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Mastering Violence

An Option for Operational Military Strategy

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THE ENTRY OF THE WESTERN NATIONS into a new strategic era has been accompanied by a significant increase in the commitments of their armed forces. The Western states, including France, operate today within the framework of a de facto “counterwar” strategy, but no such strategy has ever been officially formulated or expressed; the employment of forces has to be adapted on a case-by-case basis. The aim of this unexpressed strategy is to contain violence—in conflicts that are different from interstate wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and from the wars of decolonization. Western forces are typically given international mandates that put them in the position of third parties between belligerents neither of whom they consider enemies. Consequently, the military courses of action associated with classical warfare are imperfectly adapted to the problems currently being encountered.

Nonetheless, employing force to contain violence may be a valid strategic option. The employment of appropriate force can protect against violence, control it, contain it, even dominate it. The issue is how much force to apply. The guidance implied by the official United Nations definitions of “peace operations” remains unsatisfactory. They characterize military operations in a legal sense, but they do not help decide what kinds of military actions are to be taken in a given case; a suitable strategy must be based upon a clear assessment of the different types of violence that can be met in the field. No true operating modality has yet been worked out.¹

Certainly, military actions will not be directed against the “centers of gravity” of warring parties; that would risk a protracted

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confrontation. Military actions that contain violence but with minimal armed confrontation are preferred. The aim is to remove from the belligerents their physical and moral freedom of action, but without attacking the sources of their power.

The key to “mastering violence” is to control certain operational *domains*—for instance, “land-space,” mass movement, and armaments, but also information and humanitarian operations. However, no UN-mandated intervention force can be equipped and trained exclusively for mastering violence; it may also have to conduct combat operations. That contingency will not be addressed in this article.

Natural Order or Disorder

The collapse of the USSR and its empire opened a new strategic era, one that is still difficult to understand. To begin with, the nature of conflict has changed over the last ten years, and its present forms require an adaptation of political and military instruments. Military operations are now completely integrated with political, diplomatic, economic, and cultural activities. Strategy is no longer simply a matter of defense. The problem is now, more than ever, to conceive military actions in a political framework.

From Communities to Society: Integrating Concepts. At the heart of the present international disorder lie *communities*, where identities and values—the fabric of society—are first expressed. A community can be defined as a social union marked by strong, shared, participatory feeling, from which self-representations and customs arise. *Society*—an imprecise concept—can be considered the “community of communities.” It differs from the *state*, which is the political organization of communities.

Two major integrating concepts were predominant throughout most of the twentieth century: the nation-state and ideology.² They led to policies of power and expansion, and, in turn, conflicts over sovereignty and territory. These conflicts continue, overlaid on the fundamental search for values that has marked international society since the end of the colonial empires and later of the Soviet empire. Meanwhile, globalization has engendered yet further contradictions.

The concept of the nation-state, which has shaped the international system since the seventeenth century, has in this century

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aimed to provide stability and security. At the same time, it has also been a major instrument of control over communities and individual behavior. The nation-state created a particular form of war, focusing on territories. At the same time, ideologies, sophisticated representations of the world, were creating “unique truths” and legitimizing even the most radical behavior, often opposed to the idea of nation-state. Ideological war is a total, mass conflict between two antagonistic models of society, with stakes much deeper than territorial disputes—the conquest of “hearts and minds.”

Today, two new *concepts intégrateurs*—civilization and culture—compete with nation-state and ideology. The paradigm of the “clash of civilizations” has highlighted their roles. *Civilizations*, as defined by Samuel P. Huntington, are rooted in a metaphysical vision of the world and a spiritual experience that guides community life.³ Huntington identifies eight civilizations existing today and predicts the emergence of conflicts along the “fault lines” between them. Such

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“civilizational” conflicts also erupt in collapsed states whose populations have been gathered from different civilizations or cultures; these civil wars tend to be extremely lethal. *Culture* comprises the common beliefs, behavior, language, and experience of a civilization. Culture may become an ideology, or be used as one. The notions of culture and ideology, in fact, are closer to each other than are the concepts of nation-state and civilization, which are based on different principles: territory, law, and sovereignty for the former, values and identity for the latter.

A recent phenomenon affecting all four of these integrating concepts is *globalization*, which is both a process and its result. It is first of all an economic and financial phenomenon; as such it gives rise to new actors in the international system, and also to a new dimension of conflict, since belligerents are often supported by transnational networks. Globalization can be seen as the advent of a “universal civilization,” the worldwide expansion of a model of society. Conflict can result when communities resist globalization to preserve their respective identities or to prevent the demographic, economic, and social transformations associated with it. Relatedly, modernization of society also implies psychological changes. It is possible to modulate and channel modernization so as to reduce its obvious impact on tradition, but doing so can exacerbate differences between generations or cultures within a society.

The Evolution of Conflicts. With the end of the Soviet empire, the notion of total war lost its potency, at least for the time being. This was not the end of conflict, however. Two main types exist today.

The first is conflict over sovereignty—regional powers fighting to establish spheres of influence. It is symmetrical with regard to objectives, military means, and courses of action. Western countries cannot neglect these conflicts, because their strategic interests can be harmed by them; their armed forces need to remain prepared to fight in high-intensity conflict and to win as decisively and rapidly as possible, under political constraints and with media coverage. Western militaries will structure themselves for this task much as in the past—with emphasis on heavy forces capable of all combat functions, the most sophisticated weapon systems, and highly professional soldiers. Those forces can be smaller than they once were,

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because they will most often fight in coalitions. Nations will tailor their forces to produce the political influence that they desire to exert.

The second type of conflict arises from political manifestations of society—tensions between communities belonging to different cultures or civilizations, with the decline of the traditional integrating concepts. These tensions can exist within single states that encompass several cultures.⁴ When they do, the conflict that results is usually asymmetric, with the legal government using its military and police forces, and its opponents organized in networks. Violence takes different forms: abuse of force and repression on one side, terrorism and guerrilla warfare on the other. Identity conflict can, however, be symmetric, between belligerents having the same objectives, means, and ways of fighting; this is the case in many African wars.

Identity—that is, culture and civilization—and the other *concepts intégrateurs* need not be the only causes of a conflict. Just as conflict between nation-states may have an ideological dimension, “identity wars” can also turn into struggles for political power.⁵ In fact, integrating-concept factors are often simply used by political leaders as instruments of their ambitions.⁶ In particular, identity is likely to be an instrument rather than a source of conflict. The key consideration is legitimacy, the sense in communities and societies that a government has a moral right to rule. In a state governed by a legitimate authority, cultural differences are an asset; they become sources of trouble when the government becomes tyrannous or collapses.⁷

For instance, the nation-state remains at the heart of apparently identity-based conflicts in which either a nationality is not satisfied with its representation in the state or the form of government is contested. There are three possible cases. The first is a rebellion of a minority of the population against a legal government that the majority considers legitimate; no international intervention can be envisioned, unless requested by the government. In the second case, the legal government has lost its social legitimacy, usually because of its authoritarian nature; intervention in this kind of conflict is difficult, because the government is likely to impede an impartial settlement. Thirdly, conflict may result from the collapse of the state: in the resulting vacuum, the ideologies or cultural values of its constituents clash violently. Military intervention cannot restore peace; this can only result from agreement on a new “social contract” and acceptance of a new government.

Another complexity is the variety of ways in which aspects of globalization appear in various types of conflict. For example, transnational criminal organizations provide financial and logistical support to combatants. More commonly, the media and communication networks mobilize international audiences in support of a cause; public reaction becomes both a constraint on, and an impetus for, political decision making. Also, conflict resolution often is internalized, with military interventions now being authorized by international organizations rather than being conducted unilaterally. Even major powers that used to intervene unilaterally in their spheres of influence now appear to need the formal legitimacy provided by United Nations resolutions.

Thinking about War Differently. In the post-Cold War context, Western countries are peacemakers: they intervene to fight against war. In the past, major powers had assumed this role at the edges of their spheres of influence, but today the role is acknowledged by the international community and accepted by a large part of the public. Hence, Western nations now resort to force or the threat of force mainly to stop intrastate wars, to stop violence in order to pave the way for political settlements. They are finding that political end-states and military objectives are more difficult to define than they were.

This is a new approach for a military that is used to considering itself primarily an instrument of war and whose conception of war remains narrowly Clausewitzian. While the Clausewitzian view of war as a continuation of policy remains valid, both for belligerents and for international parties seeking to end a conflict, today's international will cannot be imposed by annihilation of the warring factions.

