank spectrum, will make the British Army only even more effective, and CHACR will continue to play an important and integral part in this process. Also, as the Reichswehr learnt in the inter-war period, the development of the conceptual component is far less bound by restrictions than the other two components of fighting power, not least because it is cheap by comparison. The rewards reaped might not be as imminently obvious as putting a tank on a drill square, but the effects can be far more wide-reaching and important as even a superficial glance at the history of warfare tells us.

RUSSIAN MILITARY STRATEGY THROUGH THE LENS OF HISTORY

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Shock and surprise have characterised the Euro-Atlantic community’s reactions to Russia’s offensive against Ukraine since February 2022. The shock has come with the brutality of a military campaign that has caused appalling loss of life and destruction, initially in a series of “lightening” advances in the south, east and north of Ukraine, especially towards Kyiv, and then the shift towards a more attritional approach in the east, based on the use of heavy firepower. This is the opposite of what many had assumed to be Moscow’s new “way of war”: for nearly a decade, and despite Moscow’s combat operations in Ukraine and Syria, the orthodoxy was that Moscow preferred to use asymmetric and hybrid “measures short of war”, instead of conventional warfighting.

Further surprise has come at the disjointed and poor performance of the Russian military. Many assumed that the Russian military – re-equipped and reformed through a decade of sustained modernisation, would quickly defeat Ukraine on the battlefield. Instead, a range of problems

quickly became obvious, from the underestimation of Ukrainian resistance to poor planning and preparation, to poor logistics and command and control, such that Russian forces appeared to compete for resources and lack coordination. Although numbers are disputed and remain unclear, the Russian armed forces appear to have suffered significant losses in material and personnel, including senior officers.

Even though the campaign is still underway, a useful discussion is beginning to emerge about lessons that could be drawn from the war, as Russia specialists exchange with generalists and defence specialists. These include the need to think holistically about adversary military performance and to think more creatively about possible war scenarios. Neither will be easy: as one experienced former US defence planner suggested, had a red team proposed acting in the way the Russian military has in the current campaign, he would have ejected them from the exercise.²¹ An understanding of history should therefore be an essential feature of this debate – it can help to hone thinking about how Russia fights its wars by looking both for common historical characteristics in experience and also to parse the current debate in the Russian military about the future of war.

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²¹ “What the Experts Got Right (and Wrong) About Russian Military Power”, *War on the Rocks* Podcast, 30 May 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/05/what-the-experts-got-wrong-and-right-about-russian-military-power>

Russian (and Soviet) field commanders have often shown a bluntness in their approach to warfighting which has resulted in heavy casualties. The staggering scale of losses in the Great Patriotic War are widely known.



Heavy toll: A sculpture of a mourning soldier in Rzhey, Russia serves as a memorial to all those Soviet soldiers who died during the Great Patriotic War

Picture: Dmitry Grachyov/unsplash

To an extent, of course, history already is a part of this discussion. Western officials and observers are using historical analogies to seek to illuminate current events by comparing them to (among other examples) the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 and the Soviet Union's Winter War against Finland in 1939-40. Thus, they paint a picture of Moscow launching wars of territorial conquest, hoping for quick victories against enemies they had underestimated – but because of poor planning and command instead faced punishing consequences and defeat.

This certainly can offer value, particularly in some of the military aspects, as discussed below. But analogies simplify thinking about Russia's wars, serving to suggest, or even lead the reader towards some determined conclusion – not only about Russian defeat, but also about the looming end of Putin. Care is needed with this approach to using history. Russia certainly suffered numerous battlefield defeats in the Russo-Japanese and Winter Wars, and there was substantial domestic unrest in 1905 largely due to the military defeats and economic shortages in Russia caused by the war, but this is only part of the story.

The Winter War was extremely costly for the Soviet Union. But after a catastrophic initial campaign, the military reorganised and then overwhelmed the Finnish armed forces leading to the Moscow Peace Treaty in March 1940. The USSR then won the Continuation War, leading to the Moscow Armistice (1944) and Paris Peace Accords (1947) which imposed significant further financial and territorial demands on Finland. Germany and Japan both drew lessons about Soviet weakness from the first campaign of the Winter War which subsequently proved highly misleading.

And although Russia lost every major military engagement on land and at sea against Japan, St Petersburg's subsequent statecraft at the Portsmouth peace negotiations resulted in Russia securing such favourable terms that the Japanese government was obliged to impose martial law for nearly two months in Japan to control extensive rioting, and then resigned.

