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Naval Transformation: Progress, Prospects and People

by RADM Tan Kai Hoe

Reflections on Operation Blue Orchid (Sea)

by LTC Frederick Chew

Balancing on Shifting Sand: Perspectives on Singapore's Strategic Engagements with the Major Powers in the Asia-Pacific

by LTC Irvin Lim Fang Jau & CPT Phua Chao Rong, Charles

Global Maritime Partnership and the Prospects for Malacca Straits Security

by MAJ Desmond Low



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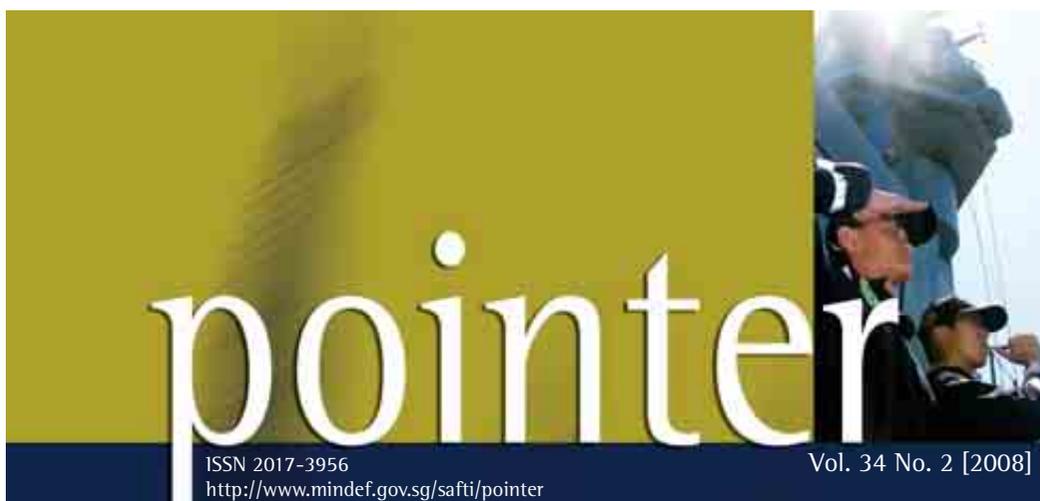
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EDITORIAL

This is the second Navy-sponsored issue and a follow-up from last year's efforts. We are delighted to publish seven feature articles that are contributed or co-written by Navy Officers. As the lead article, we are indeed honoured to publish an article by our Chief of Staff – Naval Staff, RADM Tan Kai Hoe, entitled "*Naval Transformation: Progress, Prospects and People*". With transformation underway in many modern armed forces today, it is an opportune moment for RADM Tan to give a personal recapitulation of the RSN's progress and its future directions. The article gives a brief introduction of the impetus to change and reviews the steps the Navy has undertaken so far. Emphasising on the need for agility and versatility in the capabilities, organisation and people, it provides key ideas to ensure the success of the Navy's transformation efforts.

The second article in this issue "*Reflections on Operation Blue Orchid (Sea)*", written by LTC Frederick Chew, documents the RSN experience in this operation. The article aims to contribute to the post-operation knowledge management effort, as well as to enrich the growing body of Operations Other Than War (OOTW) knowledge in the RSN and SAF. It explores the approach to conducting OOTW which poses its set of unique challenges

unlike conventional warfare. The amorphous nature of the threat requires a customised Concept of Operations (CONOPS) to deal with the myriad of dynamic operational scenarios that may be encountered by the Task Group. The article also discusses the implications, arising from such a CONOPS, on the RSN's training and force structuring for future OOTW missions.

The third article "*Balancing on Shifting Sand: Perspectives on Singapore's Strategic Engagements with the Major Powers in the Asia-Pacific*", co-written by prolific POINTER contributor LTC Irvin Lim and CPT Phua Chao Rong, provides a holistic review of our nation-state's engagements with the major players in the region's geo-political landscape. The ability to manage relations with other nation-states is a crucial part of Singapore's defence policy. Over the years, the SAF has engaged actively in defence diplomacy as a way to resolve tensions and build trust and understanding. As we enter further into the 21st century, new powers and old players are springing up to stake their claims and their time in the limelight. The strategic relationships Singapore have with the various countries of influence are examined, and the ways in which Singapore can participate and contribute meaningfully to enhance regional security and stability are discussed.

The next article “*Global Maritime Partnership and the Prospects for Malacca Straits Security*”, written by MAJ Desmond Low examines the relatively new USN initiative known as the Global Maritime Partnership (GMP). Intended to address mutual concerns on maritime security, GMP is a voluntary global network of nations and their navies. The article first highlights the key characteristics of the GMP concept and surveys the challenges, using the Malacca Straits as an example. It then describes recent developments which signal an improving climate for multilateral cooperation before suggesting ways to implement the concept in the Malacca Straits.

In our Personality Profile section, we continue with the second of our four-part series under the theme, “Against the Odds”. *POINTER* will be featuring World War One hero, Major Charles White Whittlesey.

Lastly, it gives us great pleasure to announce that the 2008 CDF Essay Competition is now open. Do check our website for more details. We look forward to receiving your entries.

We hope you will enjoy this issue.
Happy Reading!

Asst Editor, *POINTER*

Naval Transformation: Progress, Prospects and People

by RADM Tan Kai Hoe



“To promote regional security and to defend Singapore, the RSN needs to maintain a high level of operational readiness and develop a 3rd Generation Navy that is highly versatile, and able to achieve decisive outcomes across a wide range of missions.”

*Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Defence,
in a speech at the commissioning
ceremony of RSS Intrepid,
RSS Steadfast and RSS Tenacious,
5 Feb 08, Changi Naval Base*

Introduction

In the last decade, many of the world’s militaries have come to recognise the need to change – to transform, in order to remain relevant in the fast-changing world. A confluence of factors is responsible for this – including the uncertain global strategic environment two decades after the Cold War, the rise of terrorism and other asymmetric threats, advances in military technology and military thought, as well as escalation in the cost of military equipment.

The RSN has also embarked on its transformation journey, and is on its way to operationalise the first spiral of what we have termed the Third Generation Navy. With transformation underway in many navies, this is a good time to take stock of our progress and envision how we might move ahead in the future.

Impetus for Transformation

While different navies may face different specific challenges, there are some global trends which are key drivers of transformation. Chief amongst these is the uncertain global environment, with an increase in new security threats and security concerns. As the pace of globalisation intensifies and seaborne trade grows, world governments increasingly need to grapple with issues such as energy, food and environmental security. Navies are finding that, in addition to fulfilling their traditional roles of ensuring good order at sea and protecting maritime commerce, they are also expected to contribute towards the maintenance of global security through ensuring maritime security against terrorism, or by standing ready to provide relief to natural disasters. At the same time, the fluid geo-strategic situation also means that navies must continue to hone a sharp edge in conventional war fighting to deter aggression, and to win in conflicts if necessary. Navies are finding that they have to develop new capabilities, structures and processes to meet the broadened range of new and existing operational demands.



Multilateral sea exercise to enhance maritime security cooperation against terrorism.

A second impetus for transformation is that technological progress is creating discontinuities which make some existing hardware and fighting concepts ineffective or irrelevant. Traditional force modernisation approaches seem insufficient to deliver the capabilities necessary to surmount future challenges. Instead, navies are finding that they need novel operational concepts and new fighting systems enabled by technological breakthroughs in communications, information technology and computing power.

Similarly the RSN sees the need to fulfil a wider spectrum of operations and to leverage on evolving technology to allow us to do so effectively. In our vision for the 3rd Generation Navy, the RSN sees itself taking the lead in ensuring maritime security for Singapore; providing valued options for OOTW; engaging and building partnerships with other like-minded navies and also serving as an integrated maritime component of the SAF in military operations.

Progress and Lessons

Today, many navies including the RSN have made good progress in the transformation journey. Looking back at the progress, there are some lessons which may prove useful for the next phase of our journey.

The Role of Technology

One of the key takeaways of transformation is probably the role of technology. It should be clearly understood that technology is a necessary but not a sufficient ingredient for success. Technology is a key enabler of transformation, but it has to be matched with sound operational concepts and good supporting processes in order to become a new capability. Indeed, recent wars like the Iraq and Lebanon Wars have demonstrated both the importance and the limitations of technology. For example, the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in both wars provided persistent air surveillance, multiplying the effectiveness of ground and maritime forces. However, it was also shown quite clearly that smart weapons alone cannot win the war on their own; Hezbollah for example managed to continue its *Katyusha* rocket attacks on Israel despite Israeli air and artillery strikes. Indeed, we need an in-depth knowledge of what technology can achieve, so that we do not base our operations on unrealistic assumptions. Technology of course will evolve, and the unattainable today might be commonplace tomorrow, but until then, military planners will do well to plan on the technology available today.

Evolution or Revolution

A related issue for both force structuring and operational planning is the need to handle a mixed orbat of existing and new capabilities. There are military thinkers who argue persuasively that we should start from a clean slate, so that we can be free from the encumbrances of the present. However, having served both in operational commands and in force planning appointments, I have come to conclude that this is just unrealistic. If one considers that the pace of introduction of new capabilities is always limited by resource boundaries and that militaries should expect to be called into action at any time, militaries will invariably need to operate a mix of existing and new capabilities. From this perspective, transformation is necessarily more evolutionary than revolutionary, and the intermediate states of this evolution have greater permanence and importance than we sometimes realise. It is in cognisance of this that the SAF has decided to articulate its third generation vision in three five-year spirals. In fact a spiral approach is not only more realistic, it is also more efficient and more robust, because newer technology which becomes available can be more easily included in the orbat while the issue of mass obsolescence is also avoided.

Flexibility of Response

Another lesson which military planners should bear in mind is the value of flexibility. The strategic environment will continue to be fluid and uncertain, so navies must incorporate flexibility and adaptability in our force structure

so that we can remain ready to handle a range of maritime operations. Traditionally, navies have achieved this by building a “balanced fleet”, which includes not only conventional warfighting capabilities, but also ships that are suited for other missions such as enforcing maritime security and participating in OOTW. With navies being called upon to contribute to a constantly broadening range of military operations, the concept of a balanced fleet will continue to be a valid one.

The importance of flexibility is also influencing platform design, giving rise to the popularity of so-called multi-role vessels. Instead of maintaining every class of ship, the idea is to have versatility built into the design of each platform, so that each can be rapidly reconfigured for different missions. This is important considering that ships are planned and designed many years in advance of the type of operations envisaged for them. As capabilities will need 10 to 20 years from conception to fruition, versatility in platform design is necessary in order to allow navies to meet future missions that may not even be envisioned today. The Endurance-class Landing Ship Tank (LST) is the RSN’s first multi-role design. In service since 2000, the LSTs were designed to be flexible, providing various means for the embarkation, transport and disembarkation of equipment and personnel via cranes, fast craft and helicopters. These features served it well in various OOTW missions, particularly during Operation Flying Eagle¹, when three LSTs delivered emergency supplies, medical personnel, and humanitarian assistance support group personnel to aid in relief efforts.