Theater Violence

Even in the bipolar context, there were units specialized for commitments outside Europe, and the "first world" experienced low-intensity conflicts. Over the last decade, however, the intrastate nature of conflict has entailed new forms of violence, which break out in various ways: impulsively, from aggressiveness or fear; or deliberately, the product of rational decisions. We may also distinguish direct violence, perpetrated by an individual or a group of identifiable

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people, from the more diffuse collective violence, which stems from oppressive social practices.⁸

Types and Intensities of Violence. However, these distinctions do not provide simple reference points for armed forces whose mission is to master violence in a given theater of operations. Concretely, armed forces have to identify perpetrators of violence in order to protect themselves from aggression, defend populations from their exactions, and if necessary, neutralize armed groups.

Recent experience demonstrates that violence can assume six distinct forms, differing in their causes, motivational bases, and objectives. The six forms are *committed*, *insurrectionary*, *institutional*, and *psychotic* violence, Mafia-type or organized *crime*, and *civil disobedience*.⁹ Within each category, acts can be classified by intensity. At the lowest level of intensity is *psychological* violence, exerted through threat, exclusion, and contempt; then comes *sporadic* violence, which represents an incipient transition toward a more continuous violence. The next most intense level, *targeted* violence, is directed against properties or people that are hostile symbols; *blind* violence, in contrast, strikes any kind of property or person, to create public terror and force authorities to negotiate. *Legitimated* violence is justified by a perceived acceptance by international, or at least national or local, opinion. Lastly, *generalized* violence overwhelms any attempted controls and bounds; it is characteristic of all-out war or civil war.

In actual operations, an international force assigned to deal with one category of violence will in fact be confronted by all the other kinds as well. Theater commanders can use this typology to recognize the main categories and to organize accordingly their efforts to master the violence and protect their units and populations.

Committed Violence. This widespread form of violence is used by groups as an instrument of coherent, goal-directed plans. It may be a reaction to discrimination or stem from an intent to destabilize an established order. It expresses a sense of precariousness and frustration, and it may go hand in hand with a search for power or wealth. The main perpetrators are political organizations (perhaps with religious or ethnic goals) that become clandestine and are thereafter constituted into militia, paramilitary groups, or guerrilla movements.

Terrorism is the favorite course of action of these groups; they use it to reduce the resistance of governments and to subdue

populations.¹⁰ They may also resort to guerrilla warfare, with the various elements of the population providing logistical support, hostages, targets, and legitimacy.

Insurrectionary Violence. The roots of insurrectionary violence can be found in social and institutional disorders and in human deprivation and frustration. It is characterized by attacks by small groups or crowds upon material or human symbols of their discontent. Its motivations include the elimination of stress (a sense of release and pleasure), the survival instinct, and at times opportunities to steal. It encompasses strikes, provocations against the police, and “mobs in upheaval” (below). It may take more radical forms, ranging from vandalism to pillage, havoc and devastation, even urban guerrilla warfare. In a civil war, the parties try to provoke, use, or incorporate this form of violence for their own political agendas, and to integrate it in their strategies.

Institutional Violence. The two types of violence above may force the government of an authoritarian state to use institutional violence in reaction. Then begins the well known spiral of rebellion and repression. Repression may be exercised directly by the country’s security forces or be “subcontracted” to paramilitary front organizations. This violence aims at preserving and exercising power. It may also express a dominating will, social assertion, or greed.

Institutional violence can be subtle, implemented through a legal framework or in the form of discriminatory practices. It may also take more extreme forms, including elimination of individuals or communities, or such acts of mass terror as genocide.

Mafia/Organized-Crime Violence. Violence of this kind, which serves private interests, emerges usually in weak political regimes, in which Mafia-like organizations can pursue illegal activities with total impunity. Corruption and disorganization in the governance and passivity and fear among the population are its prerequisites. Its main perpetrators today are warlords, pirates, and sects in Asia and Africa; cartels in South America; and urban gangs in a number of Western countries. These organizations adapt with a rapidity that state institutions cannot match. Their primary objectives are monetary, but they can also have other agendas, such as opposition to a government considered hostile (as asserted by some American paramilitary groups), challenges to society generally, or rejection of the Western way of life.

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The violent tools of organized crime include intimidation, corruption, blackmail, gang-style killing, and theft, as well as piracy, kidnap for ransom, and attacks on police. In its most intense form, this kind of violence can lead to urban guerrilla warfare, mass seizures of hostages, and terrorism. Mafia-style violence can be institutionalized in territories from which public authority has been excluded.¹¹

How can we distinguish the actions of our armed forces, mandated by the international community and respecting the law of war, from the violent activity of the belligerents?

Psychotic Violence. Psychotic violence particularly involves people already destabilized by other forms of violence. It develops mainly in civil war environments, in which individuals—especially teenagers—are likely to become addicted to violence.¹² Determined and courageous, yet fragile and vulnerable, and animated by the turbulence of adolescence, they are often victims themselves, their proper places in society having been destroyed. Accumulated reservoirs of hatred turn them into highly aggressive human beings. They easily get out of hand, even out of the control of their nominal leaders, and slip into unrestrained violence.¹³

Psychological mechanisms are the true sources of psychotic violence. Isolation and psychological fragility make people and groups especially susceptible to oratory and to ideological and religious manipulation. The world-vision of an individual destabilized by chaos is likely to be simplistic and totalitarian, readily convertible to deep hatred for all those who do not share it.

Civil Disobedience. Though it rejects physical violence and attempts to convince an adversary (generally one who is using institutional violence) that solutions must be political, civil disobedience is a powerful instrument of pressure.¹⁴ It aims to mobilize moral force and to maximize the effect of mass and cohesion. Protests, boycotts, and sanctions, scrupulously implemented by thousands or even millions of people, can bring a government, or its coercive resources, to collapse; they cannot be entirely countered by military action.

Nevertheless, the most frequent use of civil disobedience—or at least of the appearance of it—is tactical, in support of some violent course of action, especially in urban areas under intense media coverage. For instance, a “peaceful demonstration” of women and

children may be set up to hinder troop movements or to cover sudden excursions by armed groups.

Armed factions typically practice several types of violence simultaneously, with varying degrees of intensity. For example, in the former Yugoslavia, the “nationalist armed forces” used committed violence in opposition to the central government, in conjunction with institutional violence against the populations they controlled. Internationally mandated forces may also be confronted by several types of violence perpetrated by different actors, perhaps the committed violence of fighting groups and the institutional violence of paramilitaries. As another example, the insurrectionary violence in Albania that followed the bankruptcy of the banking system was paralleled by organized-crime violence perpetrated by clans and small, Mafia-like groups. The most dangerous violence for a mandated force, however, is the institutional type from a host government. The position of the mandated force must be clearly defined, and a line—as clear as possible—must be drawn between the use of legitimate state force and the practice of violence.

This diversity of violence clearly points to the need for a new approach to the notion of “the enemy.” In peace-support operations there is usually no designated adversary. The international force has to act alternately in *interposition* and in *opposition*. It must control the violence of certain elements, protect itself against others, and simultaneously impose the terms of the international mandate. To do that effectively, the theater commander requires multifaceted and seamless intelligence support.

International Efforts to Eradicate Violence

The current literature on localized conflict addresses only partially the need for doctrine on the use of armed forces to master violence in a theater of operations. To date, the international community has attempted to cope with violence by four different and competing approaches.

The State Interests Approach. This concept is the legacy of the Realist vision of international relations elaborated by Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Kenneth Waltz in the United States, and by

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Raymond Aron in France. In this view, violence is in itself a threat to national interests and security, conceived in a broad sense, not only military. This notion gives particular weight to conflict in regions of strategic interest; for instance, the United States would not tolerate risks of war in areas that are essential to economic relationships and prosperity. Its national security and military strategies stress preventive operations, which to some extent can be seen as controlling regional violence.¹⁵

The French government has defined, in its 1994 defense white paper, not only *intérêts vitaux* (vital interests) and *intérêts stratégiques* but *intérêts de puissance* (interests of power) in promoting peace, international law, and democracy.¹⁶ However, the notion of state interest remains imprecise. Even if each state endeavors to give its neighbors and the international community a more or less coherent vision of its interests, such definitions must necessarily be basic, without concrete modalities for combating violence.

The Juridical Approach. The Hague and Geneva Conventions, which were instrumental in creating the law of war, were the first international attempts to limit violence on a cooperative basis. During the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, it was out of the question to seek to stop, on legal grounds, a sovereign state from waging war. But in time a new, shared morality condemned sufferings unnecessarily inflicted on combatants, prisoners, and populations. Since then the law of war has been augmented, even if its application has been imperfect.

After the Second World War, the great powers agreed to set up permanent military forces to discourage aggression. The United Nations Charter established as a norm the peaceful settlement of conflict and, if necessary, the restoration of peace by international force. Chapter VI favors preventive diplomacy and does not clearly envision the commitment of armed forces. Chapter VII, however, details the coercive measures available in case of threat or breach of peace.

