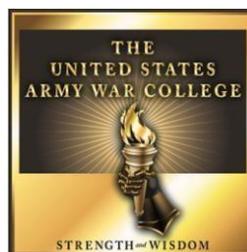


The Importance of Feasibility in Strategy and Operational Art

by

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Class of 2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188		
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2016		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Importance of Feasibility in Strategy and Operational Art				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Butler United States Army				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel James A. Frick				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited. Please consider submitting to DTIC for worldwide availability? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (student check one) Project Adviser recommends DTIC submission? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (PA check one)					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 5578					
14. ABSTRACT The concept of feasibility is a central, but often underappreciated, part of the planning processes and resulting senior leader dialogues that allow civil and military leaders to make difficult choices. Identification of flexible military options demands that political, strategic and operational echelons coordinate to maintain the means-ways-ends balance. Discussions and synchronization of means allows military leaders to know what is within the realm of the possible and enables a discussion of ways with civilian leadership. The narrative of this paper seeks to explain some of the more salient points that allow senior leaders to accomplish good feasibility assessments. The selected historic examples illuminate where many of these points either aligned to provide the civilian-military leadership team with the flexibility to meet the final desired end state, or where non-adherence to feasibility assessments resulted in a less savory end.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Civilian-Military Relationship, Strategy, Feasibility Assessment, Force Flow					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

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(5578 words)

Abstract

The concept of feasibility is a central, but often underappreciated, part of the planning processes and resulting senior leader dialogues that allow civil and military leaders to make difficult choices. Identification of flexible military options demands that political, strategic and operational echelons coordinate to maintain the means-ways-ends balance. Discussions and synchronization of means allows military leaders to know what is within the realm of the possible and enables a discussion of ways with civilian leadership. The narrative of this paper seeks to explain some of the more salient points that allow senior leaders to accomplish good feasibility assessments. The selected historic examples illuminate where many of these points either aligned to provide the civilian-military leadership team with the flexibility to meet the final desired end state, or where non-adherence to feasibility assessments resulted in a less savory end.

The Importance of Feasibility in Strategy and Operational Art

I tell this story to illustrate the truth of the statement I heard long ago in the Army: Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower¹

The U.S. Army faced a new, prolonged challenge in the Philippines following the seizure of Manila in 1898. Washington's policy for the region led to the Army and Navy coordinating a basic long-term strategy directing the Army to pacify the Filipinos and support the fortification of Luzon as an expeditionary staging area for the Navy. Four significant events further shaped the region militarily over the next twenty years as a potential adversary emerged. Foremost was Russia's two-fold defeat in 1905 at the hands of the Japanese. Consequently, the 1907 Japanese invasion scare reinforced the long-term belief that America and Japan would eventually go to war in the Pacific. Exasperating these tensions was the continuous change in naval strategy due to technological advances² and the rise of the Imperial Japanese Navy. The final event was the post-World War I agreement giving Japan possession of Germany's mandate islands in the Central Pacific. By 1920, the Army's mission to defend the archipelago was outdated and untenable.³

Politically, public opinion constrained the Army to a small standing land force and also provided minimal funding for American-backed Filipino efforts to create an indigenous force. Despite these factors, the Army created operational plans insisting on immediate reinforcement if war came to the Pacific. The Army and Navy War Colleges, which acted as service think tanks contributing as adjuncts to the service planning staffs, clearly understood this dilemma when devising both the Orange plan and the

subsequent Rainbow plans. Resultantly, during the 1930s, the Joint Board adopted the Navy's informed stance of defending the Hawaii-Panama-Alaska line.⁴

Field commanders in the Philippines also recognized the dire situation. They, therefore, formulated plans for a delaying action designed to hold out against a Japanese invasion for as long as possible. From an Army standpoint, these forlorn efforts included routinely using mobility estimates that were unachievable early in the war, and wrongly assumed that the Navy would fight through in time to relieve the forces holding out on Luzon.

Not surprising, after forty years of planning, Washington's strategic shortsightedness culminated with the American Army in the Pacific essentially in an isolated position. Conversely, time was increasingly on Tokyo's side due to the modernization of their military power and the benefits of membership in the winning coalition of World War I. Until December 1941, Washington continued to believe that its economic power and available forces in the Pacific were sufficient to deter Japanese military aggression against United States possessions, presuming the Asian militaries were not equal to their Western counterparts. Most important in this case, Washington leadership failed to recognize that the solution for this infeasible endeavor involved a minor change in policy and resourcing regarding the transition and status of the Philippines. Such action would not have prevented World War II, but it would have made over 15,000 American soldiers available to fight on better terms early in the war.⁵ If military planners had truly critiqued these Asia-Pacific approaches to determine their feasibility for execution against the expected adversary, their leaders could have better

informed the political leaderships on more viable options. This was a hard-learned planning lesson the American military should not need to relearn.