The LSTs’ flexibility allowed it to contribute effectively to the tsunami relief operation, even though force planners and ship designers could not have foreseen such a mission when they first designed the platform.

More progressive and aggressive multi-role designs are on the horizon. For example, the US Navy’s next-generation surface combatant, the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), relies on mission modules and unmanned systems to give it mission-specific capabilities. It is envisaged as a flexible craft that will replace specialised ships such as minesweepers, while being reconfigurable for anti-surface, anti-submarine, mine countermeasure, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, homeland defence, maritime intercept, special operations, and logistics missions. However, I should qualify that there is a cost to having such flexibility, in terms of having to incorporate interfaces to the various mission modules and also in terms of the compromises or over-specifications to the platforms. In the end, just as there are good reasons for using a multi-bladed Swiss-army knife or a traditional set of kitchen knives – the degree of modularity, the number of modules to have, the total size and hull-types required in such a modular fleet are all important questions that each navy’s force planners will have to answer depending on its own missions and circumstances.

Integration and Collaboration

Advances in technology have also enabled the different services of an armed forces to make effective



The armed forces of the future will be required to work in a joint and integrated manner.

cross-domain contributions through revised operational concepts. Just as air surveillance is critical for maritime operations, maritime forces can contribute to air defence or support land operations from the sea. The armed forces of the future will be a system of systems, with services working in an integrated, interdependent and synergised manner. Navies must closely integrate with land and air forces in order to operationalise truly joint capabilities. For the RSN, our small population base means that integration and interdependence with the other services are not only virtues but also necessities. In many ways this necessity has given us a head start in jointness over many established militaries. For example we have operated our maritime patrol aircraft since the early 90s as a squadron in the RSAF with a joint

RSAF-RSN crew, probably the first military to implement such a hybrid. Today, the three services of the SAF have made remarkable progress in redefining themselves not just as the Army, Navy and Air Force, but as part of a larger, integrated ONE SAF.

Beyond integration with the other services, the current transnational-threat environment also demands that we collaborate with other national agencies and like-minded navies. A transformation of mindset and operational concepts is required to effectively deal with the threats to maritime security. Within Singapore, coordinating structures and processes have been set up between the different agencies from the Police Coast Guard, Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Maritime and Port Authority, Customs



The current transnational-threat environment also demands that we collaborate with other national agencies and like-minded navies.

and the Navy. Beyond the national borders, the Malacca Straits Patrol arrangement between Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean navies, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery (ReCAAP), the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and the Regional Maritime Information Exchange (ReMIX) system² are all positive examples of regional collaboration for a common goal. Technology is a key enabler for such collaboration as it lowers the barriers for cooperation, facilitating the easy establishment and proliferation of information-sharing systems. Today, the ubiquitous maritime Automatic Identification System (AIS)³, Global Positioning System (GPS) and the Internet are key components of any information-sharing system. Going forward, many governments, inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations are coming together to build standards and processes for data exchange and combined sense-making, in order to enhance the information-sharing network for a comprehensive maritime domain awareness to support maritime security around the world. The US Coast Guard, for example, has plans for a US-wide AIS network that will be “combined with other government intelligence and surveillance data to form a holistic, overarching view of maritime traffic within or near US and its territorial waters”.⁴ The RSN has also introduced new intelligent features such as Open and Analysed Shipping Info-System (OASIS) and Sense-Making, Analysis and Research Tools (SMART)⁵ into the ReMIX system in January this year. Singapore is also building a C2 Centre in Changi which, when

completed in 2009, will further enhance national inter-agency cooperation by housing personnel from the various homefront agencies under one roof. The centre’s Multinational Operations and Exercise Centre will facilitate international exchanges to promote understanding and build confidence.

Operationalising Transformation Supporting Systems

The success of transformation will depend much more on sound, persistent implementation than brilliant conceptualisations. To operationalise transformation, the supporting structures, processes and even the cultures of our navies will need to change in tandem with the introduction of new hardware and operational concepts. Making sure that doctrines, training systems, logistics support, organisational structure, command and control processes, etc, keep pace with the new platforms and equipment seems to be common sense. However, this is where some organisations stumble, because they fail to put in the consistent, long-term commitment and effort required, and the deleterious effects of failures in planning are not immediately apparent. Organisational risk-taking is also necessary, as existing systems and processes that have worked well thus far will need to be dismantled and replaced with new, untested ones which have more than a few rough edges. But having coherent supporting systems is a critical step in ensuring that transformation will take root and grow; neglecting these supporting “software” will lead to superficial changes and not the deeper transformation desired.

We in the RSN are also actively reviewing our training, logistics and other support systems to ensure that they will continue to deliver the desired results in the future. If we are successful in our transformation, the RSN will evolve over the next few years into an even more tightly-knit, matrixed and networked organisation, and part of a larger, integrated, interdependent ONE SAF.



Our People is a key determinant of the success of transformation.



The RSN will evolve into a tightly-knit and networked organisation, and part of a larger, integrated, interdependent ONE SAF.

People, the Key Enabler

The most important enabler of transformation is a resource all navies have — people. Ultimately, how much and how quickly our people can assimilate new knowledge and new skills, how receptive our people are to change, how fast our mindsets change, are the key determinants of the success and the pace of transformation. Thus, this is where the greatest effort should be placed in operationalisation. Without capable people, new and sophisticated platforms and equipment will be at best deterrent show-pieces, and at worst operational hazards to oneself and others.

Nurturing Our People

With transformation at the systems level proceeding apace, it is crucial to nurture our people to keep up with the changes in concepts, structures, capabilities and technologies. After all, innovation is ultimately a social process that converts ideas into a new product or operational activity⁶. It is vital that the navy's greatest asset, its people, does not become its greatest liability as mindset change is a slow process that involves a great deal of simultaneous learning and “un-learning”⁷. The SAF's transformation in general is aided by a skilled and educated generation of young workers who are both tech-savvy and technically competent. In addition, emphasis placed on “Conceptual Thinking” in leadership⁸, as espoused by the SAF Centre of Leadership Development (CLD), has laid a firm foundation for the development of thinking skills in SAF leaders.

The RSN has also implemented a paradigm shift for naval training from just “Training for Performance” to include “Learning for Capability”.

Instead of vocational knowledge and training, the Naval Training Command (TRACOM) has put in place systems and methodologies like problem-based learning, reflection and journaling, coaching and competency-based learning to help servicemen develop the habit of self-directed learning. This will reinforce their individual capabilities and make them more competent in performing their jobs.

The RSN also provides development and educational upgrading opportunities, in order to meet the growth needs of our people. The latest endeavour in this aspect is the Continuous Learning Academic Study Scheme that provides Warrant Officers and Specialists the chance to upgrade themselves academically.

Engaging Our People

Navies, besides nurturing our people, also need to keep them mentally engaged and spiritually committed to our cause. It is important for navies to continue to instil values and inspire commitment - for the military is one profession which requires its people to pledge their lives for their fellowmen and for the higher mission of defending the nation. Militaries have long understood this requirement to engage our people and to build *esprit de corps*, and as we busy ourselves building the next generation of capabilities, it is important to remind ourselves not to neglect to engage the minds and souls of our people in this effort. Transformation is ultimately not

about changing the mindset of just the senior leadership or a few planners, but each and everyone in the navy.

Through nurturing and engagement, navies can create a more innovative, intelligent and relevant fighting force that can capably manage its future systems. In the RSN, we are fortunate to have adaptable and committed sailors who have always responded to changes and challenges with resolve and fortitude.

Conclusion

Given the uncertain global environment, transformation will necessarily be a continuous, long-term effort that navies will need to undertake to stay ahead of the challenges of tomorrow. Technology and people development have been, and remain, key pillars of the transformation process. Navies must thus create agility and versatility in their capabilities, their organisation and more vitally their people. Investing in the nurturing and engagement of our people is not just the means for navies to realise the full potential of naval transformation. More importantly, developing our people is the only way to ensure our continued success in future transformations. 

Endnotes

- ¹ Relief operation conducted by the SAF after the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004.
- ² This is a web-based portal with information on shipping and maritime security occurrences in the region.

- ³ The AIS is a system fitted on all ships of 300 gross tons or more, and uses a VHF transponder to broadcast the ship's identity and type, dimensions, and navigational data such as GPS location, heading, speed, destination and the estimated time of arrival.
- ⁴ USCG, Nationwide Automatic Identification System (NAIS), <http://www.uscg.mil/nais/>
- ⁵ OASIS facilitates the sharing of shipping information, while SMART sifts through this information to detect anomalies.
- ⁶ Richard Harding (ed.), *The Royal Navy, 1930-1990: Innovation and Defence*, (New York, Routledge, 2004), p6.
- ⁷ Roland Ng, Liau Eng Soon, Poh Li San, Ng Boon Ching, Timothy Ang, "The 3rd Generation RSAF: Managing Transformational Tensions", *POINTER*, Vol. 33, No. 1, (Singapore: Singapore Armed Forces, 2007), p21.
- ⁸ Lim Choon Peng, "Developing the Thinking Competency of SAF Leaders", *POINTER*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Singapore: Singapore Armed Forces, 2007).



RADM Tan Kai Hoe is currently Chief of Staff (Naval Staff). A Naval Officer by training, he has served as Fleet Commander, Head of Naval Plans Department and Head of Naval Training Department. RADM Tan is a President's Scholar and SAF Overseas Scholar. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Physics from the University of Cambridge, U.K. and a Master of Science from Stanford University, USA. For his contributions to Singapore and the SAF, RADM Tan was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver)(Military) in 2007.

Reflections on Operation Blue Orchid (Sea)

by LTC Frederick Chew



*Explosives-laden merchant vessel currently in the Arabian Gulf is making its way towards Iraq. Its mission is to blow itself up to destroy key infrastructure and further destabilise the fledging democracy in Iraq. This Critical Contact of Interest will pass through TF 999's Area of Operations. TG 999.1 is to...*¹

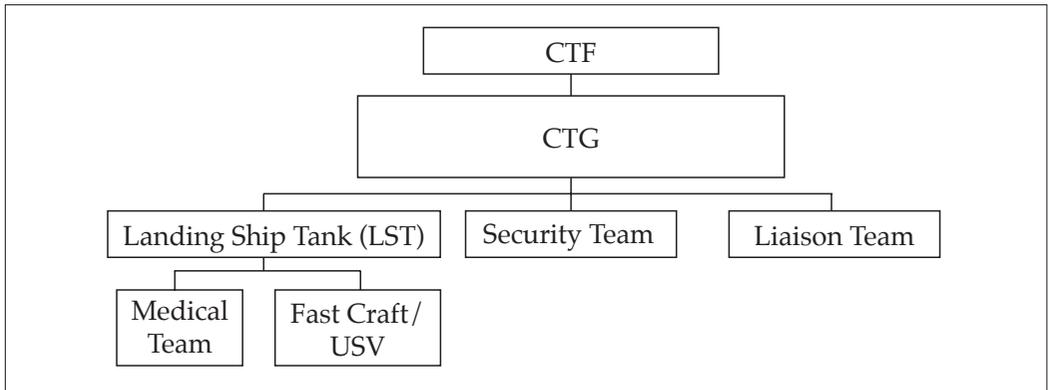
Introduction

The above scenario, while partially fictitious, does provide some insights into the security environment as well as the challenge of the mission and tasks that various RSN Task Groups (TGs) have been involved in, while in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) conducting Operation Blue Orchid – Sea (OBO). From 2003-2007, the RSN dispatched a total of four TGs to that area of operations (AO).