The Secretary-General's *Agenda for Peace*, originally published in 1992 as an attempt to address the instability of the new strategic context, distinguished preventive diplomacy (aimed at settling conflicts before violence breaks out) from peacemaking and peacekeeping (to resolve conflicts and end hostilities). Under the *Agenda*, peacekeeping and peacemaking, having succeeded, give way to peace

building, designed to prevent the resurgence of violence.¹⁷ The 1994 supplement to the *Agenda for Peace* adds to this schema “enforcement actions” in case of a threat to peace, a breach of peace, or acts of aggression. In such a case, the organization would expect to give an enforcement mandate to a group of states.¹⁸

The international juridical approach represents a significant step forward, but its main purpose remains the protection of states against violence stemming from interstate wars.

The Humanitarian Approach. Based as it is on state-sovereignty and noninterference principles, the juridical approach is powerless to limit violent actions resulting from civil wars or conflicts within a state, which today represent the most frequent cases. Over the last thirty years, however, the international conscience in this regard has evolved, and violence against populations in the defense of interests or ideology has become odious. Many nongovernmental organizations have promoted this view, with the support of the media.

Under such pressure, the UN recognized in 1988 the existence of fundamental humanitarian rights, among them access by international assistance organizations to endangered populations. This right has been made concrete by proposals for humanitarian-assistance “corridors” that no state may impede. This was the birth of the right of “humanitarian interference.”

As this approach is less deferential toward state sovereignty than is the juridical one, it is often debated within the international community. Many third-world states oppose it, seeing in it a tool of domination by Western countries.

The Military Approach. Following the U.S. example, Western armed forces have little by little integrated UN missions in their own doctrines. They generally distinguish operations in support of diplomacy—peacemaking, peace building, and preventive diplomacy—from the peace-support operations, which for them include peacekeeping and peace enforcement. The peacekeeping concept does not allow the actual use of force, except in self-defense, whereas peace-enforcement operations can resort to force to execute a mandate.

France, however, distinguishes three main categories of interventions under the UN mandate: intervention to maintain peace, with the agreement of the various parties, when hostilities have ceased;

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intervention to restore peace, in a country where external or civil war threatens the security of populations and no aggressor has been clearly identified; and intervention to impose peace, through coercive action against a clear adversary. In the last two cases, a party may agree to the mandate only in part or refuse it entirely. Force may be used only to fulfill the mandate, not to eradicate belligerents or adversaries.

Prospects for a Common Approach

A real strategy of “counterviolence,” encompassing the political, diplomatic, economic, and military dimensions of intrastate conflict resolution, needs to be developed. An operating mode especially designed to “master violence” would take into account the complexities and the political constraints governing military intervention in intrastate conflict, and guide theater commanders in managing them.

The Clash of Legitimacy. Legitimacy is a central issue in, and a major source of, conflict. Each belligerent claims legitimacy and denies his adversary’s. Their respective claims are rooted in self-referential logic (law, religion, support of the population, history, etc.) and in values beyond power and interests, and so cannot be easily arbitrated. A force mandated to intervene in the conflict has to be seen as legitimate as well.

In war-torn countries, conflict is the expression of rejection of the political form of government, or of a nation itself. In the former case, the rejected government is confronted with “committed” or “insurrectionary” violence practiced by a separatist minority, or even by a dissatisfied majority; having lost a significant degree of social legitimacy, the state counters with “institutional” violence. The latter case—rejection of the nation as it exists—produces chaos. The government has neither legitimacy nor authority. The country is torn apart by communities fighting others, each in the name of identity.

In an intervention, the political objectives and the options chosen to reach them must be legitimate in the eyes of both the international and local publics, and that legitimacy must be built case by case. The foundation of legitimacy is the international mandate; three major issues have to be taken into account in crafting it. First, the political goals must be supported by the major powers in the UN

Security Council, each of which will have its own agenda. Precision, therefore, cannot be expected; a compromise must be sought at the level of basic objectives—preventing regional or local instability, restoring stability, or creating a new balance of power. Second, compromise must also be reached between the competing principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, on one hand, and human rights and self-determination on the other. Third, the strategic option selected—specifically, the role assigned the military in nonmilitary matters (diplomacy, economic measures, humanitarian assistance, etc.)—will influence whether the mission becomes in practice one of military coercion or the mastering of violence.

The international community, if it undertakes to master violence, indicates that it has not designated an “enemy and does not favor one claim over another. That, however, complicates the role of the theater commander. He must be given a comprehensive and detailed grasp of not just the military but the political dimensions of the conflict; only then can he assess for political authorities the claims of each armed faction. Those with internationally or nationally recognized legitimacy would be invited to take part in conflict settlement; the violent strategies of the others would be opposed militarily. The theater commander must also implement the political agreements, by force if necessary. He has a major role, therefore, in the reconciliation of the belligerents.

Mastering Violence. Mastering violence is, then, a political choice. Political authorities have to define the goals of the operation as well as the military means engaged. This may lead to three kinds of intervention: an operation in support of a diplomatic or economic settlement; an operation to master (prevent or control) violence; or an operation to compel an adversary to give up his military ambitions. Mastering violence is especially appropriate in terms of international stability, since it can revert to coercion if necessary.

A Western military force fighting politically against violence will face demands beyond those for which it has trained. It may have to play any of several main roles, depending upon the political objectives and nonmilitary measures decided upon: protection of the population, of their political representatives, and of public and private property; control of violence in the theater of operation, in order to facilitate a political settlement; and the domination of perpetrators

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of violence, in order to create favorable conditions for conflict resolution. In each respect, military measures will be diverse, both physically and psychologically. They are part of the overall attempt to influence the belligerents. At the strategic level, the objective is to give meaning to the mission; at the operational level, it is to win support for the international mandate; and at the tactical level, the goal is to create a favorable perception of the force. In physical terms, military action should aim at reducing the violence of perpetrators and restricting their freedom of action.

Mastering violence is the final result of coordinated efforts in five operational domains: control of the environment, to constrain the factions' freedom of action; control of mass movements, to prevent their political use by the perpetrators of violence; control of armaments, to balance, reduce, or suppress their combat power; control of information, to remain continually aware of the situation, anticipate violence campaigns, and support friendly forces; and finally, if necessary, control of forces through actions designed to intimidate, warn, or inhibit recalcitrant elements (but not to strike at their centers of gravity).

Operations under an International Mandate. Of the different classifications of international operations that have been described, the UN taxonomy is most often adopted in Western military doctrines. However, the notions of "peacekeeping" and "peace enforcement" do not address fully the practical conditions for the use of force. It would seem more appropriate to examine possible operations with regard to their political and military objectives:

- Operations in support of diplomacy, including preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peace building
- Peacekeeping operations, as defined by the UN, undertaken with the consent of the parties to facilitate the achievement of a political agreement
- Operations to restore peace, under the rubric of peace enforcement and Chapter VII of the UN Charter
- Security intervention, including humanitarian assistance, noncombatant evacuation, and shows of force

- Operations—“limited wars,” in the American parlance—to oppose the actions of an aggressor identified by the international community.

Rules of engagement can guide operations at each level. At the strategic level, these rules define the conditions of military action. They deal with legitimacy, the consent of the parties in conflict, or the designation of adversaries. At the operational level, they address the impartiality of the mandate force, its credibility (in terms of political will and military capabilities), and the transparency of its activities. At the tactical level, they become the authority for military decisions, dealing mainly with security, self-defense, or the reversibility of military dispositions. Each of these principles would be applied in ways appropriate to the given operation.

The Employment of Force against Violence

The mastering of violence requires an answer to a fundamental question: How can we distinguish the actions of our armed forces, mandated by the international community and respecting the law of war, from the violent activity of the belligerents? This distinction is essential, especially since government forces and armed factions with legal standing frequently take advantage of their status to abuse populations. Intervention forces cannot be associated with such behavior. The strategic option of mastering violence presupposes this distinction between force and violence, but it remains difficult to establish. The very concepts of “force” and “violence” lack clear and universal definitions; the boundary between them fluctuates and must be continually reassessed—it is, in the end, a matter of conscience. Nevertheless, the line may be illuminated by how the terms are defined by other disciplines.

For instance, semantics sees *excess* as a difference between them. Force is a capacity for physical action, evaluated with regard to the effects produced. It also has a moral dimension. In contrast, for a semanticist violence has two meanings: “abuse of force” and “illegitimate constraint”; it corresponds to the Greek notion of immoderation. In terms of mechanics, force is anything that modifies the state of rest or movement of a body. A force is defined by its point of application, its direction, and its intensity (conceived as

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energy delivered instantaneously). To an engineer, force is interesting only as leading to a final state different from the initial one; this end state must be defined in advance. To extend the metaphor to intervention forces, an excess of force—that is, violence—can occur with respect to the desired end state (that is, the legitimacy of the strategic aim), points of application other than armed forces (populations, etc.), direction (actions modifying the point of application), and intensity (the power used to achieve the desired modification).