Today, as throughout American history, planning is a fundamental senior leader and staff function. Furthermore, planning is exponentially complex as one goes up the military and civilian chains of command. Using the Ends-Ways-Means calculus of strategy development as a backdrop, this essay focuses on the importance of means testing (referred to as feasibility) within this extremely intricate environment to guide senior military leader discussions between commands and with political leadership. The concept of feasibility is a central, but often underappreciated, part of the planning processes which enable senior leader dialogues that allow civil and military leaders to make difficult choices. Identification of flexible military options demands that political, strategic and operational echelons coordinate to maintain the means-ways-ends balance. Discussions and synchronization of means allows military leaders to know what is within the realm of the possible and enables a discussion of ways with civilian leadership. The narrative of this paper seeks to explain some of the more salient points that allow senior leaders to accomplish good feasibility assessments.

Complexity in Planning and the Importance of Feasibility Testing

Since arriving on the world stage following the Spanish-American War, and increasingly since World War II, the American military has sought greater coordination to ensure that joint, combined and interagency teammates align to meet United States political objectives. Senior leaders and their planners spend years in school and in the field, where military art and science come together, gaining experience at the operational level. Senior leader education and practice focuses on understanding the intricacies of the strategic level of war and the importance of maintaining good civil-

military relationships. Despite these efforts, military leaders struggle to provide their bosses and partners with the right information on available options and associated risks when considering the use of force to achieve political ends.

To provide better counsel and decision-making, military leaders must understand how all echelons of planning nest⁶ together at the strategic level to achieve the desired end. When a joint warfighting commander creates an operational plan articulating a maneuver, each supporting command generates its own scheme of maneuver and/or movement to assist the operational commander in completing the assigned mission. The resulting aggregate capability requirements necessitate synchronization and prioritization. Done properly, these actions allow for a comprehensive discernment of feasibility. This can only occur after completing planning at each level.⁷

Synchronization and prioritization of capabilities applies at four levels before a strategic plan can be considered complete. Working upward and out, the first of these is at the operational warfighting level. The second is at the Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) level. The third is between the GCCs and FCCs (Functional Component Commands) that support a particular crisis or contingency. The fourth involves the impact on other areas of the world, either within the GCC area of responsibility (AOR) or with another GCC AOR. The supported GCC is responsible for the first two levels; the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) is responsible for the latter two.

When planning within this four level hierarchy, using specific terms to describe the scope and scale of a particular plan adds valuable clarity during creation of executable plans. Activities at the strategic level of war are framed via national strategy, theater strategy, and strategic plan⁸. Similarly, actions at the operational level

are described in contingency, campaign, operational, and supporting plans. These strategies and plans are not executable without synchronization. It is remarkably hard to do because of the number of plans in simultaneous execution that require nesting and synchronization (see figure 1 as an example). The integration of interagency and coalition partners at the various echelons further complicates this process. How hard could it be to win a war?

The answer, of course, is very hard. Strategic and operational level planning involves the blending of art and science to creatively combine means and ways to meet the desired end. Using the operational planning processes, each organization invariably produces its own plan with an associated list of requirements, including authorities and capabilities. Authorities include mission command relations, rules of engagement, deployment and employment guidance, mobilization authorities, access authorities for foreign locations, and the budget necessary to conduct operations. Capabilities describe tactical units, echelons of headquarters, and staff augmentation. Senior civilian and military leaders cannot approve these requirements, and the overall concept of their employment, until they pass the various litmus tests designed to show balance between ends, ways, and means.

