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The Threads of Continuity

- a. Internal Threads: The threads of continuity that are entirely or almost entirely a part of the military profession are: military professionalism, tactics, operations, strategy, logistics and administration, military leadership, and military theory and doctrine. Note also that strategy, operations, and tactics are categorized as internal threads of continuity and as levels of war.
 - (1) Military Professionalism. Those who practice or think about the conduct of war solely for personal glory or material gain are not military professionals. *A profession is an occupation or a calling that requires specialized knowledge of a given field of human activity, that requires long and intensive training, that maintains high standards of achievement and conduct through force of education and concerted opinion, that commits its members to continued study, and that has the rendering of a public service as its primary purpose.* Attitude and training thus distinguishes the “professional” members of the military from those who are not professionals. Military professionalism is the newest thread of continuity.
 - (2) Tactics. Tactics is the employment of units in combat. It includes the ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other, the terrain, and the enemy to translate potential combat power into victorious battles and engagements. This includes activity out of enemy contact that is intended to directly and immediately affect such battles and engagements.
 - (3) Operations. The operational level of war is the level at which campaigns and major operations are conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operations (AOs). Although the term operational dates from the late twentieth century (“grand tactics” and “military strategy” both having been used in the past to describe what is now termed “operations”), it is useful for analyzing campaigns in all historical periods. The U.S. Army Field Manual, FM 3-0 Operations, identifies “operations” as the link between strategy and tactics. As a result, operations are concerned with using available military resources to attain strategic objectives in a specific theater of war. Therefore operations seek to attain the objectives of strategy while at the same time addressing the way in which campaigns are planned and pursued in a theater.
 - (4) Strategy. Strategy is the art and science of developing and employing armed forces and other instruments of national power to secure national and multinational objectives. The word “strategy” is derived from the Greek strategos, which means general. By the early nineteenth century, “strategy” referred to the use of resources or the particular tasks of war that were peculiar to the highest ranking officers. Today, the military profession recognizes strategy as a complex term that involves much more than military campaigns. It is the long-range plans and policies for distributing and applying resources to achieve specific objectives. Successful strategy requires clearly defined and

attainable goals. Strategy may change during war to reflect changes in goals, resources, or other conditions of the conflict. Strategy exists at four levels. Grand strategy is the strategy of a nation or of an alliance. The goal of grand strategy is the attainment of the political objective of a war. Grand strategy is formulated by heads of state and their principal political and military advisers. National strategy is similar to grand strategy, but national strategy only concerns the goals of a single nation (not an alliance). A third level of strategy is military strategy, which is a strategy where the means and resources are those of the armed forces of a nation and where the goal of strategy is the securing of objectives consistent with national policy through the application of force or the threat of force. Military strategy can be formulated by military commanders at all levels. A fourth level of strategy is campaign strategy, which is the strategy of a commander of a force of considerable size that is acting independently. Its immediate goals are generally the occupation of territory or the defeat of all or a significant part of the enemy armed forces; its long term goal remains to support political goals.

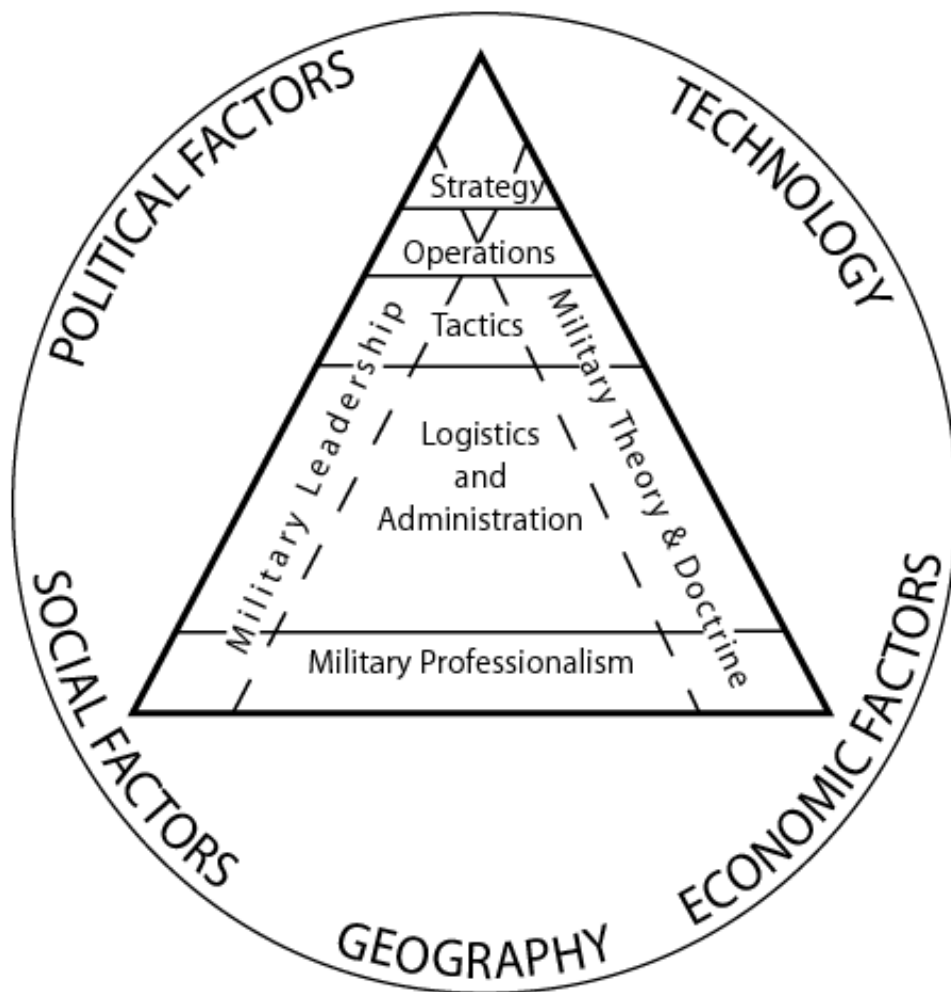
- (5) Logistics and Administration. Logistics and administration, is much like strategy, in that even though many of its elements are wholly a part of the profession of arms, some may also be dependant upon and interact closely with civilian controlled activities. In addition, logistics and administration provide many of the resources that strategy needs to work. *Logistics is the provision, movement and maintenance of all services and resources necessary to sustain military forces. (See: Combat Service Support)* *Administration is the management of all services and resources necessary to sustain military forces.* Logistics includes the design, development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposal of materiel; the movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel; the acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; the acquisition of civilian labor; and the acquisition or furnishing of services, such as, baths, laundry, libraries, and recreation. Since administration applies to the management of men, materiel, and services, it is intimately associated with logistics.
- (6) Military Theory and Doctrine. Military theory is the body of ideas that concern war, especially the organization and training for and the conduct of war. Doctrine is the authoritative fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of objectives. Doctrine in modern armies is generally disseminated through manuals, regulations, circulars, and handbooks that prescribe standardized procedures and organizations. After examination and acceptance by highly experienced professionals, theory becomes doctrine. By employing and training according to accepted doctrine, military leaders ensure that soldiers at all levels have a common vocabulary, organization and combat system that improves coordination and cooperation. Doctrine does not, however, alleviate the requirement for sound judgment, for the solutions to many critical decisions on the battlefield cannot always be found in doctrine.