Throughout the three to four months of deployments by the various

RSN TGs in the Gulf, RSN personnel conducted a range of activities from oil platform (OPLAT) protection at the sharp end, to training the Iraqi Navy (IQN) and rendering medical aid to local communities. A summary of non-sensitive activities carried out by the RSN TGs is shown in the table on the next page.²

The operational experience gained by RSN TGs in the NAG is **directly relevant** to some of the RSN's key peacetime and period of tension (POT) missions. The aim of this essay therefore



Illustrative Internal RSN C2 Structure

Category	Tasks / Activities
Maritime Security Ops	ABOT Sector Patrol
	ABOT Scene of Action Commander
	Wide Area Patrol
	Presence Patrol
	Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV) Ops
Maritime Interdiction Ops	Compliant Boarding
	Security Sweep
	Hail and Query
Afloat Forward Staging Base	Staff boat duty
	Meals-On-Keels
	Helicopter Landings
	Helicopter Refueling
	RAS
	Forward Basing of IQN Patrol Boats
Others	RSN Personnel Exchange
	Hosting of Foreign Visits
	Hosting of Conferences
	Medical Assistance to the Coalition and Local Communities
	Training Assistance to the IQN

RSN TG's Activities

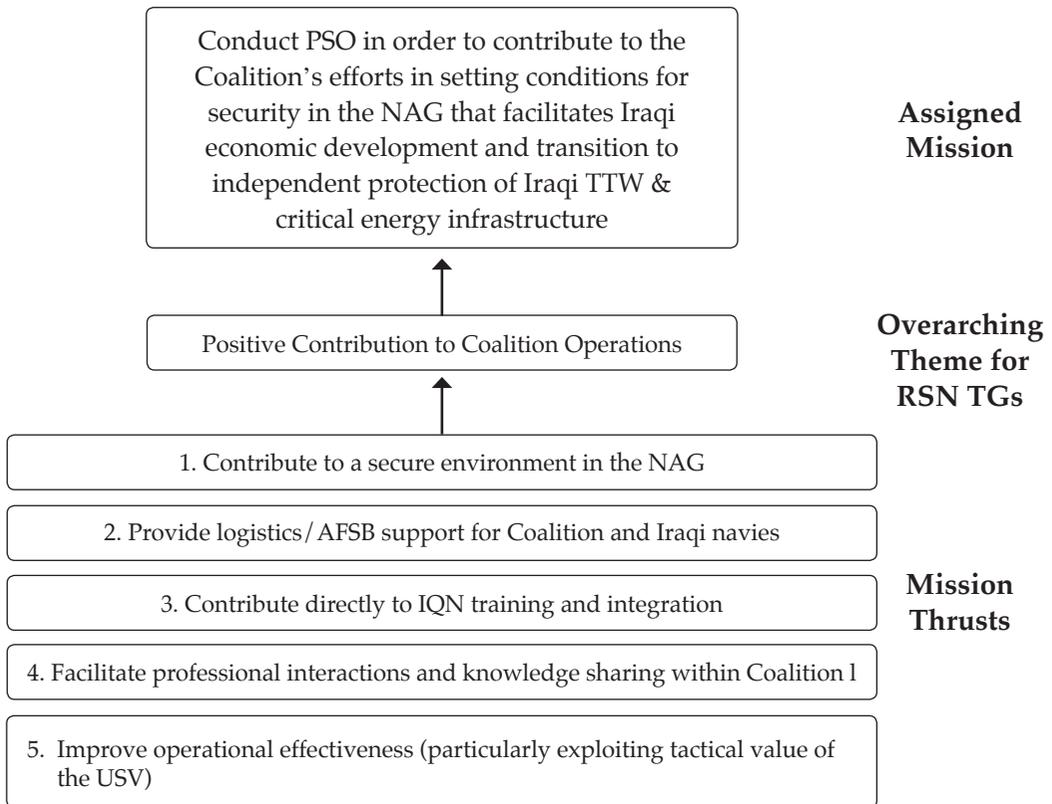
is to share the TGs' experiences with the rest of the RSN and the SAF; and in so doing, contribute to the post-operation knowledge management (KM) effort, as well as enrich the growing body of Operations Other Than War (OOTW) knowledge in the SAF.³

Approach

The essay's central thesis is that while OOTW and conventional war do share many similarities, there are nonetheless tangible differences that warrant a deliberate approach to mounting OOTW, specifically in the areas of concepts, equipment and training. Using the RSN TGs' OBO experiences as the backdrop, my approach will be first to describe the battle space and

threat environment in the NAG. Second, to describe the RSN TGs' *Concept of Operations* (CONOPS). Third, to discuss the CONOPS' implications on the RSN's *Equipping and Training*.

In the course of the analysis, some comparisons will be made against equivalent hot war scenarios in order to bring into sharper focus the unique requirements of OOTW. Given that OOTW is a broad collective term, this essay will **focus on two key facets** of OOTW – maritime security (MARSEC) and anti-low intensity conflict (LIC) operations. Both featured significantly in the Security, Stabilisation, Transition and Reconstruction Operations (SSTRO) conducted by Coalition forces in the NAG.⁴



Relating Higher-Objectives to Actions on the Ground

Background And Mission

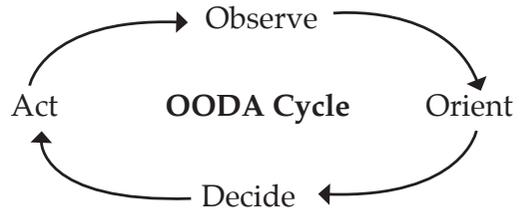
The RSN units were typically OPCON-ed to the Coalition CTF, whose mission was broadly to set conditions for security in the NAG that would facilitate Iraqi economic development and transition to independent protection of Iraqi territorial waters (TW) and critical energy infrastructure. The Coalition's primary line of operation was OPLAT and pipeline defence. KAAOT and ABOT account for some 90% of Iraq's oil exports and some 80% of its GDP. The RSN TGs' mission in turn was to *conduct Peace Support Operations (PSO) in order to contribute to the Coalition's efforts in setting conditions for security in the NAG that facilitate Iraqi economic development and transition to independent protection of Iraqi TWs and critical energy infrastructure.*

Battlespace And Threats

The NAG presents a complex battle space. It is not far removed from the insurgency ashore in Iraq. Coalition ships operate in the AO cognisant of the stated (and demonstrated) intent of terrorist organisations, such as Al Qaida (AQ), to attack Coalition forces and Iraqi oil infrastructure. A multi-axis attack by 3 fast crafts was executed in Sep 04, penetrating Coalition defences and resulting in significant damage to ABOT. NAG operations are further complicated by navigational challenges (shallow patches and sunken obstructions) as well as the high density of maritime traffic (particularly local fishing boats known as "dhows"). Furthermore, maritime crime in the AO is endemic. Last but not least, the Coalition AO lies in the middle of a politically charged Middle

East. The above factors combined to pose significant operational challenges for the RSN TGs in theatre.

The Way We Fight



John Boyd's OODA cycle will be employed to frame the analysis in this section. This section gives examples of tactical actions conducted by RSN units in the NAG and sets the stage for deriving implications on equipping and training (discussed further later in this essay).

The conduct of conventional war at the tactical level and MARSEC/LIC (during OBO) share the same four basic elements: *observe, orient, decide* and *act*. **Both allied and adversary forces are typically engaged in an intense competition to complete their respective OODA cycles ahead of the other side.** The side that reaches "Act" first usually stands a higher chance of winning.

At this juncture, it will be useful to briefly outline how forces can be deployed for operations such as OPLAT defence. The most straightforward approach is to divide the surrounding AO into concentric zones, a method typically employed by armed forces worldwide for missions such as layered convoy defence or zone air defence. Certain pre-planned responses are laid down in case any particular zone

is breached. In the case of OPLAT defence, Coalition units act in concert to collectively form a “ring of steel”.

Observe

Localised vs Wide-Area

In this first stage of the OODA cycle, **both allied and enemy forces are essentially competing to build superior awareness.** Even at this early stage, we begin to see some divergence between how this process was carried out in OBO, *vis-à-vis* how it would be carried out in conventional war. Given the heavy traffic criss-crossing the AO, coupled with the fact that any of these contacts could have been a threat; there was a need for *localised* and persistent surveillance around the OPLATs from the outset. In contrast, *wide-area* surveillance seemed less efficacious, given that one would only be able to discern a real adversary at the very last moment. It was what the adversary did “up close and personal” that mattered.

There are implications for equipping here. The situation in the NAG naturally placed a premium on high resolution short-range navigational radars to pick out small contacts encroaching into the OPLATs’ perimeters. Longer-range surface/air surveillance radars, which would prove indispensable in conventional war, were found to be not particularly useful against small boat threats. There was also an obvious benefit for the Coalition to possess units that were able to remain on-station for prolonged periods to provide persistent surveillance, as was the case with the LST.

Orient

Intentions vs Identity

In OBO, there was a need to observe each and every *attribute* and *action* made by a COI, down to the minutest detail, in order to make sense of the developing situation. The key to MARSEC/LIC lies in discerning *hostile intent*. In conventional war, classification based on an adversary’s physical attributes (missile canisters, unique hull forms) alone is usually sufficient to progress to the next OODA stage. **Simply put, in conventional war, we look at “what the COI is”.** In MARSEC/LIC, we go **beyond that to see “what the COI is doing, or is likely to do”.** The million-dollar question then becomes: *how do we discern hostile intent?*

Drawing Red Lines

The RSN TGs achieved this by drawing many virtual red lines for the enemy to cross in order to get close to the OPLATs. In crossing one red line after another, the adversary would reveal more and more of his hostile intent to the OPLAT’s defenders. It is this cumulative intent, after an appropriate number of red lines have been crossed, that would trigger a move to the next OODA stage. Such an approach would not be necessary in conventional war.