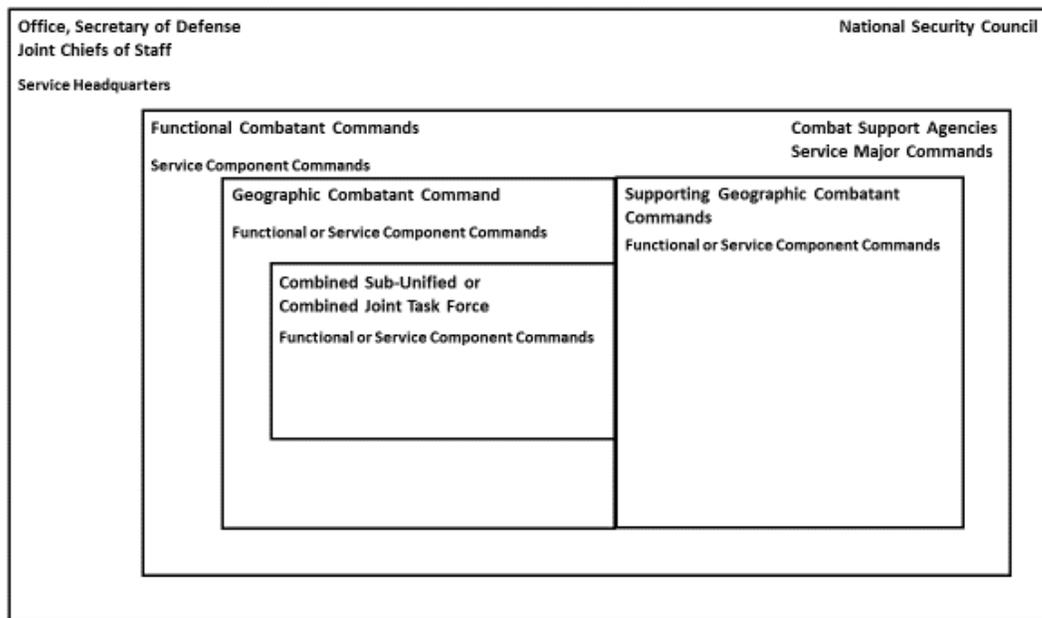


Figure 1. The Interlocking Organizations Responsible for Military Planning⁹

At both the strategic and operational levels, all planning must demonstrate this balance by passing litmus tests for feasibility, acceptability, and suitability.¹⁰ Feasibility, the focus of this essay, is defined as, “the joint operation plan review criterion for assessing whether the assigned mission can be accomplished using available resources within the time contemplated by the plan.”¹¹ Feasibility, as a test of means, is primarily the province of the military. The onus is on the military to apply resources correctly and in time to achieve campaign objectives. Testing the ways and linking them to means requires a broader and more inclusive civil-military dialogue. Focusing on feasibility therefore creates realistic military options and promotes a robust discussion of ways in order to create a coherent strategy. The good news is that existing staff processes already promote good feasibility testing.

Since inception of the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System (JOPES) under the leadership of Secretary McNamara¹², the Time-Phased Force

Deployment Data (TPFDD -- pronounced "TIP-FID") analysis has provided the primary test for operational planning feasibility. This process seeks to align resources to mission requirements in both time and space. It determines where 'means' will come from, how they will get to a prescribed location, and when they will be there. This process is a true validation of feasibility since it qualifies the ability to provide the 'means' consistent with the 'ways' and 'ends' for mission accomplishment.¹³

The combination of written plans and JOPES data allows the Joint Planning and Execution Community (JPEC) to assess joint feasibility for contingency plans. The Joint Staff defines JPEC as:

Those headquarters commands, and agencies involved in the training, preparation, movement, reception, employment, support, and sustainment of military forces assigned or committed to a theater of operations or objective area. It usually consists of the Joint Staff, Services, Service major commands (including the Service wholesale logistic commands), unified commands (and their certain Service component commands), Joint Task Forces (as applicable), Defense Logistics Agency, and other Defense Agencies (e.g., Defense Intelligence Agency) as may be appropriate to a given scenario.¹⁴

Viewed through this lens, the feasibility of nested plans, or lack thereof, becomes evident to senior leaders. Before the initiation of JOPES, information regarding feasibility wasn't necessarily different, but it was certainly harder to analyze. Today, planners tend to suffer from a lack of understanding of JOPES, and fail to realize that plans are not complete until they assess the TPFDD as feasible during the planning process's formal review period.¹⁵ Correspondingly, senior leaders are prone to paying too little attention to this synchronization process, and the time and effort required to establish feasibility correctly.

Responding to a crisis or contingency triggers another important process that supports feasibility. This is the Global Force Management Board (GFMB) process, run

by the Joint Staff, J3 (the Director of Operations). This process provides the Secretary of Defense, operational commanders, and service component commanders with a feasibility assessment through the coordination of deployment actions, and the assessment of risk. It entails the use of contingency plan TPFDDs and/or Requests for Forces (RFFs) that seek approval to deploy and/or employ forces inter- or intra-theater. Approved actions result in adjustments to the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP)¹⁶ and detailed follow-on coordination. These decisions result in JOPES actions, with information being added or modified on an existing TPFDD (for an ongoing operation), or the creation of a new TPFDD (for a new operation). An essential part of altering or creating a TPFDD is understanding the movement priority for the new capability so that it either arrives in time to meet the commander's requirement, or allows time for the commander to adjust his scheme of maneuver to meet various political or military constraints. With few exceptions, JOPES eventually encapsulates all movement.¹⁷

Creating nested plans capable of supporting warfighting commanders is a difficult process requiring a significant amount of coordination. As discussed, mechanisms exist which promote coordination to test feasibility, but there also exists an unfortunate lack of understanding of these mechanisms and their critical role in planning and decision cycles. Accurate feasibility assessments shared between military and civilian leaders result in better options and better decisions, but only if leaders know what to consider when testing means.

Important Factors in Feasibility Assessments

Janine Davidson, a former Deputy Assist Secretary of Defense for Plans, recently wrote compellingly that civilian and military leadership need to push past the

personality and cultural differences, which seem to plague the civil-military relationship.¹⁸ Politicians and military leaders have different perspectives on conflict, particularly in limited war scenarios. Both parties are pragmatic, but for different reasons. Senior military leaders often look at conflict from a longer-term perspective of potential outcomes related to military action, focusing on the risks service members will face to achieve a political objective. When military action is approved, they prefer to use maximum force as rapidly as possible by attacking the estimated enemy center of gravity.¹⁹ Political leaders, however, are generally concerned with maintaining options, minimizing resource allocation, limiting the duration of conflict, and preserving the domestic political agenda; and they are keenly aware of the next election cycle. Neither perspective is exclusively right or wrong. Points of view simply differ and must be taken into account as decisions related to planning and execution are made.