In the post-Cold War context, Western countries are peace-makers: they intervene to fight against war.

A final definitional framework is that of the law. In fact, international law sets forth the fundamental characterization of unacceptable violence. For states, international law prohibits aggressive warfare but authorizes self-defense. On the operational level, the law of war (or of armed conflict) applies. In broad terms, it holds that any action inflicting unnecessary suffering on combatants or populations is an abuse of force. Also, violence against individuals can constitute a war crime, whereas a crime against humanity involves violence against populations.

In practice, then, the use of force can be distinguished from collective violence according to the type of entity implementing it (whether it is charged with law enforcement), the legitimacy of the civil power resorting to force, and the respect it shows the law (that is, the law of war and civil law).

The legitimacy of force, bitterly disputed in the past, remains today a burning subject. While political Realists consider force the basis of law, humanists see it as only an instrument of natural law, which is a higher law based on the respect for human dignity. Another debate concerns the legitimacy of violence. In the eyes of the Hegelian school, violence is legitimate, because it contributes to the historical evolution of human societies; a number of evolutionists take it as a central element of the process of life. Violence is also defended by some political theorists when it is employed against oppression. That view leads eventually to “romantic terrorism,” in which even the most barbaric acts are considered legitimate, since they reflect the inequality of the opponents. In a revolutionary or secessionist war, at least some sectors of public opinion consider even

extreme violence acceptable—just as, conversely, an action taken by duly constituted police may be illegitimate in the eyes of the population.

How can theater commanders deal with this difficulty? First, they must ban any reaction by their own units out of vengeance, because this might lead to institutional violence. Second, they must be quick to note if the military of the host country slips into institutional violence, and if it does, to dissociate their own forces from it.

It is possible, then, to distinguish the use of force from the indulgence of violence. Armed force should be employed only in a legal, institutional, and ethical framework. The absence of any one of those elements suggests the likelihood of violence that weakens political legitimacy. A legal framework is imposed on mandate forces by national and international law, set forth in rules of engagement; it strengthens the institutional (though not necessarily the political) legitimacy of the military action.

Ethical constraints require respect for human rights and compliance with the prohibition of crimes against humanity (as defined in United Nations Resolution 177 of 1947). To conduct a mission in accordance with the terms of the mandate and its political aims, the theater commander must at all times control the use of force—to withhold it, or to apply it with discrimination, limiting undesired effects. His ability to do so requires of each of his subordinates faultless personal behavior, knowledge of the rules of engagement, and obedience to the prerequisites established for opening fire. Therefore, rules of engagement should address three aspects: the employment of force, including instructions at the political-strategic level; the behavior of populations, belligerents, perpetrators of violence, and allies; and the use of specific armaments, especially rules defining when, and against which targets, they may be used.

Thus, even without a strict conceptual boundary, the notions of force and violence help military leaders to develop an accurate conception of operations at the operational and tactical levels. They also remind each soldier that, while obliged to obey lawful orders, he is responsible for the morality of his actions, not merely for their operational effectiveness.

Exercising Control in Every Dimension

The strategic mastering of violence requires detailed surveillance of the theater of operations, in its various dimensions, so as to permit *environment control*, by which the operational commander restricts the freedom of action of perpetrators of violence.

In combat, the physical environment (topography and terrain) is the framework of maneuver, and its features are essential stakes. In operations for mastering violence, the framework and stakes are the *human* environment. This environment has many dimensions, and military activity must take them into account; coordinated military actions in all these dimensions will contribute to limiting the escalation of violence. Direct combat actions against the belligerents are only a part of larger, multidimensional “maneuvering.”

Environments. The air and sea dimensions, nearly homogeneous, constitute combat space in symmetrical conflicts. They also represent transit space, giving access to the ground theater, in “mastering violence” operations. From an operational point of view, these dimensions must also be monitored and controlled with special intensity, in order that the ground dimension of a theater may be restricted or even denied to belligerents. Littoral space is of special significance in projection or transit operations, where monitoring or denial measures enforce embargoes or blockades.

The electromagnetic dimension is equally homogeneous, but it is conditioned by the propagation of waves in space. Its use depends on adopted frequencies and transmission modes, as well as the propagation environment. Denying its use to an enemy is complicated today by the fact that civilian systems, such as cellular phones and personal computers, are available to belligerents. To control them requires costly networks of space-based and ground sensors.

The land is a more complex environment. Recent work in French schools of geography have highlighted the crucial significance of human and economic dimensions, in addition to the physical environment.¹⁹ The human dimension provides a conceptual framework for analyzing identities, cultures, and territorial disputes, whereas the economic dimension identifies and traces the vital flows (of trade, finance, transportation) in regions and communities.

In fact, examining the human dimension is a prerequisite for understanding how a population conceives its own territory. Several concepts, in the French view, figure in this representation: the *espace vécu* (a geographical area where communities are and people live), *espace politique* (public and political organizations of states, provinces, counties), and *espace de représentation* (the historical aspirations of a community in terms of land space).

Communities are frequently dissatisfied with their physical or political territories. Such grievances are psychological matters. Indeed, the values and symbols a community attaches to a territory can explain its struggle for it; they suggest how much sacrifice—or the most barbaric violence—a community's members will accept on that account, and also the likely "hot spots," key geographical positions or symbolic places.

Organization of Land Space. The operational commander can reach the necessary understanding of the various dimensions of his theater, his region, through an analytical approach that stems from elementary geometry but is applicable to any environment.

This analysis begins with the concept of *point*, which cannot be defined but is essential to any geometric proposition. A *line* joins at least two points and constitutes a physical reality; on that line, material or immaterial *flows* may circulate between the points. We may associate these points, lines, and flows with the concept of *actors*, that is, human agents. A set of points, lines, and flows creates a *network*, a visualization that makes possible a better understanding of the environment.

Any network is part of one or more *zones*. Set theory suggests the notion of a zone as comprising a set of elements, subdivided into subsets. Zones and networks, superimposed, constitute a *human territory*, itself composed of sets and subsets. At the end of the process is the *region*, the frame of reference in the operational thinking of the theater commander. At this level, a region's key points (material or symbolic) and flows (that will have to be controlled) can be clearly identified.

Networks, however, constitute the real grid of a territory. They underlie the relations between points and lines in each dimension, as well as the interventions of human actors who use or create them. It

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is always necessary for a military force operating on the ground to identify these networks and to define their relations.

Physical networks are easy to identify. They are significant influences upon military actions, especially in terms of mobility, counter-mobility, and the monitoring or controlling of key points. They mainly involve natural communication networks, resulting from geography.

Economic networks, at least their tangible aspects, are also easy to identify. These networks involve people and circulating goods. They can be controlled at communication points (such as airports, railway stations, or bridges) or at production and control points (power stations, water sources, etc.); still, the security of lines of flow is difficult to guarantee. Information networks, in contrast, can be located by their material assets (television, radio, computer, databases, etc.) but are much more difficult to delineate in their capacity as influence networks; the same can be said of financial networks, whether institutional or informal.

Human networks are even less easy to identify, because they are unsettled and changing. A group is never a collection of independent pawns but a network organized by material infrastructures and composed of social elements. Some links are temporary and disappear quickly, whereas others are institutionalized in organizations, parties, churches, associations, etc. Therefore, the political problems of communities are strongly influenced by the geographical constraints. To plan military activity in terms of networks means to reason in terms of interactions and human networks; some must be controlled or monitored, whereas other networks (such as those providing logistics, weapons, or money) must be dissolved. Anchored in populations and linked with the existence of a territory as an *espace vécu*, these networks constitute a key to the successful execution of the mission.

Each "mastering violence" operation is a specific case. Actions by Western forces at tactical and operational levels are thus highly variable. But dominance over the environment, particularly on the ground, remains a constant. It is a way to prevent violent acts when direct combat and neutralization of perpetrators of violence are impossible or undesirable. This domination can take various forms, depending on the type and intensity of violence exercised by belligerents, how the force uses ground space, and its mission.

At the tactical level, environment dominance is exercised over a coherent region, at different levels of intensity. The first is *security*, the freedom of action of forces intervening to settle a conflict. This is feasible only in relatively stable zones, in which parties have ceased hostilities. It is suited to negotiated postconflict commitments, by which parties implement a return to peace with external support, or

. . . [E]mploying force to contain violence may be a valid strategic option. The employment of appropriate force can protect against violence, control it, contain it, even dominate it. The issue is how much force to apply.

to interventions designed to prevent the expansion of violence to other areas. *Control* marks a second step. It is applied to limit the freedom of action of parties within a defined area, particularly to prevent any resort to violence. This degree of supervision requires the approval—at least at the outset—of the parties. It also implies verification, as well as units earmarked for intervention.