If audio and visual warnings broadcasted through various means failed, small crafts and USVs could be deployed for interception. The purpose of interception was primarily to solicit intent, and not so much to “ride off”. The idea is that if an encroaching COI continued to press towards the OPLAT regardless of obstacles in its path, that would likely demonstrate hostile intent.

In this regard, the LST had weapons and sensors well calibrated for identification and warnings. In particular, the RSN USVs generated widespread interest among Coalition partners, due to their usefulness in conducting perimeter patrols and interception operations (without having to put humans in harm's way).

Decide

Rules of Engagement (ROEs)

ROEs govern how war-fighters operate across the peace-troubled peace-war operational continuum. For most armed forces in conventional war, there is obviously a concern to preserve the moral high ground. However, once the gloves come off, threats that match one's identification criteria can be swiftly neutralised. Hostile intent is assumed. Of course, utmost consideration will be given to legal regimes such as the Geneva Convention and the Laws of Armed Conflict. In limited conflict such as MARSEC/LIC, similar considerations apply, albeit with some subtle but significant differences. Firstly, COIs that match one's identification criteria sometimes cannot be immediately neutralised, as they may not be displaying sufficient hostile intent up till then. Secondly, it is incumbent on the defender to continually (and not just at the outset) determine hostile intent. This means that even after a shot has been fired, the defender may have to pause and reassess before continuing his engagement. All these point to the need to train our war-fighters to imbue not only different skills but also different instincts for MARSEC/LIC, as compared to conventional war.

Time Compression in Decision Making

Given the disadvantageous constraints that the defender operates under for OODA stages I and II, the ability to react quickly once a COI evinces hostile intent becomes all the more critical. This is perhaps more so than in conventional war, where one would be able to systematically build up a recognised maritime picture of potentially hostile targets and properly think through one's anticipated actions. In this regard, clearly delegated authority for Commanders on the ground is vital. Commanders on the ground need to be able to exercise *mission command* to exploit fleeting opportunities or to react to contingencies.⁵ Chances are that there will not be the luxury of time to consult higher headquarters for the green light.

Act

Quick-draw vs Engaging at distance;
Long-drawn at medium/high intensity
vs Short bursts at high intensity

In conventional war, one plans to take the enemy out as far away as possible, preferably before entering the latter's weapon range. **The need for close observation in MARSEC/LIC means that chances are both sides will be in each other's weapon range by the time the decision is made to engage.** This places a heavy demand on the crew manning the ship's weapons; they have to operate from start till finish under threat level RED (imminent) conditions. In conventional war, a more gradual build up from WHITE (threat unlikely) to YELLOW (threat probable) to RED usually takes place. Armed forces plan

for a swift and decisive victory over the enemy by default. This implies being able to fight at high intensity for a relatively shorter duration. However, in MARSEC/LIC, the nature of the conflict is such that sporadic events are spread out over a relatively longer duration. The challenge therefore lies in maintaining a medium to high state of readiness for prolonged periods of time. There are training and human factor issues that need to be addressed – for example, avoiding burnout and establishing a sustainable routine for the crew.

Disabling vs Destructive fires

In conventional war, we shoot to kill. In MARSEC/LIC, we shoot so that we do not have to kill (in a sense). In the former, once the go-ahead is given, our war-fighters instinctively carry out a series of reflex actions to prosecute the enemy till destruction. In the latter, OOTW practitioners have to constantly weigh the principles of proportionality, limited collateral damage and minimum force. This implies a measured posture, even in the heat of battle, and a gradation of engagement options – from warning to disabling and finally, to destructive fires. Again, this is something that needs to be specifically trained for, as the instincts required in the above two scenarios are fundamentally different.

Ultra precise vs Simply accurate

In conventional war, we need accurate weapons that deliver destructive payloads onto the enemy. We need those too in MARSEC/LIC operations. However, the requirements are more stringent in the latter. We need weapons that are ultra-precise and can deliver

a high rate of fire (ROF) at specific points on the enemy vessel's hull. Large calibre main guns (3-inch, 4-inch, 5-inch) that are useful for naval shore bombardments will not cut it here. Neither will long range surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) designed for longer reach to achieve “one shot one kill” in war. We are looking at weapons that are very precise with a high ROF at short range, for example, smaller-calibre stabilised guns (in the 25-30mm range) with associated fire-control systems. These guns should be able to provide both low (for disabling) and high rates (for destruction) of fire. MARSEC/LIC weapons also need to pack sufficient punch to disable very large vessels such as hijacked supertankers. There are equipping implications here.



In MARSEC/LIC, our war-fighters have to constantly weigh the principles of proportionality, limited collateral damage and minimum force.

The Way We Equip

As highlighted already at various points in the essay, the difference in the “way we fight” for OOTW (MARSEC/LIC) and conventional war impacts the way we equip for OOTW (MARSEC/

LIC). From the above OODA analysis, an ideal MARSEC/LIC platform should possess the following characteristics: fast, manoeuvrable, sufficiently big to mount stabilised medium-calibre guns with varying rates of fire that possess high accuracy at relatively short ranges, able to carry sufficient payload, able to withstand rough seas, remain self-sufficient for extended periods (or be able to conduct replenishment with Coalition oilers) and possess the capability to launch unmanned systems as well as auxiliary crafts.

OOTW is currently on an up-trend and it makes eminent sense for armed forces to make sure they are properly equipped for OOTW missions. However, given the simultaneous trend of decreasing defence expenditure worldwide, most armed forces have taken the force development path of equipping for war and adapting for OOTW. From the RSN's vantage point, given that our core business remains conventional war-fighting, that would seem a prudent approach for us too, for now. The implication therefore is that the diversity of mission demands in OOTW points to the need for highly versatile platforms in the RSN's ORBAT, if it is to conduct wide-spectrum OOTW cost-effectively, as well as be able to employ the same assets for war. These platforms should be rapidly configurable for the particular mission at hand.

The Versatility of the LST

In the case of OBO, the LST was easily configured to carry a customised set of weapons, sensors and small crafts for a MARSEC/LIC mission in a distant theatre. For a start, the LST has the real estate to house a robust weapon

suite that included a 76mm main gun, two 30mm stabilised remotely-operated guns and various types of small arms. It also possesses a good sensor suite comprising navigational and surveillance radars. Furthermore, it has the lifting equipment and space to house and launch Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and USVs.

Not only is the LST easily configurable, it has good sustainability and sea keeping which facilitate operating in distant theatres under sometimes unfavourable environmental conditions. This applies not only to the LST "mother ship", but also to the small crafts that operate out of her. On many occasions, the RSN TGs were literally flooded with requests from Coalition partners for the use of the LST's Fast Craft (Utility) [FCU] and Fast Craft (Equipment and Personnel) [FCEP] to carry out duties ranging from stores and VIP transfers to security patrols. That certainly helped to accentuate the value that the RSN TGs were bringing to the Coalition force.

Besides the sturdiness of its small crafts, the LST has the capacity to carry a good mix of them: USVs, various sizes of RHIBs, FCUs and FCEPs. Small-craft capability appears to be a must-have for most maritime OOTW missions to afford multi-purpose utility.

Force Multipliers

As described under the "Observe" and "Orient" stages, UAVs and USVs perform useful surveillance and presence roles. They have the distinct advantage of being able to operate without incurring risks to human life. They can also operate under harsh environmental conditions. For example, temperatures often soared

above 40 degrees Celsius during some of the deployments in the NAG. Such temperatures could extract their toll on Coalition sailors conducting small boat patrols under the hot Arabian sun. In previous OBO deployments, the opposite – extreme cold – was encountered.

Looking ahead to future OBO-type deployments, the RSN could configure more of our platforms to be able to launch UAVs. This will significantly increase the situational awareness of RSN ships in any Coalition and also our value as a useful partner. USVs should continue to feature in our future deployments. We should build on our accumulated experience to systematically expand the USV's operational envelope – from perimeter patrols around the mother ship to autonomous patrols at distance.

Future Procurements

While the LST scores well on many counts, it does have certain shortcomings – speed and manoeuvrability. These are both important attributes for MARSEC/LIC as well. While Coalition Patrol Crafts (PCs) faced sustainability and sea keeping issues in the NAG, the importance of their role as pickets around the OPLATs cannot be overemphasised. Their ability to respond quickly to rapidly closing threats was a vital asset. Given their slower speeds and longer pick-up time, the LST and larger Coalition cruisers would have been hard-pressed to intercept fast approaching skiffs (which can travel at up to 40-50kts).⁶ Even if the LST happened to be in the right position to block an encroaching skiff's initial line of approach, it would have faced

considerable difficulty manoeuvring to fend off the more nimble skiff.

This leads us to consider whether there are other more suitable platforms that can potentially be contributed for future OBO-type operations. Looking at the RSN's ORBAT⁷, its new Formidable-class frigate appears to fare better than the LST in areas such as speed and manoeuvrability. However, the frigate does not provide as much utility as the LST in terms of its space and lift, and hence the flexibility, sustainability as well as ability afforded to carry multiple auxiliary crafts. Overall, the LST still appears to be the platform of choice for OBO-type missions in its current form. The frigate could be employed at the sharper end of the OOTW spectrum. This could range from maritime interdiction operations under the ambit of the proliferation security initiative (PSI) to non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO) in hostile environments. ALST-frigate combination would no doubt be a highly versatile and effective pairing. The RSN's missile corvettes and patrol vessels are useful too for MARSEC/LIC operations. However, their main disadvantage remains their lack of sustainability.

The above considerations represent only one line of inquiry – force structuring for a specific type of OOTW. The reality is that optimising one's force structure to cater to both conventional war and OOTW remains a huge challenge. Even as armed forces worldwide gear up to meet rising OOTW demands, we will probably see increasing numbers of multi-role platforms coming to the fore. It remains to be seen how useful newer generations of multi-role and multi-mission crafts will be in the RSN's operational context.

The Way We Train

Earlier in the essay, we noted the differing instincts and reactions required for OOTW and conventional war during the “orient”, “decide” and “act” stages. The philosophy underlying the principles of OOTW (shown above) is tangibly different from that underlying the principles of war. The war-fighter is used to acting swiftly and decisively upon reaching a conclusion on the identity of the COI. By necessity, he tends to perceive things in black or white. The OOTW practitioner needs to be able to “hold his horses”, as he generally encounters scenarios which are more grey, uncertain and complex. That is not to say that the latter does not need the ability to act swiftly once a point of no return is reached. Obviously, some form of OOTW-specific training is needed to prepare our sailors to perform well. The key question then is whether this training should: (a) take the form of ad-hoc packages delivered prior to deployment; or (b) have a number of officers/WOSPECs specialise in OOTW in lieu of conventional war-fighting.