In many ways, despite Russia's military failings, its defeat was much mitigated by political means. And while there was indeed serious domestic unrest in Russia in 1905, the Tsar did not fall for another 12 years. Russia and Japan continued intermittently to spar over territory during the next 40 years, before the Soviet Union decisively defeated Japan in Manchuria in 1945.

But if this suggests that there is a need for caution with using analogies and drawing hasty lessons from injudicious isolation of aspects of these wars, these examples also show that much can be learnt from history about how the Russian leadership thinks about war. Indeed, a bigger, broader picture of Russian military history can help to interpret what is happening today, and also to consider the longer-term trajectory of how Moscow thinks about war.

Although Russia has fought in a number of different wars

in varying conditions in the modern era, there are some wider commonalities and perennial difficulties – beyond Clausewitzian fog and friction – that Russia faces when it goes to war and from which it is possible to learn. If Moscow underestimated Ukrainian resistance in February 2022, for instance, and there was a disjoint between the national leadership and the military command, this will not have come as a surprise to historians. The Russian leadership has often underestimated its opponents, for instance – whether in the Napoleonic wars in 1806-07, the Crimean war of 1854-56, the Russo-Japanese war, the Winter War and Chechen War.

Indeed, with only rare exceptions, the Russian leadership has often sent its military to war from a poor starting point, either because of poor diplomacy, which distorted military planning or failed to rule out the participation of other powers in support of the enemy, or because of gaps between the Russian leadership and its own military. This latter point is a particularly prevalent common characteristic. The Crimean War started unexpectedly for the relevant commanders, who

had been left in the dark by St Petersburg, for instance, and in the Russo-Japanese war the Tsar had a more aggressive broader policy while the military had prepared for the possibility of a defensive war. And one of the reasons why the initial Soviet campaign in the Winter War was so costly was because the military command was side-lined in its planning.

At the military level, if poor command and control, problematic logistics and heavy casualties are characteristics of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, these too are prevalent common characteristics of Russia's wars, not only in defeat but also often in victory too. Divided command, either because of unclear and uncoordinated theatre responsibilities, or because of personal grievances – or both – opened major gaps in the war effort in the Napoleonic Wars, Crimea, Russo-Japanese war, World War I, or the Russo-Polish War of 1920 that either stalled offensives or were exploited by the enemy.

Moreover, Russian (and Soviet) field commanders have often shown a bluntness in their approach to warfighting which has resulted in heavy casualties, not only in the Winter War and Russo-Japanese war, in which casualties on both sides were particularly heavy, but also in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, and World War I. The staggering scale of losses in the Great Patriotic War are widely known. It should also be noted that the casualty rate of Russian senior officers, including commanding generals, in these wars is also high.

This is compounded by the fact that Russia's wars are characterised by the challenges faced by the military in overcoming the difficulties of distance. All of Russia's wars in the modern era have been fought over great distance and on a scale that the Russian military leadership had trouble satisfactorily mastering. The logistical problems of transporting large quantities of supplies and troops across great distances on very limited infrastructure either into Europe or to the Black Sea or Pacific has in the past often meant not only the loss of the initiative but also problems with sustaining resilience in the field. Either offensives reached their

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culminating points before a decisive victory could be won, or commanders were obliged constantly to fight delaying actions while forces were slowly built up.

These characteristics should not be taken to point to Russia's inevitable defeat – problems of command and control and logistics, for instance, were managed, mitigated or resolved in Russia's two Fatherland wars against Napoleon in 1812-14 and Hitler in 1941-45, in the Russo-Turkish war, the Winter and Continuation wars and also in the Manchurian campaign in 1945, among others. And detailed examination of Russia's wars reveals much more of value for understanding how Russia fights, and the relative role of the military in those wars. Nevertheless, familiarity with them would have mitigated the sense of surprise at the flaws in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

History is also important other ways, too. A sense of history, for instance, is very prominent in the policy and public discussion in Russia. In fact, history has become a national security matter in Russia, featuring in official strategic documents such as the National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine. Putin re-established the Russian Military History Society in 2012 specifically to consolidate efforts to study Russia's military past, to popularise it and to counter efforts to distort history. Moreover, President Putin frequently flavours his speeches – including recently to the Russian Historical Society and also to officers graduating from military education – by referring to Russia's 'legendary' martial traditions through the centuries, including the battles of Chudskoe Lake, Poltava and Borodino, and in the First World War and Great Patriotic War.²² Putin has also pointed to the value of learning from history, especially Russia's defeat in World War I because it was 'torn apart from within' and 'declared itself a loser'.²³ And he has published articles on the origins of World War Two and on Russian and Ukrainian history which have been widely and vigorously

²² "Vstrecha s vypusknikami voennykh vuzov", Website of the Presidential Administration, 21 June 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/68685>

²³ "Vstrecha s molodymi uchonymi i prepodavatelyami istorii", Website of the Presidential Administration, 5 November 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46951>

Picture: kremlin.ru



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critiqued in the West for their re-writing, politicisation and manipulation of history.