Lastly, *exclusion* aims at denying access and use of a zone to belligerents. It requires not only control of the networks in the zone but even the eradication of some, and the ability to operate in any part of the area at any time. It involves measures for at least minimal protection, verification, and denial of lines or points of passage, and also forcible responses if unauthorized presence is detected.

At the operational level, supervision of the environment is a matter of the geographical positions of factions. The military role will consist of suggesting, negotiating, or imposing positions that contribute to the settlement of the conflict. The geographical arrangement will, if possible, satisfy the *espace vécu* or *espace de représentation* of each party. Several options may be applied at this level. One, *sécurisation*, aims to assure civil peace in the theater by preventing acts of violence. It requires local political consent and an agreement between the parties. Control is the responsibility of tactical units settling local disputes. In a country where civil peace is threatened, this option may be preventive, to stop the escalation of various types of violence. It is also the best way to restore peace in a postconflict situation. It facilitates the restoration of normal public and private activities. A second option, *interposition*, places a third force between

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opponents in order to prevent armed confrontation. This option is always implemented in conjunction with diplomatic actions, because it requires, at the beginning, the agreement of the parties. It may also be used in crisis prevention, to avoid the occurrence of hostilities (preventive deployment); in humanitarian projects, to establish security conditions; in peacekeeping, to avoid the resumption of combat; and in the restoration of peace, to ensure compliance with a territorial agreement. Interposition is implemented through fairly elaborate tactical dispositions (zones of control, no-man's lands, zones of defense, etc.), all in the framework of a coherent operational disposition adapted to the strength of the factions present.

A third operational option is *confining*, that is, isolating a belligerent within his territory. It has been practiced, for example, in Latin America to counter guerrilla movements. This operational option has the advantage of settling, or at least reducing considerably, the problem of violence. It may be negotiated, installed tacitly, or even imposed (but without striking the faction's operational centers of gravity). *Grouping* armed factions in imposed areas may contribute to the political settlement of a conflict; it generally goes with disarmament operations. However, it demands the agreement of the concerned parties, not only the political leaders but also local warlords. Finally, *area denial* is designed to prevent intrusion by new belligerents into the theater of operations from another territory. Area denial may be employed to defend an overseas territory, such as a country benefiting from a defense agreement with a Western nation. The UN may also have established a mandate to prevent intrusions onto the territory of the host nation.

Control of Mass Movements

Human masses can deliberately act as "vectors" of violence, but mostly they are manipulated for that purpose by political leaders (strategists) and directed on the scene by agitators (tacticians). As was seen in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, military interventions often encounter civil disorder, whether consciously organized or totally out of control. The theater commander is confronted with a dilemma between protecting populations from themselves or protecting his own troops from populations.

It is necessary to be acquainted with the behaviors of human masses—that is, mobs—that are encountered in theaters of operations. This knowledge is essential even to collecting intelligence and conducting preventive operations; it should contribute to the control of mobs, at least at the tactical level. There are *fleeing mobs*, flows of refugees or demobilized soldiers; *refusal mobs*, displaying clear collective resistance to the government; extremely brutal *aroused mobs*, which appear and disappear suddenly; and finally, *mobs in upheaval*, large movements attempting to overthrow the established power.²⁰ In a civil war context, the intervening force will often be confronted by all these types of mobs. Ambitious community or political leaders use every possible manipulation to coalesce human groups into “mobs in upheaval.”

Control of Mass Movements at the Tactical Level. The international military force may not be expected to control uprisings, but it may be involved in restoring public order in a riot context. Its actions will then be at the tactical level; units will have to find appropriate solutions, without simply improvising. Tactical intelligence in this situation can be effective only when supported by operational intelligence, giving precise knowledge of the area, the availability of local police forces, and the types of mobs and their leaders.

In any case, preventing a mass movement is better than having to control it. Preventive measures are designed to forestall large-scale gatherings. They are normally the responsibility of the local police, but there may be no police, or they may be ineffective, forcing the intervening military units to take action themselves. With a “refusal mob,” the aim will be to limit the number of demonstrators, block gathering places, or to make a planned demonstration less likely to turn into a riot—by working with its organizers, examining the terrain, and setting up dispositions to stop riotous assemblies. It will be difficult to stop people fleeing as the result of deliberate acts of a faction; it should be possible at least to forecast such movements.

When it is necessary to control a mob, the objective is to accompany it and avoid a riot through negotiations and shows of force. Controlling “refusal mobs” is a particular problem for which riot police are trained; such techniques are not familiar to the military. Control of an actual riot is even trickier; it entails separating leaders from the crowd. Usually, however, the objective is not to control the total

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momentum of the mob but to limit its destructive effects through dividing it, scattering it, or diverting its collective aggression toward substitute targets.

“Fleeing mobs” can be controlled by simply escorting them and avoiding or removing obstacles that would create panic. It is impossible, however, to control “upheaval mobs” without using force, which often has devastating effects; the intervening force can only redeploy itself to assure its own security and avoid being trapped by large mass movements whose very *raison d’être* is the violent destruction of civil authority.

Preservation of Public Order at the Operational Level. The theater commander has to coordinate tactical control of mobs and protection of property in order to avoid a deterioration of the situation. To do that, he requires operational-level intelligence—a broad perception of the area and an understanding of the “games” being played by the different actors—in order to anticipate their intentions and actions. At this level, intelligence is mainly collected on political leaders, their strategies, and their current tactics.

Operational-level preventive measures focus on the environment and local leaders. With respect to the former, the goal is to reduce specific shortages and in general the precariousness of the population’s existence, in order to alleviate the discontent that might predispose people to manipulation. Pressure on leaders may deter them from resorting to violence, at least while the intervening troops are in the theater.

All such measures are time consuming. In an emergency, two types of action are possible: deescalation, by talking and mediating with the local leaders; and intimidation, through the threat of military retaliation, of leaders who would try to generate mob action. If the tactical situation gets out of hand, the force commander must take at once all necessary measures required to ensure adequate force protection, and then wait for a new mandate—which should reflect modifications confining operations at the operational level. That is necessary to avoid the crystallization of a “mob of upheaval,” which could trigger civil war. If the international community is not prepared to take that step, the force should withdraw.

Armament Control

Arms control and disarmament often contribute strongly to the general settlement of a conflict, but in many cases attempts to implement them fail for lack of confidence between the warring parties. The mandate force plays a major role here.²¹ The control of weapons is not an end in itself but part of a comprehensive process that includes humanitarian, diplomatic, and economic actions leading to the restoration of peace. It permits the reconstitution of local politics, rebuilds a certain degree of stability, and reduces violence.

There are various degrees of arms control, which can be combined and modified by local agreement. Weapons can be *limited* in terms of areas (prohibited zones), categories of weapons (such as a prohibition of heavy weapons), or use. *Weapons control* designates the transfer of weapons from armed factions to mandate forces. *Weapons reduction*, in contrast, defines quotas for some or all weapons in the theater; it implies an ability to verify and destroy surpluses. *Disarmament* deprives parties of military capabilities; their weapons are collected and stored by the mandate force.

Demobilization, in contrast, is a comprehensive process combining disarmament, dissolution of units, and the return of combatants to civilian life. This entails an organization that is well coordinated with the political power, the bureaucracy, and the economy, in order to avoid simply transforming combatants into unemployed workers. That would merely impel them to criminality, banditry, or to hiring themselves out as mercenaries.

The Psychological Dimension of Disarmament. The notion of controlling weapons is both new and old. Once demilitarization was the predictable consequence of military defeat; it marked the submission of the losing population. The late twentieth century, however, introduced the idea that consensual limitation of weapons or even disarmament could constitute a significant aspect of conflict prevention.

In negotiating and implementing arms control agreements in the theater, one must take into account the psychological motivations (aside from political objectives) behind the desire to possess and use weapons. On the level of the individual, the difficulty in disarmament or weapons limitation lies in the mythic image of the warrior. To many, carrying weapons is a privilege of the warrior caste; with it

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goes charisma, personal image, and feelings of superiority. In addition to such affective aspects of possessing a weapon, there are hidden mechanisms involving the idealization of war aims. Leaders attempt to transform warlike impulses into an inspiration, a higher cause. Each combatant is invited to consider himself an instrument of the Almighty, chosen to improve the lot of the society to which he has devoted himself. In this way the warrior is called to create history, to change the course of events, to become a hero.