Principles of OOTW
Objective
Unity of Effort
Security
Legitimacy
Perseverance
Restraint

Table 1: Principles of OOTW⁸



The OOTW practitioner needs to be able to “hold his horses”, as he generally encounters scenarios which are more grey, uncertain and complex.

The starting point for our solution must be that the SAF and RSN are likely to face continued resource challenges in the years to come, particularly in the area of manpower. The crux of the matter is not dissimilar to that of equipping, which has been discussed earlier. Can we afford the luxury of two different training tracks? Or should we try to adapt our men and women (who have been drilled in conventional war-fighting) for OOTW? Personally, I feel that conventional war-fighting training should continue to remain the core business of military schoolhouses. In fact, drilled war-fighting instincts and responses serve us well in environments where quick responses are needed. I believe that a war-fighter can be adequately “ramped up” for an upcoming OOTW deployment through a customised and comprehensive pre-deployment training package. That package should include basic language

training, ethics training, geopolitical briefs and refresher courses on legal regimes like the Geneva Convention, the Laws of Armed Conflict and the Law of the Sea Convention. Such packages can be provided by training units that specialise in OOTW. At the same time, these units can double up as KM custodians for OOTW.

There are other elements that should be covered by such training packages. OOTW are usually multinational, multi-agency efforts. Working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is a central feature in OOTW. The uninitiated war-fighter usually ends up applying battle procedures and using military-speak when dealing with civilians. Needless to say, this could backfire. Our men and women must be primed to understand how NGOs operate and what their vested interests are. As Commanders, we need to exercise our discretion in choosing and developing subordinates with the correct aptitude, skill-sets and exposure to deal with NGO representatives.

Another area that warrants further thought is Multinational Force Management. It is only natural that there will be occasional tensions between what the Multinational Force Commander desires to do on the ground and what the National Commander is actually permitted to commit to. There is a lesson to be learnt here in managing expectations. At times, in order to avoid awkward downstream situations, there is virtue in being up front with one's constraints. The National Commander can "make

up" for this by participating more proactively in other areas within his mandate. Fellow Coalition soldiers tend to appreciate transparency up front. Of course, judgement needs to be exercised by the National Commander as to what is appropriate and what best balances the interests of his country and the Multinational Force that he is operating under. For that, a National Commander needs to be given an intimate understanding of his or her national and military strategic interests in the context of the mission.

Conclusion

The RSN TGs have achieved mission success in the various tasks and activities they were engaged in over a number of deployments and have contributed substantively to achieving desired Coalition outcomes. In this concluding section, I'll like to briefly survey our strengths and weaknesses as Singaporeans when it comes to Multinational operations.

One of our strengths is that we are thoughtful in our contributions. A lot of thinking goes into what niche contributions we can bring to the Coalition table. Coupled to that, we focus our energies, not so much on the "song and dance", but on getting the job done efficiently and effectively. I believe this is well appreciated by our Coalition partners. Third, the significant number of bilateral and multilateral exercises that the RSN engages in does prepare our men and women to work well with sailors of other nationalities. Fourth, our small size works to our



advantage by allowing us to be nimble. This means that we are able to move from concept to implementation more quickly than most other armed forces. The fact that the RSN has been fielding cutting edge technologies (the USV for example) in the NAG for 3 years running already, ahead of most other navies, is testament to that.

Ironically, a strength can just as easily turn into a weakness. Sometimes, our zeal to get the job done can come across as being too “impatient” or “pushy”. As such, we may unnecessarily create friction with our multinational partners. This does not do justice to the good work that has been done. What we need is patience and the calm to take our foot off the accelerator from time to time, and let events unfold naturally to sort themselves out.

In conclusion, this essay has sought to make the point that while OOTW and conventional war do share many similarities, there are nonetheless tangible differences that need thoughtful reckoning. Conceptually, there are subtle yet substantive differences between how war-fighters and OOTW practitioners deal with the threat environment and potential adversaries. As a consequence, a deliberate approach to mounting OOTW, in the area of training and equipping, is necessary. Given that

most navies might not be able to afford a force structure optimised for both conventional war and OOTW, it becomes important to think through how to “adapt for OOTW” in terms of customised training packages underpinned by a robust OOTW KM system and imbuing modularity into force structuring for increased ORBAT versatility.

Finally, penning this essay has brought home to the writers the richness of the OBO experience. We hope that the information and insights that have been shared in this essay will be useful for war-fighters and OOTW practitioners in the SAF and contribute to the growing the body of knowledge on this subject. It is also hoped that through this essay, readers (from the SAF) will be much enthused to sign up for the next RSN or SAF operational deployment and experience things firsthand! 🇸🇬

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Endnotes

- ¹ The signal extract as shown is based on an imagined scenario and has been edited for illustration purposes. The Coalition Task Force number 999 is also fictitious.
- ² SAC refers to Scene of Action Commander. IQN refers to the Iraqi Navy.
- ³ Unfortunately, certain information that would have afforded the reader a better appreciation of the OOTW battle space and Coalition CONOPS has been omitted in order to preserve Coalition OPSEC.
- ⁴ “SSTRO” is the acronym used to describe the set of activities previously classified under counter-insurgency (COIN), security and support operations (SASO), and stabilisation operations.
- ⁵ Mission Command refers to a decentralised C2 philosophy that devolves decision making to well-trained, capable and empowered subordinates.
- ⁶ A “skiff” refers to a common working boat, usually river craft. Skiffs usually possess outboard motors and have a central-console hull design, with a blunt bow, flat bottom and square stern. They are typically used by fishermen or as leisure speedboats.
- ⁷ ORBAT refers to SAF Order of Battle.
- ⁸ Extract from Trainee Guide J-NE-002 for MOOTW Course conducted at Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Atlantic – Naval Amphibious Base, Virginia, USA in 2002 for US and International Naval Officers.



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Balancing on Shifting Sand: Perspectives on Singapore's Strategic Engagements with the Major Powers in the Asia-Pacific

by LTC Irvin Lim Fang Jau &
CPT Phua Chao Rong, Charles



“Foreign affairs for us is to find a strategic balance for the area, and special relationships with those who will be able to help us in our economy and our security.”

Lee Kuan Yew, 2007¹

“When there is a multiplicity of suns, the gravitational pull of each is not only weakened but also by a judicious use of pulls and counter-pulls of gravitational forces, the minor planets have a greater freedom of navigation.”

S. Rajaratnam, Jun 1976²

The Changing Nature of the Ground

The geostrategic landscape in the new millennium continues to be dominated by the US monolith. Although, it will continue to wield considerable global politico-military weight for at least another few decades to come, its ephemeral moment of *strategic unipolarity*, appears to be at a penultimate phase. The sands of history are shifting at the American monolith's very feet, as new powers and old players spring up to stake their claims and time in the sun.

Already, discernible patterns are forming in the future geostrategic landscape, shaped by the other major powers pulling towards a more strategically multipolar world. China, Russia and even India have expressed strong reservations at US hegemony and are downplaying traditional strategic rivalries between them to forge new strategic “autonomy”, if not “alliances”, to allow themselves greater freedom of manoeuvre to pursue their own national interests on a regional and global level. The ongoing flurry of diplomatic charm offensives launched by the major powers throughout the world – and particularly in Asia – bear testimony to the differences in strategic vision and the *realpolitik* stridency of their respective quests.

With so much diplomatic cultivation and re-alignment going around these days, the strategic sands of geopolitics continues to shift, and “balancing” the interests of a small state like Singapore will not get any easier. With a wavering American “hyperpower” coinciding with the rise of China, an outward-looking India, a revitalized Russia and a re-militarising Japan, the rise of new major players as regional stakeholders will mean that strategic engagements will sharpen even further the uneven playing field. Indeed, it will create unevenness and uncertainties in the geostrategic environment that will need to be managed with some policy delicacy and finesse for a small state like Singapore; albeit one that needs to be plugged into the global political-economy in order to stay relevant and punch above its limited strategic weight so that the city state continues to not just survive, but thrive.

US – Still a Choice Partner of First Resort

A small city state like Singapore has to engage the US for a multitude of reasons. Politically, the US continues to champion and lead the pack of Free World democracies after the Cold War. It remains the biggest global military spender with the most sophisticated and strongest technological military prowess. Economically, the US remains the strongest in sheer quantitative GNP terms and the rising powers of China and India, though catching up fast still have some distance to go before reaching parity. As some have argued, “even if America is losing the ability to dictate to this new world, it has not lost the ability to lead”.³ It is clear that the US, both as a super power and as a super market, carries substantial strategic weight that cannot be ignored, and the continual impetus in engaging US is a foreign and defence policy imperative for Singapore.

Distractions do not mean Disengagement of US in Asia-Pacific

The so-called *Global War of Terrorism* may have somewhat distracted the US from the Asia-Pacific. Since 9/11, the US has been focusing its efforts on the Global War on Terror. The main theatre remains in the Middle East with on-going convulsions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Southeast Asia is considered a secondary theatre. The no-show by the US at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Manila in Aug 07 is considered by some to be indicative of the region’s marginalisation that could send a wrong signal⁴, especially at a time when enhanced engagement is key to solving many pressing security issues of

common concern. Nevertheless, Robert Gates' recent speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Jun 08 has sought to reaffirm US commitment in Southeast Asia.

The US's management of China's rise as a major power on the global stage will shape the course of its engagement with the region. American foreign policy continues to be at two minds on how to treat major powers like China and Russia as "strategic partners" and as strategic competitors. Indeed, some RAND strategists had even previously proposed that a US foreign policy of "*conengagement*" and *strategic clarity* for dealing with China⁵ over *engagement* and *strategic ambiguity*. Such Manichean policies carry with them heightened risks of conflict to the detriment of regional stability. Singapore can continue to play a pivotal role through its "thought leadership" role in the range of regional fora to further facilitate regional engagement between the US and emergent major players like China to promote greater understanding and cooperation, in order to, avoid disengagement or estrangement.

Leveraging on Mutual Benefits for Sustained Interaction

Bilaterally, our close cooperation with the US in many areas of political, economic and defence policy coordination continue to be in "good shape".⁶ Mutually beneficial areas like the Strategic Partnership Agreement and the signing of a bilateral *Free Trade Agreement* (FTA) should further deepen our already broad-based country-country relations in the coming years. On the military end, we should continue to progressively step up the

tempo, complexity and integration of our existing exercises with the U.S, as we operationalise new enhanced capabilities and benchmark for greater combat effectiveness. For example, our involvement with the US in bilateral exercises like Ex. CARAT (Combined Annual Readiness Afloat Training), as well as multilateral ones like the Proliferation Security Initiative, Ex. SEACAT and Ex. Cobra Gold have been significantly enhanced and broadened particularly over the past few years. Enhanced collaborative high-tech military ventures, as well as arms sales, can also propel such efforts. In addition, honing new joint expertise in the area of peace support operations and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations can be achieved through our future troop participation in multilateral exercises like the revamped annual Ex. Cobra Gold series (with Thailand and US). We should also continue to build-up new undersea Search and Rescue (SAR) capabilities through continued involvement in the multilateral Western Pacific Navies' submarine rescue exercises. Such regular professional engagements enhance interoperability that help foster greater regional resilience in handling regional OOTW/HADR contingencies. Despite its vacillating tendencies between unilateralism and isolationism on the one hand, and triumphalist moralism (*megaphone diplomacy*) and exceptionalism on the other, the US remains the one key strategic partner amongst the other major powers that is a potential stabilising force when weighing-in on any regional contest in the political, economic or military arena.