By assessing feasibility properly, senior military and civilian leaders both understand what the military intends to do, as well as, the potential options and risks associated with strategic and operational decisions. Military officers who are able to discuss feasibility in a concise, accurate, and logical manner promote a better interagency dialogue providing the clarity needed by civilian leaders. If civilian leaders understand how the military assesses feasibility, then the discussion of ways, which is at the heart of the civil-military relationship, will also improve.

Prescribing the solution to promote better plans and better dialogue is easy. Actually doing it is complex and time consuming. Feasibility is not a simple math problem; information contained in the plans and in JOPES requires interpretive evaluation, with a two-fold goal. The first is to work through executability. The second

is to stimulate a better ends-ways-means dialogue between political and military decision makers through the lens the military knows best. In an effort to induce these goals, senior leaders should keep a few feasibility factors in mind to promote good feasibility assessments. The following list of factors is neither comprehensive, nor are they distinctly separate from each other. The doctrinal definition of feasibility prompts us to consider time and available resources as critical elements. However, these two factors alone do not adequately determine if a plan is feasible. Resources are also applied against a thinking enemy and within a decision space created when politics dictate the importance of the end. Together, these four factors – time, enemy actions, resource availability, and preservation of civ-mil decision space – create a more complete feasibility evaluation using the existing processes.

Time

It is far too easy to ignore time constraints and simply plan to deploy forces as rapidly as possible in a crisis. This ignores the fog and friction of war at both the strategic and operational levels. As discussed earlier, the concept of the duration of time required to execute a campaign or operation can vary dramatically between civilian and military leaders. Similarly, opinions can vary between military leaders due to their individual service beliefs, operational backgrounds, and education.

The pre-war planning in the Pacific, as previously discussed, presents an opportune example of military planners not adequately addressing time when determining plan feasibility. Military leadership did not accurately account for the time necessary to stand off a threat to the Philippines, nor did they determine the time required to deploy reinforcements. Failing to consider time as a factor was significantly more than understanding the physics of mustering and moving forces to an operating

area, it was a failure to acknowledge the time required to make political decisions to successfully mount a defense. Resultantly, military strategy aligned within civilian policies that essentially doomed an isolated U.S. presence in the Pacific.

At the operational level, the relationship between time, friendly actions and enemy actions is the key to feasibility testing. Appreciating how time factors into enemy and friendly decision cycles supports control of escalation, de-escalation, and operational tempo. This requires strategic leaders who understand how political decision making occurs for the involved parties. Simply put, if friendly forces cannot arrive when required, there is a point at which the plan becomes too risky, and therefore infeasible.

Enemy Actions

According to an old adage, the enemy always gets a vote. Throughout a conflict, the interplay of the opposing sides alters the application of means. For Washington, this has traditionally been more acute during the early phases of conflict due to the character of American democracy, and the nature of its foreign policy. Additionally, the post-industrial world allows America's potential enemies to act and react faster than Washington can respond to a crisis. The ability to control the narrative via social media, and the proliferation of weapons technology once exclusively owned by the U.S. military, complicates the application of means to resolve a problem. Likewise, enemy reactions in the area of operation can be more rapid, particularly early in the conflict, before U.S. forces can mass.

Defining who the enemy is, or will be, and how they may act, presents another unique challenge for the military. As Mike Matheny points out in his book *Carrying the Fight to the Enemy*, operational planners often need to make strategic level

assumptions when working to create feasible concepts to fight a potential enemy.²⁰ Because relatively few people are involved in the pre-war planning processes, these political and mobilization assumptions tend to be grossly inaccurate in the opaque strategic environment. This is further complicated by the American public often not accepting the reality of potential threats recognized by the military. Bottom-line: for a plan to be feasible, the application of resources must have a reasonable chance of counting an adversary's actions and capabilities. This is another example where pre-WWII planning for the Pacific theater did not adequately account for Japanese military strength, tactics and will. It was infeasible for U.S. forces to respond within the available resource and time constraints to thwart this threat.

In context, this means that strategic and operational planning efforts should follow worst-case deployment timelines. Psychologically, this is important because it creates positive momentum that touches all aspects of society if operations are going well. The alternative is to suffer emotional setbacks resulting from infeasibility linked to enemy actions when the American military cannot keep pace with the enemy early in the conflict.

Resource Availability

Assessing a plan's feasibility and its associated force flow requires more than an understanding of the combat power applied to a course of action and also more than a cursory knowledge of the plan and associated TPFDD. Resource availability requires detailed knowledge regarding how all the joint warfighting functions come together over time to achieve the desired end. This includes sustainment requirements (logistic, medical, and human resources), replacement of entire units due to battle loss, and potentially long-term occupation and reconstruction. Military leaders must be prepared

to discuss these critical issues and associated risks with civilian leadership, both before and during a conflict.