Lastly, war can be made to seem an adventure. It is exciting, certainly in comparison to the squalor of daily life and the harsh reality of work. It is perceived as a dangerous sport, but one that gives expression to vitality. It is all the more appealing in that it gives people the impression that they will be no longer accountable for their actions. The warrior, they tell themselves, does not ask questions: he obeys. He is carried along by a vast machinery, which decides what his future will be.

There is also a collective psychological dimension. In conflicts, weapons are sources of individual and collective benefits. Many armed groups survive by robbery or exploitation of populations, which have to pay a "tax for the revolution." Members of paramilitary militia look for other forms of profit—honors. War is a rapid way to rise socially in a society, to get power, glory, or privileges—in other words, to "make it." To accept disarmament, then, can mean abandoning a lucrative arrangement. Especially for warlords, it also means loss of standing. They lose their power and must submit to a system with different rules.

Lastly, in most cases, disarmament is not unilateral but bilateral or trilateral. In consequence, strategists and tacticians of each party endeavor to conserve all they can of their combat power, each fearing the others will cheat or renege.

Consensual or Coercive Processes. Thus, even in a consensual situation, when parties agree, the agreement needs to be strengthened enough not to vanish with time.²² The mandated force must intervene to support political and diplomatic efforts, notably in the preparatory and negotiating phases. It does so by achieving mutual military transparency between parties, eventually through economic pressure and embargoes decided on by the international community. Once the agreement is achieved, the force implements confidence-

building and security measures, especially for wholesale demobilizations. These measures must be accompanied by additional economic or political arrangements to prevent the erosion of consent.

Weapons control can also take a coercive form. The aim here is to force local warlords to adhere to agreements signed by political leaders. Among the first effects of weapons control is the limitation of freedom of action, by confining parties to zones where they will be disarmed.

Weapons control is a difficult task. The conclusion of agreements at the politico-strategic level is only one step; implementation at the operational level is a delicate matter. To succeed, the mandate force uses both consensus and coercion. Negotiations continue at this level throughout the weapons-reduction process. Actions at the tactical level are even more difficult. They demand a great deal of courage and professionalism, and they require enough local military superiority to intimidate any possible participant.²³

This new aspect of operations must be taken into account in military doctrines and in the education and training of future leaders.

Control of Humanitarian Emergencies

Over the last thirty years, calls upon the West for humanitarian assistance have become more numerous than ever before, notwithstanding their costs and political risks. This can be explained by the progressive emergence of an international conscience, under the influence of the media, which are very active in areas of conflict. This conscience has various modes of expression. One is personal commitment to nongovernmental organizations; these individuals, in turn, mobilize media campaigns to put pressure on Western governments. Further, there is an international movement toward recognizing an obligation to assist victims of natural disasters, industrial or environmental catastrophes, or war, through humanitarian-aid channels. Accordingly, armed forces must be prepared both conceptually and practically for humanitarian operations, even if their cost and political risks make them infrequent. The proliferation of humanitarian operations to date has revealed difficulties regarding political objectives, the role of nongovernmental organizations, and benefits extracted by belligerents.

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The Contradictions of Humanitarian Aid. When confronted with a conflict requiring practical resolution, the UN and its member states tend—if only as a manifestation of what the British call the “do-something syndrome”—to resort to military-humanitarian operations. Military-humanitarian operations are a way of responding to contingencies whose political settlement is intractable. The inherent contradiction here has been widely criticized, by the media—which themselves contribute to interventionism—and by humanitarian organizations, as well as by the belligerents themselves.

Humanitarian help offered in this way jeopardizes the neutrality of the states offering the assistance. Humanitarian help extended through military intervention cannot be neutral; if it were, it would likely be useless. Without military support, persuasion against violence is ineffective. This is why the concept of “impartiality” discussed in doctrinal manuals must not be confused with neutrality. Impartiality does not rule out military action; in fact, it authorizes such actions to enforce the mandate of the intervening force. The issue is, then, the mandate itself—that is, political will.

The difficulties of humanitarian operations stem from the large number of actors: populations, the media, the host-nation government, potential assisting nations (and their relationships), humanitarian organizations, and perpetrators of violence. A mandate force is only one of many elements, each of which works according to its own logic. Major dislocations in the management of actions in a theater are a frequent result.

For instance, access to endangered populations is the top priority of aid organizations; to gain it, they have to accept compromises with belligerents. For armed forces, the security issue constitutes the priority; to impose this constraint on aid organizations, however, would limit their effectiveness, which accounts for much of their desire to remain independent of mandate forces. For armed factions, control of humanitarian aid is a way to buy allegiance or support from populations, or to impose control. Thus, it becomes a strategic instrument, like weapons, military alliances, or support networks beyond the state’s boundaries.²⁴

Military-Humanitarian Operations. Because political decision making takes time, military-humanitarian operations are usually implemented on an emergency basis, though the situation may have long

been deteriorating.²⁵ Therefore, military-humanitarian operations can be defined as operations designed to end, on short notice, situations posing imminent or actual danger to populations—that is, to secure the survival of great numbers of people.

Armed forces, with their equipment (especially command and control), structure, and readiness, constitute a powerful, organized resource for dealing with crisis situations. They are supported continually by specialized logistical and medical infrastructures. They can respond to aggression of any kind, and they can deploy equipment adapted to diverse circumstances. They can set up rapidly deployable telecommunication networks, as well as reestablish blocked routes and regulate flows of vital supplies.

Armed forces can assume four distinct roles (of which the first two can be performed in either a conflict or nonconflict context). They can conduct *emergency humanitarian operations*, to help populations in distress by delivering assistance themselves, or in cooperation with international and state aid organizations. Second, *emergency military intervention* assures the survival of populations by halting exactions and atrocities. It may be associated with the third role, *protection of humanitarian organizations*, their goods and people. Finally, there is *evacuation of noncombatants*, a part of the general humanitarian activity known in French as a *mission d'humanité*. Even in nonhumanitarian operations, armed forces may have to execute emergency evacuation operations.

Each of these roles corresponds to specific actions: evacuation of zones, gathering populations, assuring the security of humanitarian corridors, denying flight, and direct or indirect humanitarian assistance, as well as the protection of humanitarian actors. Success requires a common vision as to objectives and the responsibilities of the mandated forces and the other elements. Without such a shared vision, it is impossible to organize synergy, in term of know-how, equipment, and networks.

Information Control

The ability to communicate and exchange information is a key element in settling a conflict. It requires a control of communication networks, of information, and of their effects on the environment. A conflict can be analyzed as a disruption of the vast web of networks

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already described; their stability needs to be reestablished. To control the information that circulates on these networks is essential for bringing back peace, whether by mastering violence or by coercive actions.

A Comprehensive View of Information. We are entering a century in which political, economic, social, and cultural visions are different from those that prevailed in the twentieth century. Nations will survive by their ability to integrate information from all sources and to think productively about it, forecasting and choosing the most appropriate solutions to problems. Political and economic criteria will not be the only relevant ones.

The first problem in the definition of *control* of information is to differentiate it from “information warfare.” This concept, inspired by Alvin and Heidi Toffler’s theory of the age of information, has been developed by the American armed forces in order to improve the art of war.²⁶ But as American doctrine describes it, information warfare embraces all aspects of an operation and therefore cannot usefully be delimited. Secondly, vocabulary also represents a difficulty. The terms “information” and “communication” have several meanings, and their use often causes confusion.

The third difficulty stems from the coexistence of three cultures (as defined by Pierre Levy) according to dominant modes of communication. First there is the “age of oral communication” in human societies, in which intelligence is identified with memory or knowledge of customs and tales; culture is transmitted through repetition, and time is perceived as cyclic. Then comes the “age of writing.” Here, intelligence is perceived as reasoning ability: knowledge becomes theoretical, the object of analysis; time corresponds with history and is perceived as linear. This second stage represents a written culture. Third comes the “computer era.” Intelligence lies in the ability to anticipate: knowledge is based on modeling and simulation; time is potential, and culture results from the collection of information. Thinking is elaborated through associations or superimposition of ideas.

The last difficulty lies in the evolution of communication means and their impact. The Persian Gulf War revealed how powerful an influence the media, especially television, has become for national decision-making processes and the conduct of operations. Media

support is necessary to any military operation, especially a humanitarian intervention, as their vision of a conflict shapes public opinion.

But with the development of the Internet, another tendency is growing. Through the linking of autonomous but networked sites, the public has access to many sources of information, albeit with attendant risks of disinformation or manipulation. Thus the Internet is also an actor, able to create information and broadcast it, encourage discussion groups, and thus exert influence and pressure.

The Information Cycle. The Tofflers deserve credit for revealing the size of the gap between the problems created by technology and the collective debate on these issues. This can be explained by the difficulty of departing from a vision of knowledge associated with written culture. Still, the military cannot isolate itself; it has to understand the multiple dimensions of the technological evolution now in progress. At issue is not only technological change but how one primarily understands events, solves problems, and acts in a conflict.