Ex. Cobra Gold opening ceremony

Keeping the US Engaged in Regional Security Developments

Continued US interest and engagement, as a “resident power”⁷ in the region’s evolving multilateral security architecture is a crucial leg in the diplomatic “bipod” (the other leg being - bilateralism) for lessening regional tensions; even if complex disputes in themselves may not always be resolved quickly. Continued US commitment to the multilateral process is of strategic importance and in its interest, even as it aims to maintain its military presence/ pre-eminence and seek affirmation of its leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region. Besides, the close Trans-Pacific Japan and Taiwanese relations, the US may explore developments with Southeast Asia, with a US-ASEAN FTA after US-Singapore FTA being a good start. The potentially destabilising developments in the South China Sea and its strategic consequences to the wider regional security warrants closer US attention. This is to prevent any stumble into an escalatory situation by bluster and brinkmanship through gun-boat diplomacy *ala Taiwan*⁸; although cross-straits relations appear to be looking up with renewed ties and bilateral deals to boot, under new Taiwanese President

Ma Ying-Jeou. The region may not be headed for a steady decline towards a ‘show-down’ between the various claimants over the disputed South China Sea islands as yet, but the need to keep such disputes on the strategic radar and from boiling over at the diplomatic end is clear. Recent Chinese and Taiwanese refutation of Malaysian assertion of claims over its occupied and extensively developed “Pulau” Layang-Layang (or what the Taiwanese call Swallow Reef) serve as another reminder of the “asymptotic” Spratly issue; a geopolitical Gordian knot that will be challenging to untie any time soon. Any show-down between the claimants would be destabilising and could just as surely drag in the major powers. Here is where perhaps a road map towards the resolution of the dispute could be jointly sponsored by the US and ASEAN under the auspices of the ARF or UN. Difficult though as it is due to often overriding competing interests, it is important to continue the process of getting all parties concerned to commit to a pacific multilateral agreement on the South China Sea disputes to reduce the risk of conflict⁹ and to pre-empt any major power from presenting the region with a pejorative *fait accompli*.



Multilateral security cooperation is important to foster trust among member countries.

The US remains an established stabilising influence even as the other major powers cast their strategic gaze on the region. In fact, US has been continuing with its efforts at re-strengthening the *San Francisco alliance system*¹⁰ with their bilateral partners in the Asia-Pacific e.g. Japan, South Korea, Australia *et al.* However, the US need not choose to be a “lonely superpower” and pursue “dangerous dreams of flying solo”¹¹ in bilaterally securing their security interests in the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia. Instead, they should stay on the course of multilateralism, as an integral and inclusive overlay to their strategy of forward defence and bilateral security arrangements in the region.

China – Awakening Dragon Ambitions

The peaceful rise of China remains an open book for the Asia-Pacific powers. In the US, its response came in the form of a decade-long discourse on the “China Threat” theory. India is wary of what it considers to be China’s “string of pearls” at its door-step (i.e. across the Indian Ocean). Despite recent reconciliatory overtures¹², Japanese relations with China are still laden with heavy historical baggage that have yet to be off-loaded.

Moving Warming Relations Forward

China’s relationship with Singapore and the region has been warming steadily, especially since the end of the Cold War. The Chinese seem increasingly eager to engage the countries of Southeast Asia beyond traditional issues of economic cooperation to take

on new security cooperation. This intent is seen most vividly in increased defence-related policy dialogues and the signing of cooperation agreements with the various ASEAN countries in recent years.

As some scholars¹³ have concluded – on the one hand, we diplomatically engage China’s rise as a major regional power with circumspection, while on the other hand, we hedge militarily by building up an effective and credible defence force in preparation for any deterioration in the regional security climate. Such a pragmatic policy of “*cultivating while hedging*” looks set to continue. Besides economic and political engagement with the Chinese, “*cultivating while hedging*” may well evolve beyond *di riguer* exchanges of personnel at military training courses, towards more substantive engagements such as bilateral/multilateral exercises. In this regard, inclusive participation in multilateral exercises involving SAR and HADR are a good way to kick-start the next phase of interactions. Going forward, beyond reaping mutual professional benefits, regional confidence building is something that we could facilitate as an *honest broker* to help foster wider military interaction with the Chinese military in the international arena, by plucking the low hanging fruits of common security concerns. The recent WPNS Multilateral Sea Exercise (WMSX) hosted by Singapore in May 07, in which the Chinese sent a warship to take part in, was the first time that the PLA Navy (PLAN) participated in a multilateral exercise in Southeast Asian waters. And just a couple of months earlier in

Mar 07, the PLAN deployed frigates to participate in the multilateral Exercise AMAN 07 held in Pakistan. And again in Sep 07, two Chinese warships joined the Australia and New Zealand navies for a two-day drill at waters off Sydney. The participating navies conducted drills in communications, fleet formation, vessel supply and search and rescue. Reaching westward, China also deployed two ships to four countries in Europe from Jul to Oct for goodwill visits that involved the conduct of joint search and rescue exercises. China's participation in such multilateral military activities as well as active participation in international defence exhibitions with significant arms export opportunities for its growing range of military products herald a greater willingness on the part of the Chinese to embark upon higher profile defence diplomacy on the regional and global stage, commensurate with their growing global stature and power. The flurry of show-of-flag outreach efforts present opportunities for professional and operational engagement as they can enhance confidence-building by promoting greater transparency, better understanding, and mutually beneficial cooperation. And as has been argued, "a more assertive China does not mean a more aggressive China".¹⁴

In sum, China's on-going *charm offensive* in the region¹⁵ can be seen in the broader canvass as a serious attempt to extend her growing influence in the region; particularly in Indo-China and the South China Sea. Already, the South China Sea has been described as potentially China's Caribbean¹⁶ as its navy modernises to take command of the (distant) seas in the coming decades.

Its continued military build-up with sophisticated Russian arms sales and self-developed weapons systems (e.g. anti-satellite missiles) remain a source of concern for some over the "pacific" nature of its longer term orientation towards the region.¹⁷ Although China is well plugged into the global economy and is unlikely to revert to autarkic policies, her growing appetite for natural energy resources and improvements in military capabilities, even if focused principally on Taiwan for the moment, bears some watch particularly as it sharpens its strategic gaze towards the Southeast Asian region in the coming decades. Hence, continued multilateral engagements with China is a way to balance the region's concerns for continued peace and stability *vis-à-vis* China's growing influence, *without* it seeking regional hegemony¹⁸ or interference.

India – Looking East and Linking-up

Moving in from the (Water) Margin

The rise of China clearly has had an effect on India's foreign policy. Concerned about China's strategic interests and growing influence in the region, India has also stepped up its interactions with the Southeast Asian countries.¹⁹ India has moved fast to open up some sectors of its previously hermetic economy, and has embraced the globalisation mantra for her economic development. Indian policy makers are also shedding the Nehruvian ethos of "non-alignment"²⁰ with a new view that national security and economic development are two sides of the same coin. After all, both facets increasingly involve close coordination and interaction with external powers,

as well as forging new partnerships with friendly states in the Southeast Asian region. A founding member of the Non-Alignment movement, India is now moving in from the margins of Asia-Pacific Security with enthusiastic participation in multilateral efforts like the ARF. These actions reflect its desire to join the global community and intention to balance China's growing influence in the region.

Translated to their military development, this is apparent that India is now adopting a pro-active and forward-looking defence policy capable of offensive power projection to back its diplomatic initiatives. India has also looked East with the formation of its *Far Eastern Naval Command* (a Joint Strategic Command) at the strategic Andaman/Nicobar Islands – the western gateway into the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. India's blue-water capability is also set to grow with the recent operationalisation of new stealth warships on order. The Indian Navy already operates one aircraft carrier, INS Viraat (originally *HMS Hermes*); and is poised to acquire a second one to be named INS Vikra (*Ex-Admiral Gorshkov*) from the Russians sometime by 2014; albeit a full-fledged two-carrier naval force with blue-water capabilities in the real sense of the term will likely only be ready after 2015.

Accommodating Indian Security Interests

Clearly, India is a growing regional power that Singapore cannot ignore. Bilaterally, we have set the right course by reciprocating India's diplomatic gestures and goodwill through closer economic cooperation and convergence

in regional political outlook. These initiatives should be actively entrenched in the coming years, as we become a strategic portal by which India integrates economically with the rest of the Southeast Asian region.

At the security level, our Singapore army, especially our armoured units, has recently started to train in India. Our naval forces have been conducting annual Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercises, with the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean and Andaman Sea since the mid 90s, and more recently in the South China Sea. The Indians have also expressed keen interest in conducting more of such bilateral interactions with ASEAN navies in Southeast Asian waters; especially the conduct of extended bilateral naval training in the South China Sea. Multilaterally, Indian naval presence in the SEA region is growing fast. It has already made tangible steps in expanding eastwards since the conduct of its first joint naval patrolling exercises with the Vietnamese and Japanese navies in the South China Sea in 2000.²¹ To be sure, Japan and Vietnam are emerging as India's strategic partners in the maritime domain from Indian waters to the South China Sea. At international maritime forums, India has also joined Japan in calling for joint naval/coast guard patrols in the Malacca Straits to curb the region's notorious piracy problem. High-level visits by Indian leaders to regional countries and Singapore over the past few years, have sought to seal new trade deals and forge a new image of India as an emergent regional leader with global aspirations. As India's External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee put it recently: "India is not just a motor

of regional growth, it can equally be the bulwark of regional security”.²² In a major policy reversion in the mid 90s, India has also been cultivating the Myanmar military junta²³ through the exchange of high-level visits as well as transfer of military equipment²⁴ to consolidate fledgling security ties. This expansive Indian effort to secure “operational partnership”²⁵ is widely seen as a strategic response to curb creeping Chinese influence in the Indo-China region and Indian Ocean.

There is a mutuality of interests and scope in accommodating the renewed Indian desire to engage its near and Far East through deepening bilateral and broadening multilateral modalities of defence engagement in order to further develop fledgling security ties with the Indians. This will need to be done while assuaging any concern that countries such as China may have about encirclement of her southern flank with misperceived encroachment by extra-regional powers into an area it deems to be its traditional backyard. Such inclusive accommodation should enhance and not compromise our potential future defence cooperation with the other major powers as well.