Washington's ability to deploy forces into a theater is dependent upon their readiness. The Joint Staff routinely does readiness assessments with support from the designated service staffs, who monitor force generation and projection into a theater to support contingency operations. Ideally, assessing readiness to deploy involves four critical considerations. Intuitively, the first is the actual readiness of a tactical echelon and headquarters to deploy. The second is the readiness of military power projection platforms, including lines of communication, seaports, and airports. The third is the readiness of the Functional Component Commands (FCCs), Combat Support Agencies (CSAs), and major service commands (e.g. Army Material Command) to deploy and support operations.²¹ The final consideration is approval of authorities needed to increase readiness and maintain the employment timeline.

Availability of forces implies that the required forces actually exist. Such an assumption can create two situations that can lead to infeasible plans. For one, a plan that requires forces not already in the ever-evolving inventory can create issues at the onset of execution. Provided that adequate support is provided during planning and that the plan is revised periodically, this problem can be avoided as staffs constantly reassess available force structure and capabilities. The second situation, which is similar and somewhat connected to the first, is the practice of aligning forces in contingency plans to signal the need for future force requirements. This is the wrong place to present these demand signals for force development as other processes exist to inject these requirements.

It is laudable and sometime necessary to use feasibility assessments to identify critical capability²² gaps that can be either rectified immediately due to their importance in current operations, resourced in the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), or projected into long-range exercises and/or research and development. However, if the capability gap is too large to overcome, planners must rebalance the Ends-Ways-Means calculus by addressing the problem in a different way or by changing the end. The WWII pre-war planners failed to do this as they recognized issues in both the Orange and Rainbow plans for the Pacific. Resultantly, the forces committed to the Philippines were inadequate for the mission and policy makers did not adjust their expectations for the region. Ignoring known gaps in strategic and operational plans in the hope that they will magically disappear in execution is folly. As Secretary Rumsfeld famously quipped regarding execution, "As you know, you go to war with the Army you have. They're not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time."²³

Preserving Civ-Mil Decision Space

It is not the intent of this essay to create yet another term of reference, but rather to describe important activities related to means testing that interplay between the strategy and policy levels to create feasible plans. The precepts below are evaluated after all the plans are synchronized and various commitments of domestic and/or foreign governments are vetted. They represent the most significant strategic level of analysis regarding the application of resources applied in time. Because of this, they are incredibly useful for promoting dialogue between civilian and military leaders.

Planners, strategists, and senior leaders should seek to design flexibility into their plans to the greatest extent practicable. This often requires preparation of multiple feasible options for political leadership consideration. There is often more than one way

to resolve foreign policy problems using military means integrated into a national strategy. To accomplish this, theater and operational level commanders must share their visualization of the operation with strategic level leaders as soon as possible, including how they view the campaign unfolding using an austere to robust capability build of force structure. Fortunately, the current JOPES/APEX In-Progress Review (IPR) process provides one such venue for this interaction. Providing multiple feasible military options offers a superb opportunity for military leaders to gather the insights and preferences of senior civilian leadership. Options should address principal points of friction revolving around cost, duration, risk to service members, and the short- and long-term outcomes of action related to our national interests.

Expeditionary militaries fight “away games.” Therefore, coordination and access along lines of communication is incredibly important and a key activity in assuring plan feasibility. The ability to utilize ally and partner seaports and airports is always necessary. Additionally, the more Washington can use these assets to support its operations, the less sustainment and protection capacity is required of U.S. troops. This burden sharing allows military operational tempo to be more rapid. Conversely, less access and support means the United States will be less effective, particularly early in a conflict. Coordinating access and support requires the long-term coordination and insight of the Department of State (DOS). Washington’s current and likely future methods for maintaining its enduring interests involve increasing coalition support and ceding military actions to local powers to control their areas when American existential and vital interests are not at stake.²⁴ Similarly, if Washington policy makers had transitioned the Philippines to self-governance prior to WWII and resourced their ability

to defend themselves against a Japanese threat, those U.S. forces could have been better allocated and the plan adjusted to support an approach more feasible within U.S. means. As such, Washington must be more candid with its allies and partners about its capacity to support military action. In the event of war in their regions, nation-states must be prepared to defend themselves until the United States can muster domestic support, mobilize, and maneuver forces from around the world to join the fray.

Senior military leaders must appreciate that command relationships are flexible and fluid by design at the operational level. Establishing mission command options is the final, critical, and often most contentious, part of designing a force to accomplish the desired end. To assure the mission command option selected is feasible to the command and control requirements within a given situation, leadership must have an appropriate vision of how mission command requirements will change from the beginning to the end of a campaign. This vision must consider the entire theater of operations at both the operational and theater strategic levels. The intervening variables assessed in this determination include the changing responsibilities of the commanders over time and the span of control that increases with expanding force structure and/or terrain. Mission command at all levels must also be flexible enough to enable complex supported/supporting and coordinating relationships as defined in the Unified Command Plan (UCP), Joint Publication 1, DOD directive, and agreements between participants in a coalition. Military leaders who understand these flexible command relationships can successfully articulate the authorities required for success to civilian leaders.