Information can be considered as *action*: it shapes the environment and makes it change. Information can be distinguished from more general action, however, in that it is directed especially at the psychological domain. Communication aims at influencing, even transforming, the environment. In short, we can say that information is the source of decision, which is then applied both through actions to shape the context according to goals, and through further information intended to give a meaning to those actions.

To control information involves making the environment more transparent, by identifying networks in different dimensions; obtaining a more precise knowledge of the current situation; anticipating future situations and the possible evolution of the various networks and dimensions; choosing a strategy or an initiative, with the help of decision-support systems; taking action in physical dimensions; using digitized information; and giving meaning to those actions by various means of communication or through psychological operations, if appropriate.

Intelligence and Command. Knowledge is the key to making right choices. Armed forces have always considered intelligence a major combat-support function; in peacetime, it not only supports operations but plays a role in deterrence and the prevention of conflict.

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The “transparency of the battlefield” promised by new intelligence collection systems does not solve the problem of how to select the right intelligence for mastering violence. What categories of information are relevant? Surveillance of perpetrators of violence is not easy, since they may be decentralized in organization, even immersed in the population.

At the strategic level, intelligence has to be updated continuously in order to prevent crises, monitor them if they arise, and prepare for possible military interventions. Intelligence analysts must often infer transnational networks, in their human, financial, and logistics dimensions; knowledge of such larger structures is necessary to any decision to commit forces. More traditionally, strategic intelligence also includes geographical data about the theater, historical background, economics, and general characteristics of the belligerents. Operational intelligence, for its part, includes precise information on perpetrators of violence, conditions in the theater (such as terrain, weather, and infrastructure), and human and economic dimensions.

However, information is never complete. There is a danger of delaying a decision forever. In fact, a good decision anticipates the possible evolution of the situation instead of waiting for more information. This means that knowledge is not sufficient. The commander has to transform it, through reasoning, into understanding. This process is especially complex in asymmetric conflict. Changes are often difficult to perceive, since they are mainly psychological. The impact of negotiations, lobbying, or media is even more difficult to identify and monitor than the movement of forces. Still, such phenomena may be decisive.

However, anticipating the future remains essential, and this requires imagination, rationality, lucidity, and a sense of psychology—all aimed at producing a few plausible hypotheses simple enough to help in decision making. The decision-making process ends with a choice among perceived possibilities. It must be based on a number of criteria arranged according to their importance. Foreseeing the impact of the decision is even more important in an asymmetric conflict than in a symmetrical one. For this, the wise commander tries to identify the feedback mechanism that will provide the earliest reliable indication of the appropriateness of the choice he has made, so he may revisit the decision if necessary.

The Psychological Dimension. In France, psychological warfare is viewed with misgivings, since it has negative associations with propaganda. In the French context, it has a connotation of an ideological war, in which “hearts and minds” are conquered through manipulation, intimidation, and indoctrination. However, the fact that the concept of psychological action does not have a major place in the strategy of that democratic country does not mean that we should neglect the psychological dimension of operations.

In the types of conflict where Western armed forces intervene, the belligerents themselves may undertake psychological action of a hostile character: propaganda and social manipulation are used, sometimes to generate extreme violence. Democracies cannot respond in kind; their psychological actions must be consistent with the values they promote throughout the operation. Democracy requires that any military operation be explained and justified, before national and international opinion and to people in the theater of operations. This is a first-order task of psychological action. Another is refuting an adversary’s propaganda, especially within the theater. In a conflict, intimidation or deception is also to be expected from a resolute adversary. While responsibility for countering these actions is at the political-strategic level, the theater commander is confronted on a daily basis with the necessity to act and react in this field. Psychological actions must be part of his planning.

The main purpose of psychological action is to give meaning to the operation, so as to make it acceptable to the groups concerned. “Meaning” shapes the environment in ways favorable to the desired political end-state. This notion is important when intervention occurs in a complex conflict wherein each belligerent can claim legitimacy. The reason for the intervention derives from responses to the belligerents’ claims, that is, the meaning assigned to them by the international community. In turn, this determines the kind of operation undertaken: in the easiest but least frequent case, an act considered to be aggression is punished by a peace-enforcement operation.

Psychological action in an operation to master violence conveys the operation’s meaning by giving rational explanations for the operation, based on the interests and values to be defended, and by generating emotional support for the success of the operation, often by showing a direction, expressed in the political end-state. Psychological action is thus an effort to convince the warring parties and the

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populace that acceptance of the envisioned end state is in their ultimate interests. This requires that the following basic principles be respected. First, freedom of thought and expression, which constitutes the basis of democracy, cannot be restricted. Second, accuracy is essential if the message is to be convincing; it is not always necessary or advisable to provide all information available, but it is always dangerous to lie. Third, the credibility of the message must be ensured by its congruence with the actions taken by the intervening force. Finally, the message and courses of action have to be tailored to the objective and to the targeted groups, especially if a designated adversary exists.

Control of Forces

“Control of forces” is the prevention, by threat of force, of direct or indirect violence exercised by belligerents against populations, groups, or the environment. The issue is the appropriate degree of force to apply, since the international contingent desires not to achieve a military victory but to compel the adversary to give up his violent aggression, without triggering a war.

Limits on the Control of Forces. In an all-out war, military force is directed at an enemy’s centers of gravity, as defined by Clausewitz—that is, the basis of his moral and material power. The destruction of these centers would put him in such a difficult position that he would have to abandon his aims. The belligerent’s centers of gravity can be strategic or operational; they can be political and military decision makers, bases of operation, logistical resources, economic facilities, communication networks, the fighting spirit of troops and the population, or military forces themselves.

A deliberate assault on these centers of gravity is a major political issue, since it jeopardizes the political power of the targeted belligerent. In a peace-operation setting, the Western task force could easily make itself an enemy by such an attack. On what, then, should the coercive effort be concentrated?²⁷

One possibility is *coherence points (points de coherence)*, the bases of the operational cohesion of an armed organization at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. They could encompass the support facilities of a military force; its communication lines, disruption of

which would bring combat action to a halt; combat-support functions crucial to cohesion (intelligence, command, logistics, weapons capable of fires in depth, air defense, etc.); and morale, which can be hindered by undermining the political position of leaders. An attack directed at tactical and operational coherence points may intimidate a belligerent, demonstrating the superiority of the international force without initiating an (always dangerous) escalation process.

In parallel, or if the action directed against coherence points is not sufficient, military effects could be focused on the most significant *decisive points*. These are targets whose destruction, neutralization, or seizure would give direct access to operational centers of gravity. If the international force can seize a decisive point, it will be able to impede the adversary's maneuver without damaging its potential power. Decisive points may include the weak points of the adversary; these vulnerabilities can be increased by application of minimum force (for example, by disrupting a poorly organized combat-support function). A second possibility is key terrain. The seizure of dominating positions reinforces land-space control, facilitates the intervening force's own operations, and inhibits the options of the targeted party. A third decisive point would be positions (supply areas, tactical lines of communication, defense areas) that the adversary believes invulnerable.

The control of forces is a duel of wills.²⁸ The key is to convince the opponent to give up his strategy of violence by demonstrating the determination of the mandated force. Such a result is achievable only through understanding the adversary's political purposes, strategy, perceptions, and reactions. Among the most important things to understand are:

- How he expects to reach political goals and military objectives. His likely actions can be inferred by examining his military capabilities and how he has used violence in the past to realize his goals.
- The adversary's estimate of the capabilities and determination of the international force. It is crucial to understand what effect he believes the international force can have on his own power and on his freedom of action in the local political competition.
- The adversary's concerns about how his own domestic enemies evaluate his strength. A measured attack against what the

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international task force deems to be merely a cohesion point could be viewed by the adversary as an attack on a center of gravity if it undermines his position in the eyes of his local enemies. Such a miscalculation could push the adversary to extremely violent action.

Psychological perceptions, ideological visions, and rationality are the key factors for success in such a duel. Control of forces is an art, a more sophisticated undertaking than the usual military tactics, techniques, and procedures, because so many factors (each usually quite difficult to assess) are involved.

Control of Forces at the Operational Level. Military actions involving control of forces are mainly conceived and conducted at the operational level—in army terms, above the division. This is a substantial challenge, since a miscalculation of the belligerent's reactions may oblige the force commander to go beyond his initial goal.