Such a use of history certainly illuminates the gulf between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community. The differences in many ways fit the distinctions between what might be called "the Past" and "History". In this sense, "the Past" serves as a means to legitimise or even sanctify a government, or invest a sense of destiny and purpose, seeking to shape both belief and action – the past put to particular political service, whereas History is a more intellectual, even destructive process seeking truth.²⁴ This puts Russia and the West on different intellectual planes – with all the concomitant problems of interpreting each other's signals; it may even dissuade Western observers from attempting to engage with the discussion in Russia.

Nevertheless, an awareness of the Russian military's interpretation and often didactic use of history in the search for lessons enhances our ability fruitfully to examine the evolution of Russian military strategy. Indeed, history is an essential feature of Russian military science and how the Russian leadership debates the character of war. The late Makhmut Gareev, a former Deputy Chief of General Staff and then President of the General Staff Academy – and perhaps the most prominent figure in Russian military thought for much of the last 40 years – often wrote on the relevance of history to contemporary times and today's changing character of war. Historical examples, therefore, are often the anvil on which contemporary debates about the necessary reforms are hammered out, and the discussion is peppered with references to the wars discussed above and the lessons that should be learnt from them.²⁵ Central to this is the Great Patriotic War. The Foreign and Defence Ministries have both recently published multi-volume histories of the Great Patriotic War. And senior officers, including Gerasimov, have written extensively about the contemporary lessons of the Great Patriotic War for command and control in warfighting at scale.

History is not merely symbolic, therefore: it has relevance to the contemporary Russian debate about military strategy. This emerges especially from the articles signed off by Gerasimov which either explicitly discuss history or refer to or quote numerous influences from Suvorov to Clausewitz, and, especially, Alexander Svechin and Georgii Isserson, two Soviet era military thinkers. These all offer valuable insight into how the Russian military leadership is thinking. Gerasimov, for instance, cited Isserson to speak to the lessons of the German campaign against Poland in 1939 and the changing nature of mobilisation and the initial period of war.

His repeated references to Svechin through the 2010s, but especially while the Russian military was reconsidering its military strategy in 2019, are all the more revealing: they suggest that the Russian military leadership is thinking more in terms of fighting wars with strategies of attrition or exhaustion than lightening wars of strategies of destruction.

²⁴ Plumb, J. *The Death of the Past*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1969.

²⁵ "Nevyuchennye uroki Finskoj kampanii", *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 28 March 2022, *Невыученные уроки финской кампании / Истопия / Независимая газета (ng.ru)*



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Moreover, for Svechin, the military tool must be used in conjunction with political and economic tools, which take longer to have an effect: in essence, active military operations may have only limited goals while the strategic goals could be broader. The combination of the economic, political and military parts of the war would define its character and duration. Equally, Svechin understood the difficulties of assessing the future character of war: a one blow strategy of destruction would only work if the adversary was divided internally. If not, only a war of attrition would succeed. All of this provides essential context for understanding the war

underway in Ukraine, and the specific role of the military in it.

History, then should form an important part of our thinking about the Russian military and how it fights. It is an essential ingredient in how Moscow thinks about future war, reflecting questions of continuity and change. Indeed, as the Russian military examines and seeks to learn lessons from this war, there will be historical resonances, and we will need to be in a position to interpret them. In doing so, we will be better equipped to understand how the Russian military thinks and is evolving in the 2020s.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

This *Ares & Athena* has been about the importance of, and the improvement of, the conceptual component of fighting power. We have sought to explain why it matters, how it matters and how professional soldiers may wish to exercise themselves in a way that builds up their own conceptual body such that they may be better tacticians, better strategists, better military thinkers, and thus better able to contribute to the fighting power of their Army. Above and below the thresholds,

real and imagined, of the constant competition of modern military operations, those who prevail are much more likely to be those who understand that armies who put as much effort into considering how their opponents may be out-thought as they do into how they may be out-fought are the armies that are likely to prevail. We hope that the CHACR may continue to play its part in providing signposts for an Army that is already travelling that path.



CHACR MISSION STATEMENT

To conduct and sponsor research and analysis into the enduring nature and changing character of conflict on land and to be an active hub for scholarship and debate within the Army in order to support the development and sustainment of the Army's conceptual component of fighting power.