Linking strategic movement to operational maneuver requires a solid assessment of the capability and capacity to deploy and sustain forces in the Area of Operation (AO). As with envisioning mission command, civilian and military leaders must visualize how the movement of American military power will be constrained early in a conflict and then grow over time with an assured probability of success.²⁵ This means that feasibility must be reassessed at various points of a campaign or operation that is either in the planning stages or in execution. Military leaders must be able to explain to civilian leaders what U.S. military power can and cannot accomplish as force structure initially builds, conducts major operations, and transitions to a more stable environment.

Time, enemy action, resource availability and the preservation of civ-mil decision space should ultimately inform the Secretary of Defense IPRs that direct the approval and review process for contingency plans. Similarly, for crisis action or operational plan execution, these discussions need to occur within the GFMB process. Likewise, these dialogues addressing feasibility must occur within military channels and be shared, as appropriate, with senior civilian and interagency partners using National Security Council (NSC) apparatus and other related channels. Necessary to these discussions is the conveyance of what additional resource authorities are required, how the interagency may help, and what strategic and operational risks remain following the military's prioritization and synchronization of capabilities.

Historical Narrative Demonstrating Implications of Adequately Assessing Feasibility

Many, if not all, of these factors played a role in the political decisions that shaped coalition operations during World War II. Although assessment processes were not yet automated, the factors considered resemble those required for today's global planning. As discussed in the opening of this essay, the Rainbow planning efforts that

matured in the late 1930s identified the infeasibility of America's position in the Pacific. They also began to align the political and military ends of the "Germany first" policy, based upon likely coalitions. This strategy solidified during the ABC-1 conference as the main tenet of the Allied military strategy following Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, and Japanese attacks on American forces in the Pacific. The strategy gained even more importance after Soviet setbacks on the Eastern front.

As American planners began to envision the long campaign to defeat Germany, they took an in-depth look at both the mobilization effort and the integrated campaign required. The so-called Victory plan promulgated by the Army General Headquarters (GHQ) identified the center of gravity as defeating the German Army and seizing German terrain. To do this, they envisioned a campaign to reduce Germany's strategic capability by control of the sea lanes of communication, a buildup of forces in the United Kingdom, forced entry operations in France, and a strike at the heart of Germany.²⁶ Militarily, it was direct and efficient.

However, the varying interests of the Allies dictated a much more indirect path to victory. Throughout the three years of planning that culminated in Operation Overlord, Prime Minister Churchill continuously articulated the need to conduct operations in the Mediterranean basin. British motivations included the desire to maintain lines of communications and to manage resources for its colonial possessions in North Africa, the Mid-East, and Asia both during and following the war. The British were also concerned with communist expansion into central and southern Europe, and the American readiness to fight.²⁷

Additionally, Premier Stalin and Foreign Minister Molotov pushed aggressively for the establishment of a second front to relieve the pressure on Soviet armies in the East. They went so far as to voice to Churchill that they might be willing to sue for a separate peace. Conversely, the American position was shaped by a strong national desire to seek retribution for the attack on Pearl Harbor, military leaders in the Pacific, and the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral King, who repeatedly pushed for more resources in that hemisphere. Adding to these considerations was the American Army's inexperience at all levels of command, which worried leadership on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁸

The result was repeated cooperation and compromise at the policy-strategy interface, informed by the availability of military resources. Coalition decisions to divert resources to the Pacific campaigns, support Soviet lend lease, and further compromises regarding allied entry into Southern Europe delayed the buildup of military power for the cross-channel invasion.²⁹ Resource scarcity played a critical part in the decisions involving how military means would be applied. Allied leadership quickly realized the only viable option for opening a second front initially was entry into North Africa (Operation Torch).

These decisions had a profoundly positive impact on the war effort. In the European theater, Torch increased the feasibility of the Normandy invasion by battle-testing American military leaders and troops. It provided insight into who should command Overlord and how to arrange the command relationship. The operation also provided valuable lessons for equipping, training and sustaining units.³⁰ Perhaps most importantly, Torch kept the alliance solvent, allowed more time for American society to

mobilize completely, and created the strategic narrative that the Axis was doomed to failure. The essence of the weighty strategic decisions being made by politicians was captured by General Marshall who opined that what he learned in 1942 was the importance for the politicians to do something in the war every year.³¹

These same factors played out again in 1943 and 1944. Political necessity continued to drive planning that was subsequently bounded by feasibility limitations. From the standpoint of time, political requirements demanded action, even if not ideal. Pressing the Axis on multiple fronts to change the cumulative momentum of the war became necessary. The availability of landing craft and transports,³² along with the availability of seasoned American commanders and service members, determined how many major operations occurred each year. Accommodating the political needs of the major Allied countries in order to maintain the coalition was of paramount importance. Yet, Allied actions were always intended to keep Axis strategies out of balance. This meant keeping the second front in Europe moving up through Italy, accelerating operations in the Pacific, and postponing the invasion of France to the summer of 1944. Throughout the conflict the demands of political necessity had to run the gauntlet of military feasibility before they could manifest as action against the axis powers on the road to victory. The discussion of feasibility played an essential role in determining the outcome of the war and is a lesson that should be long remembered and emulated routinely.