Japan – Looking Forward to a “Normal” Rising Sun Again

Troubling Memories and Old Scars Remain

For some countries in the region, Japan has yet to remove deep-seated concerns by failing to apologise²⁶ for the indelible scars of occupation that remain. To be sure, growing fears of resurgent Japanese militarism is not helped by her ongoing struggle as a

nation to come fully to terms with its disastrous role in WWII. A clear and unequivocal atonement for her war atrocities remains problematic and elusive in the medium term.

Assertive Constitutional Renovation Towards Re-armament

This coupled with the strong stance of recent Japanese administrations in re-arming Japan, looks set to alter Northeast Asian security dynamics. *Article Nine* of Japan’s postwar “peace” constitution, which “forever” renounced war and the threat or use of force, is being challenged by new calls within Japan for constitutional reform. This can be seen by the controversial push for a permanent law to allow Japan to deploy troops abroad, as well as the passing of a new law on 9 May 08 allowing for the non-aggressive use of space, breaking a decades-old taboo with an increasingly ambitious space programme that allows Japan to launch its own military surveillance satellites as part of early warning for its missile defence system. Japan’s quest to be a “normal” state has also been prodded along by its American ally; support for it to shoulder some limited form of peacekeeping duties under the auspices of the UN. Such calls²⁷, which have been gathering momentum, has been somewhat cemented by the US Republican Bush administration as it re-calibrated its focus towards enhancing closer strategic ties with Japan (and Taiwan) by eventually bringing them under the aegis of the much-touted Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) system. Besides the North Korean Missile threat and the China/Taiwan dispute, the Japanese have outstanding maritime disputes with the Chinese and Taiwanese over maritime borders

and the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Japan is concerned with China's growing maritime influence in the region and the latter's growing potential to destabilise the region. It is therefore poised to play a more active role in countering any perceived increase in China's naval ambitions and enlargement of sphere of influence. This new cloud of strategic rivalry looming over the South China Sea is something that will be watched warily by the Asia-Pacific region.

The Japanese have other reasons to be more active in security issues especially with regard to the Southeast Asian region. For example, the Japanese, not without reason, are concerned over preserving its vital oil imports/trade cargo that transit through the Strait of Malacca, as well as controlling the piracy problem. In fact, 70% of Japan's oil imports pass through the Strait of Malacca. At the turn of the millennium, after signalling their intention in Apr 00 at a conference on maritime piracy in Tokyo, they proceeded swiftly to deploy their 76mm gun-equipped Japanese Coast Guard vessels into the region for the new mission. Some of the vessels have been routinely calling on regional countries for the regular deployments. This development, coupled with its ongoing naval refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of the GWOT is strategically significant, as it has routinised Japanese deployments westward and represents a modest but significant expansion in Japan's sphere of operations to more than 6500km from her territorial waters.

In addition, the Japanese have the capability to do so. Already, the Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) has by far the

most advanced military technology amongst the Asia-Pacific countries; albeit kept at a low profile and away from the public's eye. Her on-going high-tech purchases of long range air-refueling tankers, additional Aegis air defence destroyers²⁸ and two 13,000-tonnes "helicopter-carrying destroyers" (often considered by military experts to be quasi-aircraft carriers) will extend its force projection capabilities and make it even more formidable in the years to come. In addition, revised guidelines for the US-Japan Defence Cooperation, declared in 1997, have assigned to Japan a greater security role in the Asia-Pacific, allowing its SDF to venture out into the high seas and international air spaces. Besides, the change towards a forward-leaning posture for the Japanese Coast Guard and Maritime Self Defense Force, coupled with its robust defence budget is repositioning the "land of the rising sun" as a major regional player in the area of maritime security. Already at the inter-governmental/agency cooperation level, Japan's ReCAAP²⁹ initiative to promote maritime security by reducing regional piracy through information-sharing and capacity building has led to the creation of an inter-governmental Information-Sharing Centre based in Singapore since late 2006.

Japan has been our long-standing business partner in the Asia-Pacific region. Substantial Japanese investments and expertise over the past three decades have helped Singapore to be the economic powerhouse it is today. Despite our close and warm bilateral relationship with Japan on the economic front, significant military and security cooperation is still relatively low-key and limited. Despite the limited

security cooperation, our bilateral ties are strong and reciprocal. In fact, we had indicated on numerous occasions from as far back as the early 1980s, that Japanese rearmament is inevitable³⁰ as part of its “state normalisation” project and something Southeast Asian countries should be prepared to accept; if not, accommodate. Close ties with the Japanese is best seen in our closed-door bilateral security talks held under the regular Japan-Singapore symposium series³¹. At the level of security interaction, we should continue to provide tacit acknowledgment of Japan’s legitimate security concerns in the region by providing fuel and victual support to the Japanese Coast Guard vessels and warships routinely calling into the region. The Japanese Coast Guard also been actively engaging the Singapore Police Coast Guard and maritime agencies of regional countries in annual anti-piracy exercises at sea during their deployments into the region. Our navy could continue to engage transiting Japanese warships with passage exercises and in multilateral exercises, and gradually upgrade the complexity of the exercises to promote interoperability and serve as a useful professional bench-mark. Such *ad hoc* and limited exercises have been good for professional interaction³² between the two navies, promoting goodwill between our countries.

Enmeshment for a Different Second-Coming

Japan’s growing regional assertion through its revised defence posture is set to grow. Although it is unlikely to lead to unfettered militarism, we could help to facilitate Japan’s regional integration

and image rehabilitation by allaying any residual fears of resurgent militarism through the pursuit of *a concerted policy of multilateral enmeshment*. In particular, some observers³³, have argued that since Japan has made considerable economic contributions to the region over the past few decades, it should naturally be invited to play a role in enhancing the region’s security architecture. Such roles and responsibilities can then be systematically disbursed to Japan within the framework of multilateral institutions such as the ARF and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation initiatives. Granted, *strategies of enmeshment* through interlocking multilateral security networks like the ARF may not always be successful in constraining a determined rising power seeking strategic autonomy. But in lieu of alternatives besides outright suspicion and alienation, they remain nevertheless useful in mitigating any regional disquiet over the return of major power militarism.

Russia – Searching for New Oriental Vistas?

With a new-found stridency on the global stage initiated under former President Putin’s leadership, Russia had officially announced back in 10 Jul 00, her own charm offensive in Asia; putting improved ties with China, India and the rest of Asia at the heart of its new foreign policy doctrine.³⁴ In any case, the announcement had appeared then to reflect Russian willingness to maintain a more balanced relationship between Moscow’s Asian and European policies.³⁵ However, Putin’s search for new Oriental vistas in the post-Cold War

era has not quite translated into any real concrete interest in Southeast Asia as yet. A revanchist Russia remains concerned more with managing its relations with the regional powers at the periphery of her Southern-Central Asia (India, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation countries like China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the Far East (North/South Korea, Japan) flanks.

Back with a Blast from the Back-burner?

Since the end of the Cold War era, we appear to have had limited and incidental contact with the Russian military in the area of security cooperation. Our contacts have been mainly in the area of limited arms sales (e.g. the *Igla* SAMs which the SAF purchased from them). We will do well not to draw a policy blank with regards to the Russians. They continue to be a weighty regional presence with a nuclear missile force to rival the US. We should continue to engage them through the ARF process and professional platforms like the WPNS as an important international dialogue partner. Singapore's Defence Minister Teo's hallmark visit to Russia in Sep 06 may yet hold-out prospects for new avenues in future bilateral security cooperation. All said, the Russians from their recent race to re-arm and the flexing of muscles³⁶, bolstered no doubt by a revitalized self-confidence in their "well-oiled" economy, appear intent on reasserting some level of military presence and political clout in the regional and global stage. Even as it is sharply focused on the resurgence of "Cold War" political divisions with

the West, the Russians nevertheless remain concerned about being left out of the game by the other major powers jockeying for influence in the East. In the longer term, the Russians may yet make a return to the Southeast Asian region, not for ideological reasons but for purely *realpolitik* interests³⁷ and prestige-based motives. Already, we see how Russian arms exports have made inroads by generating regional market interest; especially as a viable, attractive cost-effective alternative to traditional Western arms suppliers.

Europe – An Important Mixed Bag of Dealings with Selective Focus

We have firm defence relations with some of the major European countries like the British (Five Power Defence Agreement), French (RSAF Training Agreement), naval shipbuilding technology cooperation). The Swedes have also been helpful in providing us with undersea technological transfer in the area of Mine Counter-Measure operations and the ongoing training of our submarine crews. We have also fledgling defence ties with the Germans in the field of defence technology cooperation.

We can ill-afford to overstretch our lean pool of defence manpower resources and expertise with so many countries. Therefore, for all purposes and intents, our relations with the Europeans are narrow in scope; very focused and highly selective. This should continue to be our guiding policy in the coming decades. We should continue to stay primarily focused on defence technology transfer and joint research opportunities, while

exploring military training avenues and arms sales where suitable. The Europeans are our important dialogue partners in multilateral fora like the Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM) and the ARF. Though, as part of two different regional groupings (ASEAN & EU) we may differ in approach when dealing with security dilemmas, e.g. Myanmar, we should nonetheless emphasise that dialogue is important. Our differences in approach can even be complementary at times in solving difficult disputes.

Singapore’s Balancing Act

Despite the lack of natural strategic weight, Singapore has always thrived on the challenge of punching above our weight. The country remains well poised to balance on the shifting sand of major power dynamics reshaping the balance of power and security landscape of the region. By staying politically sensitive and operationally relevant to the strategic pulse of the region, and working through institutions like ASEAN and the UN, Singapore

through our wide ranging defence engagements can help to favourably shape our foreign policy outcomes that advance our national interests; even if we cannot physically increase our strategic weight on the international stage. Singapore is also actively seeking for an open and inclusive regional security architecture that eschews narrow and parsimonious approaches that preach “regional solutions to regional problems” , especially in an era such as ours where many of the common challenges we now face in a globalised world respect no borders. The US, as the predominant power in the Asia Pacific, must be continually engaged. Rising regional powers such as China, India and Japan will need to be increasingly engaged in the new areas of defence and security cooperation in parallel with cooperation in other economic-cultural fields. Singapore’s economic aspiration as a regional hub for financial, communications, transport and education, amongst others, makes it a natural hub for greater multilateral security cooperation as well. An example



5th ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Force meeting in Singapore

of our successful efforts would include the annual Shangri-la Dialogue for Defence Ministers and senior defence officials held in Singapore. Operationally, the positioning of Singapore as a regional Maritime Security Hub through initiatives such as the mutually-reinforcing ReCAAP Information-sharing Centre and fledgling Changi Command and Control Centre hold promise in breaking new ground in multilateral security engagement in the maritime domain.