To avoid mission creep, the proposed action must meet a number of conditions. First, it must be a response to a reprehensible or threatening aggression, or a particularly blameworthy action, perhaps a war crime. The response is a "mailed fist," demonstrating the determination of the intervening force to fight the upsurge of violence. Second, it must be limited in time and space—swift and commensurate in scope with the desired effect, which is to create shock in the mind of the targeted belligerent. Third, there can be no risk of misinterpretation. It must be perceived neither as an irreversible movement to war nor as a commitment in favor of one party against others. Fourth, it should target a symbolic objective, one that will draw favorable reactions in the international public opinion, and it must do so without collateral damage. The precision of strikes (especially by air) is at a premium. Any military action that kills or injures innocent people or their property will produce countereffects and must be guarded against.

Further, the action should be accompanied by intense land-space control, to ensure security for international units and preclude retaliation by the adversary. The action must also be announced, but nonetheless it must be implemented by surprise. The option of resorting to force must have been clearly stated. The psychological effect produced on this occasion is the first step toward control of

forces. An ultimatum is a good way to preserve political and military credibility, but the concrete course of military actions cannot be revealed. In certain circumstances, a punishment effect must prevail over psychological considerations; in case of a particularly egregious aggression, the force should immediately go into action. Finally, channels of negotiation must be kept open. Combat action must always give way to negotiation when required. In fact, the point is to induce all parties to negotiate, not to break up relations between them.

Control of Force Options. Several types of military action are available for control of forces. *Intimidation* is the last resort before recourse to coercion. Its purpose is to increase pressure on the belligerent in order to forestall violence. It should give him only two options: give up his aggression or clearly opt for deliberate action against the mandate force. As a practical matter, intimidation requires obvious changes in military disposition—reinforcement of security, intelligence and control activities, and emplacement of heavy weapons; it also involves a conspicuous increase of ground-space control activities. It may include new denials of air, maritime, and ground areas as well as sanctions in reaction to violations. Communications need to be tightly coordinated between command levels, discriminating between adversaries, populations, and friends. The ideal confrontation will be precisely orchestrated, capitalizing on the control of information and intelligence. It will prove that the international force knows perfectly well the military disposition of its adversary.

A *warning maneuver* is meant to demonstrate to the adversary his own vulnerability and the possible consequences for his operational and political credibility. Military force is applied at the coherence points of the targeted belligerent. The coherence points must be carefully selected and the psychological effect of their destruction precisely assessed. This is a major challenge, for which two options exist. One is to strike targets related to the reprehensible action (for example, propaganda can be fought by neutralizing information or telecommunication infrastructures); the other is to attack high-value coherence points anywhere in the theater of operations.

The psychological effect on the adversary varies according to the geographical distribution of the strikes. A set of very localized strikes can be perceived as reflecting an intention to stop some particular

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action undertaken by the belligerent, whereas an attack on points scattered across the adversary's territory can be taken as a demonstration of the superiority of the international force. Psychological shock can also be optimized through the choice of strike assets: stand-off actions with "smart" munitions, aircraft raids, or insertion of special forces.

The *inhibition maneuver* involves weakening the political power of the belligerent by crippling his military capabilities, placing the targeted party in a critical situation in comparison to his political competitors. The international force thereby gains a decisive edge over him. Such an action is accompanied by a set of nonmilitary measures, such as: a diplomatic initiative aiming at isolating the belligerent from external support and increasing pressure on him; a media campaign stressing his personal accountability for actions and situations (with the aims of increasing his political isolation and supporting the preparation of an international indictment); and long-term economic measures (embargoes).

The military power of the mandated force is directed at the decisive points of the adversary so that he cannot accomplish an ongoing or planned aggression. This military demonstration of superiority is also designed to convince him to give up his action at once, if he does not wish to fight in unfavorable conditions. The key factors for success are surprise and force dominance. These conditions are close enough to classic military operations to warrant no further discussion.

The *deception maneuver* can be carried out on its own, to prevent the belligerent from taking some envisioned action, or to accompany the actions above. The "aimpoint" is the mindset of the adversary, his thinking. One can create and foster a false impression. This type of deception may be used to discredit the adversary or support a warning or inhibiting action. It involves some "demonstration" designed to keep the adversary's attention from the actual, concealed maneuver. It can also foster uncertainty, impeding the adversary's understanding of the situation or of the international force's intentions. To maintain uncertainty, the international force disposition should be frequently modified. Disinformation can be conveyed through communication channels to reinforce the adversary's feeling of uncertainty.

Notes

1. An operating mode is "the general manner of operating in a theater of operations in order to reach one or several objectives selected at the strategic level." French Army Staff, *Army Operations in a Joint Force Context* (Paris: 4 November 1998), pp. 2–19.

2. *Concept intégrateur* is a paradigm that provides several communities with a common vision of a society and a common way of life.

3. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, pp. 22–49.

4. Paul M. Belbutowski, "Strategic Implications of Cultures in Conflict," *Parameters*, Spring 1996, pp. 32–42.

5. The notion of ethnic conflict has been widely studied since the end of the 1980s. See Michael E. Brown, "Causes and Implications of Ethnic Conflicts," in *Ethnic Conflicts and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 5–26; Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and Richard H. Shultz, Jr., *Ethnic Conflict and Regional Instability: Implications for U.S. Policy and Army Roles and Missions* (Carlisle Barracks, Penna.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1994), p. 359; and David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear," *International Security*, Fall 1996, pp. 41–75.

6. Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiralling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security*, Fall 1996, pp. 108–38. See also François Thual, "Les conflits identitaires," *Ellipses*, January 1995, p. 192.

7. In such a situation, the role of the local media after the collapse of the government is crucial in the development of the nationalistic grievances of the faction. See Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security*, Fall 1996, pp. 5–40.

8. Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, no. 16, 1969, pp. 167–91.

9. Our taxonomy of violence based on its cause, motivation, and purpose is inspired by: W. J. M. Mackensie, *Power, Violence, Decision* (New York: Penguin, 1975); Fred H. von der Mehden, *Comparative Political Violence* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970); Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970); John Dollard et al., *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press for the Institute of Human Relations, and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1939); and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1968).

10. Carolyn Nordstrom and Robben Antonius, CGM, *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992), p. 299.

11. Michael H. Abbott [Col., USA], "The Army and the Drug War: Politics or National Security?" *Parameters*, December 1988, pp. 95–112.

12. The psychological effects of this kind of violence on individuals are described in a ten-year study of the Lebanese civil war: Dr. Adnan Houballah, *Le virus de la violence: La guerre est en chacun de nous* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), p. 281.

13. Ralph Peters, "The New Warrior Class," *Parameters*, Summer 1994, pp. 16–26.

14. Lanza Del Vasto, *Techniques de la non violence* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1973).

15. The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: May 1997), p. 31; and John M. Shalikhvili [Gen., USA], *A Military Strategy for a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Staff, February 1997).

16. *Livre blanc sur la défense, la documentation Française* (Paris: 1994). See also President Jacques Chirac, "Mes priorités diplomatiques," *Politique internationale*, November 1997.

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17. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 30 June 1992), p. 57.

18. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to the Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 1994).

19. Roger Brunet, *Le territoire dans les turbulences* (Paris: Reclus, 1990); and Jean-Michel Hoerner, *Géopolitique des territoires*, Collection Études (Perpignan, Fr.: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 1996).

20. The taxonomy on human masses is inspired by Elias Canetti, *Masse et puissance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), and Serge Moscovici, *L'âge des foules* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).

21. Gustav Dänikar, *The Guardian Soldier: On the Nature and Use of Future Armed Forces*, Research Papers 36 (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research [hereafter UNIDIR], 1995), p. 141.

22. Fred Tanner, "Consensual Versus Coercive Disarmament," in *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: The Issues* (Geneva: UNIDIR, Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project, 1996), pp. 169–204, 243. See also Swadesh Rana, *Small Arms and Intrastate Conflicts*, Research Papers 34 (Geneva: UNIDIR, March 1995), p. 52.

23. Andrei Raevsky, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Aspects of Psychological Operations and Intelligence* (Geneva: UNIDIR, Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project, 1996), p. 46.

24. François Jean and Jean-Christophe Ruffin, *Economie des guerres civiles* (Paris: Hachette, 1996).

25. Chris Seiple, *The U.S. Military/NGO Relationship in Humanitarian Interventions* (Carlisle Barracks, Penna.: U.S. Army War College, Peacekeeping Institute, Center for Strategic Leadership, 1996), p. 231.

26. Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (New York: Little, Brown, 1993).

27. French military doctrine depicts the strategic center of gravity as a vital center: "The sources of the adversary's will or essential part of his ability to fight and sustain the combat. Destruction or neutralisation of these strategic level objectives will sooner or later defeat the adversary or force him to negotiate an acceptable solution." The operational center of gravity, the *centre déterminant*, is defined as "the main part of the adversary's combat power at the operational level, which, if attacked and seized or eliminated, will force him to give up his action on the theater of operations." French Army Staff, pp. 3-7, 3-8.

28. The idea of the clash of opposing wills is depicted in many places, including Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987).