Conclusion

Feasibility played a central role leading up to Overlord. It was a strikingly different civilian-military discussion than occurred regarding the long-term defense of the Philippines. It is easy to surmise that this was simply because America was fully

mobilized for the war effort. However, it is important to look beyond this simple fact when considering the utility of maintaining an honest, forthright, and appropriately detailed dialogue between military and civilian leaders.

To improve future dialogue, this paper explained some of the more salient points for senior leaders to consider during feasibility assessments. Among the litmus tests of strategy, feasibility is in the realm of the military, and therefore key to working with civilian leaders who desire to use military power to achieve a political end. Identifying flexible military options demands political, strategic and operational echelons coordinate to maintain the ends-ways-means balance. The successful synchronization and prioritization of means allows military leaders to know what is within the realm of the possible, enabling the discussion of ways with civilian leadership. Sometimes, a balance point is unobtainable. It is then up to military leaders to recommend civilian leadership change either the strategic end or the national policy. The building blocks for this dialogue are conceptually simple. First, recognize that political and military leaders are pragmatic, but not in the same way. Second, military leaders must enforce the use of the processes that drive feasibility testing during both planning and execution. Third, fully assessing feasibility using the factors of time, enemy actions, resource availability, and preservation of civ-mil decision space will engender better assessments and improve civ-mil dialogue in today's complex environment.

Endnotes

¹ Dwight Eisenhower, "Remarks at the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference," November 14, 1957, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10951> (accessed December 30, 2015).

² Particularly the Navy's technology shift from coal to oil fired boilers, which eliminated the necessity of maintaining a coaling station in the Philippines.

³ Brian Linn McAllister, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 79-114.

⁴ Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Florence, SC: Taylor & Francis, Ltd, 2002), 35-36, 87-89, 99.

⁵ Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1993), 49.

⁶ Nesting is a term of art prescribing that the objectives of lower and supporting echelons should be linked to the higher and supported echelons. It helps ensure unity of effort to achieve the desired end.

⁷ During WWII, this was doctrinally referred to as Y-Day, a term which has since lapsed.

⁸ Strategic plan: A plan for the overall conduct of a war. DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, "Strategic Plan," http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html (accessed February 12, 2016).

⁹ Richard D. Butler, Created by author.

¹⁰ Acceptable is defined as, "the joint operation plan review criterion for assessing whether the contemplated course of action is proportional, worth the cost, consistent with the law of war, and is militarily and politically supportable." (JP 5-0) Army doctrine fails to formally define suitable, but it is described as corresponding to meeting the desired end state. (JP 5-0) When coordinating between the operational and strategic level to develop a plan, various courses of action being considered should also be distinguishable from each other and complete. Complete is defined as, "the joint operation plan review criterion for assessing whether operation plans incorporate major operations and tasks to be accomplished and to what degree they include forces required, deployment concept, employment concept, sustainment concept, time estimates for achieving objectives, description of the end state, mission success criteria, and mission termination criteria. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), GL 5.

¹¹ DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, "Feasibility," http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html?zoom_query=feasibility&zoom_sort=0&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_and=1 (accessed December 30, 2015).

¹² The documentation for the integrated planning system has been recently updated and renamed the Adaptive Planning and Execution System (APEX) system. However, JOPES and the associated TPFDDs will remain integral parts of the system for the foreseeable future. Even after the JOPES information system is replaced, the data analyzed will remain the same. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, I-3.

¹³ JOPES data includes unit, additional logistic requirements, and replacement personnel. The data base also contains the estimated date the commander requires delivery of the capability from JOPP. During pre-execution feasibility assessments, the tested schemes of movement and maneuver are tested against resources available. During execution of a crisis or contingency, the data is refined and approved based upon resource availability and decisions that are made in the political and military spheres. The level of detail in JOPES is described in the joint dictionary and CJCSM 3122.01A in the following manner: within the current joint