- (7) Military Leadership. Leadership is **influencing** people—by providing purpose, direction, and motivation—while **operating** to accomplish the mission and improving the organization. Purpose gives soldiers a reason why they should do difficult things under dangerous circumstances. Direction shows what must be done. Through motivation, leaders give soldiers the will to accomplish the mission. Military leadership is, perhaps, the most essential element of combat power. Other terms associated with military leadership are command and generalship. Command is lawful military authority exercised by virtue of rank and assignment. Generalship is military leadership at higher levels.
- b. External Threads: The most significant of the external “threads of continuity” are political factors, social factors, economic factors, technology, and military geography.
- (1) Political Factors. *Those ideas and actions of governments or organized groups that affect the activities of societies are political factors.* War is a political activity. Decisions about the initiation, conduct, and termination of war are made in the political arena and the nature of political institutions shape how a nation fights. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the political head of state was often the military commander as well. Alexander, Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Frederick the Great and Napoleon are prime examples. In such cases, the same person coordinated both political policy and military goals. In some cases, this control by a single leader lasted into the twentieth century. Dictators such as Hitler and Stalin exercised political and military leadership with mixed results. More often in the twentieth century, especially in democracies, a separation between military and political leadership has challenged societies to develop effective relationships between the two. Political factors include both civil-military relations and the role of public opinion in shaping the conduct of war.
- (2) Social Factors. Social factors affecting warfare include such diverse concepts as popular attitudes, cultural differences, the role of religious institutions, levels of education, roles of educational institutions, reactions to and roles of mass media, inter-racial and minority rights questions, combat psychology, standards of morality and justice, and ultimately the will of a people to resist. Clearly these factors have a tremendous impact on the size, organization, quality and attitudes of a military organization. Social factors can be as important in military strategy and operations as terrain objectives or the destruction of the military forces in the field.
- (3) Economic Factors. *Economic factors involve the production, distribution, and consumption of material resources.* Different types of economies (for example, capitalist, communist, laissez-faire, industrial, agrarian, commercial, or subsistence) wage warfare differently. Economic war, which takes such forms as blockade or boycott, is a military tool and can be used in peacetime as a tool of diplomacy. The interrelation of political, economic, and social factors is complex, especially in modern societies and a global economy.

Together, these factors provide the foundations of national power and shape the military forces of every country.

- (4) Technology. Technology refers to the invention, development and production in such important areas as transportation, weaponry, communications, construction, food production, metallurgy, and medicine. Technology has an undeniable influence on strategy, tactics, logistics, military theory and doctrine, and military leadership.
- (5) Military Geography. *Military geography deals with the physical landscape as it pertains to the employment of military power.* It takes into account the significance of geographic realities at the tactical and operational levels, and more importantly, the influence of geography at the strategic level and in the shaping of military forces. The physical environment in which military forces operate includes consideration of weather, climate, soil conditions, vegetation, drainage, urbanization, and people. Clearly each of these factors will affect the conduct of a campaign, and at a higher level, these factors interact with social and cultural factors that mold the armed forces of a nation.

The twelve threads of continuity offer a conceptual framework that seeks to provide a means to reconstruct at least the general outline of the tapestry of the military past. The full meaning and magnitude of that tapestry can be appreciated only after long study and/or long years of service and significant contribution to the profession of arms.



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