planning and execution system, movement characteristics for both personnel and cargo are described at six distinct levels of detail. Levels I, V, and VI describe personnel and Levels I through IV and VI for cargo. Levels I through IV are coded and visible in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System automated data processing. Levels V and VI are used by Joint Operation Planning and Execution System automated data processing feeder systems. a. level I- personnel: expressed as total number of passengers by unit line number. Cargo: expressed in total short tons, total measurement tons, total square feet, and total thousands of barrels by unit line number. Petroleum, oils, and lubricants is expressed by thousands of barrels by unit line number. b. level II- cargo: expressed by short tons and measurement tons of bulk, oversize, outsize, and non-air transportable cargo by unit line number. Also square feet for vehicles and non self-deployable aircraft and boats by unit line number. c. level III - cargo: detail by cargo category code expressed as short tons and measurement tons as well as square feet associated to that cargo category code for an individual unit line number. d. level IV- cargo: detail for individual dimensional data expressed in length, width, and height in number of inches, and weight/volume in short tons/measurement tons, along with a cargo description. Each cargo item is associated with a cargo category code and a unit line number). e. level V- personnel: any general summarization/aggregation of level VI detail in distribution and deployment. f. level VI- personnel: detail expressed by name, Service, military occupational specialty and unique identification number. Cargo: detail expressed by association to a transportation control number or single tracking number or item of equipment to include federal stock number/national stock number and/or requisition number. Nested cargo, cargo that is contained within another equipment item, may similarly be identified. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) Volume I, Planning Policies and Procedures*, CJCSM 3122.01A (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, September 29 2006).

¹⁴ U.S. JCS, *JOPES volume 1 (Planning Policies and Procedures)*, GL-24.

¹⁵ This process assesses training, preparation, mobilization, deployment, employment, support, sustainment, redeployment, and demobilization of military forces for operations.

¹⁶ The GFMAP is approved by the Secretary of Defense. It prescribes the deployment of forces from either service control to combatant command control, or from one combatant command to another. Previously referred to as deployment orders.

¹⁷ In a robust theater, apportioned lift is permanently dedicated to move individuals or high priority equipment inter or intra-theater. Due to the nature of these missions, JOPES does not capture these movement requirements.

¹⁸ Janine Davidson, "The Contemporary Presidency: Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision Making: Explaining the Broken Dialogue," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 2013): 144.

¹⁹ Center of Gravity: The source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act. DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, "Center of Gravity," http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html (accessed February 12, 2016).

²⁰ Michael Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 67-79.

²¹ Assessing operational and strategic level readiness is a cumbersome, manually driven process, pushed artificially into JOPES. It produces limited clarity which must be analyzed and

interpreted using archaic spreadsheets and PowerPoint displays. This is inconsistent with the twenty-first century's ability to collect accurate and properly detailed information that can be rapidly assessed. APEX envisions, and the Joint Staff is currently addressing, the rapidity with which operational planning can be linked to strategic maneuver by designing planning and evaluation tools to meet these requirements. The sooner they are delivered, the better.

²² Critical capability: A means that is considered a crucial enabler for a center of gravity to function as such and is essential to the accomplishment of the specified or assumed objective(s). DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, "Critical Capability," http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html (accessed March 15, 2016).

²³ William Kristol, "The Defense Secretary We Have," *Washington Post*, December 15, 2004, A33.

²⁴ Barack Obama, *2015 National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf (accessed September 23, 2015); U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 2015), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf (accessed September 23, 2015).

²⁵ To conduct decisive action in a large conflict, the variables of time, enemy actions, and lift constraints combine to add significant operational limitations upon feasibility. As the United States' global influence grew over time, there were three important points which informed how Washington projects and sustains military power. During and immediately after the Spanish-American War, the War department acquired organic troop and resupply ships to project and sustain forward deployed forces. Similarly, the Department of the Navy began applying the provisions of Mahanian doctrine forward deployed naval forces and associated coaling station requirements. This made the U.S. military inherently joint and expeditionary. World War II ingrained into the USMC, and elements of the Army, the need to maintain a robust forced entry capability as both an offensive option and deterrent. The military has a difficult time living up to this requirement due to the cost of maintaining a large standing force, the types of war America has fought since 1960, and internal service resource priorities. The defense in depth of Europe and the enduring conflict in Korea provided the final part of the lift triad—the concept of preposition stocks. Preposition stocks draw America closer with allies and partners, have served well as both a deterrent and force multiplier, and have avoided some of the inter-service bickering over investing in lift capacity. However, given the diffusion of asymmetric capability such as precision-guided munitions, the significant costs to maintain prepositioned stocks, American desires for continued rapid technological change, and long-term budget controls, maintaining the current movement triad of forward deployed forces, forced entry capability, and prepositioned stocks needs to be reevaluated.

²⁶ Charles Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and A Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), <http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/093/93-10/index.html> (accessed January 1, 2016).

²⁷ Warren Kimball, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 109-135.

²⁸ Mark Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1977), 15-35.

²⁹ Documented in multiple bibliographical references related to the competing interests of introducing Allied forces into western Europe.

³⁰ Jane Penrose, *D-Day Companion: Leading Historians Explore History's Greatest Amphibious Assault* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2009), 43-46.

³¹ Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front*, 58.

³² Frederick Morgan, *Overture to Overlord* (New York: Doubleday, 1950), 282.