While, security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific is not new, one can argue that it is taking on an exciting twist towards more active engagements amongst the major stakeholders. 9/11 has been a strategic catalyst in this regard. It has ushered in an era of unprecedented Maritime Security (MARSEC) cooperation against maritime terrorism, a common interest that affects the major Asia-Pacific powers whose ships regularly traverse the strategic regional waterways. In addition, the increase in devastating global climate changes in a seismically-active region, has seen increased demands for mounting multinational HADR missions.



Singapore is a natural hub for greater multilateral security cooperation.

Engagement Strategy - The Singapore Way

Such cooperation reflects the Singapore way of (defence) diplomacy. A unique blend of what Singapore's Ambassador-At-Large Tommy Koh had once called "pragmatic idealism". In seeking to balance on the shifting sands of geostrategic relations, shaped by major power dynamics, Singapore can provide ideas or "thought leadership" towards stronger cooperation in areas of common interests and contribute towards the process of shaping ideas to reality. This Singapore way of diplomacy is evident in the MFA's efforts to engage Europe (ASEM) and Middle-East (Asia-Middle East dialogue) that also apply to engaging the Asia-Pacific countries on security-related issues.



Singapore engaging regional countries on security-related issues.

As a small state, Singapore cannot but be a pebble in the prevailing tectonic power shifts. Size notwithstanding, the key challenge facing many states, big or small, in the 21st century is "whether states can be effective international actors at all in the face of globalisation and diffused concentrations of power".³⁸ Our influence in shaping the regional geostrategic environment may be

limited, but across the broad front, we have been relatively effective in deepening our bilateral and multilateral relations with the major powers since the end of the Cold War. In fact, we have endeavoured to pull our weight in a relatively eventful two-year tenure in the UN Security Council at the dawn of the new millennium and more recently, as Chair of the ASEAN Standing Committee. Through our active participation in such international organisations, we can continue to ensure that we are able to exert a disproportionate amount of influence in relation to our physical size on the world stage as we cultivate ties to seek out common ground in line with our national interests and international responsibilities as a sovereign state. In so doing, we aim to continue building up soft power surpluses of international goodwill, respect and influence in order to punch above our weight where our vital national interests are threatened both in and out of the diplomatic ring or battlefield. As has been well argued that “size is not destiny”³⁹, we must continue to carry a lot of weight when mounting the scales of economic, communication, intellectual and diplomatic power. However, this will tend to work better only when our national interests can find convergence with the collective interests of like-minded partners.

Singapore multilateral approach in dealing with the increasingly complex security dilemmas and overlapping concerns of the closely intertwined strategic environment encourages a regional pattern of multilateral power engagement to promote greater confidence building, regional resilience,

peace and stability. Overtime, together with like-minded countries in the region, cooperative norms of behaviour with the major powers can be further deepened to harness *both* the close spirit of bilateral ties and the collective synergies of multilateral ventures.

Conclusion

The moment of strategic unipolarity may have come and gone. While strategic multipolarity becomes the order of the day with the rise of new powers, strategic stability is not a given. While strategic diversity may not necessarily lead to strategic instability, we can ill-afford to be short-sighted or be “one-dimensional” in our focus when forging closer relations with the major powers. We must be prepared to engage friendly countries and major powers, on the basis of equality and mutual respect and continue to balance our long-term survival and strategic interests carefully, while keeping a studied eye on *geopolitik* competition playing out again on the ever shifting sands of history. Popular discourse⁴⁰ has it that a new Cold War with potential for serious conflict between the US and its principal challenger, China, is well within the geostrategic radarscope. If anything, with the ambers of global terrorism still burning, it will more likely continue to be a *Hot Peace* – with periods/havens of relative peace interspersed by flashes of tension around regional hotspots underscored by major power competition. We could well see an increase in hot-peace missions of peace-keeping and peace-building involving multinational forces in countries divided by intense sectarian conflict and terrorism. The Asia-Pacific could easily become one

of the global hot-spots the world might be losing sleep over.

As Singapore positions to meet the new strategic realities, we should endeavour to ensure that our strategic engagements or enmeshments do not become strategic entanglements in the great “concert” of powers. In this respect, the exhortation of Singapore’s eminent founding foreign minister, the late S Rajaratnam, serves as an abiding reminder: “...our foreign policy and our defence policy must ensure that we do not become, or even appear to become, the pawn of any outside power”.⁴¹ This will mean that Singapore’s continuing strategic engagements – our foreign policy and security relations – with the major powers will need to constantly look ahead with acumen and creative adaptation to avoid policy mis-steps and pitfalls, while safeguarding and advancing our core national interests. In sum, it will have to be more like a well-balanced pirouette with many courting, if not contesting, partners over shifting sand. 

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⁴¹ See Kwa Chong Guan, *S. Rajaratnam on Singapore*, ed. p28.



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Global Maritime Partnership and the Prospects for Malacca Straits Security

by MAJ Desmond Low



“Most important among navies or among nations is friends.”
– Adm Arleigh Burke, USN

Introduction

During the 17th International Seapower Symposium at Rhode Island in Sep 05, US Navy Admirals John Morgan and Charles Martoglio presented the Global Maritime Network concept, a novel and thought-provoking approach to address the issue of global maritime security. Often billed as the “Thousand-Ship Navy” (TSN) and more formally known as the Global Maritime Partnership (GMP)¹, the concept calls for a global approach to

international maritime security where “policing and protecting the maritime commons against a wide spectrum of threats is a high priority for all nations interested in the economic prosperity and security that comes from a safe and free maritime domain”.² The concept is not about a thousand gray hulls flying the American flag, but rather, it is a voluntary global network that brings together the collective capabilities of nations to establish and maintain the security of the international maritime domain.

Southeast Asia and, in particular, the Malacca Straits³ is a compelling starting point for analysing the feasibility of

this concept. The Malacca Straits is one of the most vital waterways in the global maritime trade network where some 65,000 ships transit each year, carrying one-third of the world's trade and half its oil supply. Given the lukewarm international response to past US-led initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI), and in many cases criticism that these primarily furthered US interests, what makes the GMP different and what are its prospects for success in Southeast Asia? This article proposes that despite significant hurdles, the prospects for the GMP are fairly good. This article will begin by highlighting the key characteristics of the GMP concept and surveying the maritime security challenges confronting the Malacca Straits region which arise from differences in threat perception, financial resources and priorities, and territorial disputes. It

will then discuss recent developments which signal an improving climate for multilateral cooperation and finally conclude by suggesting an approach for the Malacca Straits region so as to build trust and capacity without provoking regional sensitivities, and to avoid the perception that this is a US-led initiative to “bend international maritime forces to an American agenda”.⁴

Global Maritime Partnership Defined

The old adage “the devil is in the details” certainly applies because many details of the GMP concept remain to be worked out. This will take many years, even decades, given the scope and complexity of worldwide maritime issues.⁵ However, what is clear about the concept is that it aims to bring together maritime forces, port operators, commercial shippers, and international, governmental and non-governmental



The Malacca Straits is one of the most vital waterways in the global maritime trade network.

agencies to address mutual concerns about maritime security. Participation in this network is touted as being purely voluntary, with no legal or encumbering ties and each nation only contributing to the extent that it is comfortable with. It is envisioned as a benign, free-form, self-organising network of partners that are mutually interested in using the power of the sea to unite, rather than divide.⁶ The concept recognises that safeguarding the security of the global commons against transnational threats requires significantly more capabilities than any one nation can muster, and that this does not involve just naval forces but, more importantly, governments (especially law enforcement agencies) and private-industry as well. Examples of the concept in action include the coordinated counter-piracy and terrorism operations by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in the Malacca Straits, Operation Black Sea Harmony in Eastern Europe and Caspian Guard in the Caspian Sea. Humanitarian assistance operations conducted in response to the Dec 04 Asian Tsunami, the Aug 05 Hurricane Katrina disaster and the evacuation of civilians from Lebanon by some 170 ships from 17 nations during the Israeli-Hezbollah war⁷ are other parallel examples.



Maritime exercises between government agencies and private industry.

Putting together the GMP network will require several key building blocks. First is establishing mutual trust with and amongst international partners in order to build beneficial relationships for cooperation. Second, it requires the cooperation of foreign naval and maritime law enforcement agencies as well as the private shipping industry. Third, a framework for enhancing shared maritime domain awareness (MDA) built around the principles of transparency and common standards.

Maritime Security in Southeast Asia: A Paradoxical State of Affairs

The maritime security landscape of Southeast Asia is complex, textured by the rich cultural, political, economic and social diversity of the region, posing a myriad of obstacles in the establishment of a common maritime security regime. Drawing inspiration from Charles Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, James Boutelier's description of the global maritime outlook for the region in 2004 as "a paradoxical state of affairs, that it is the best of times and the worst of times" remains apt.⁸ On the one hand, the rapid economic growth of Asian economies, led in large part by China and India, has resulted in burgeoning regional trade with dramatic knock-on effects in increasing maritime traffic and the demand for ships. On the other hand, the shadow of maritime terrorism looms over the bright prospects for the maritime community. Other maritime security challenges include unresolved maritime border disputes that hinder effective enforcement actions, lack of robust regulatory frameworks governing seaborne trade, limited resources of

coastal states, lack of robust multilateral security arrangements in the region and perhaps most ominous of all, the threat of piracy and terrorism and the possible nexus between them.

Since the inception of the 1982 UNCLOS III, intersecting claims in the Asia-Pacific over territorial seas, contiguous zone, continental shelves and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) have raised complexities over issues surrounding their delimitation. As long as these claims remain outstanding, there is a lack of jurisdictional clarity and certainty over the disputed waters. Such ambiguity complicates the development of effective bilateral and multilateral cooperation towards maritime security.⁹ A major outstanding dispute is the multiple overlapping claims over the Spratly Islands which is claimed wholly or in part by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. Around the Malacca Straits, maritime border disputes exist over Karang Unarang (Indonesia-Malaysia) and Pedra Branca (Singapore and Malaysia). Resolving such disputes is a protracted affair, especially when it involves multiple parties. It was only after lengthy negotiations that the Chinese Government signed a multilateral agreement with ASEAN in Nov 2002 on conduct in the South China Sea.¹⁰ Although such agreements and the adjudication of disputes by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) may point towards “relaxing sovereign sensitivities” as argued by Bradford¹¹, the more likely outcome is a hardening of national resolve to prevent further territorial losses. Following the ICJ’s decision in 2002 to award sovereignty over the Ligitan-Sipadan islands to

Malaysia¹², Indonesia took steps to secure its maritime borders, including a ban on sand export over concerns that further quarrying would result in the disappearance of small outlying islands and the erosion of maritime borders.¹³ And while the ICJ’s decision over Pedra Branca has been announced recently, the subsequent delimitation of its surrounding waters is expected to plague bilateral relations for many more years to come.¹⁴

Even when maritime boundaries are clear, complications can arise. For example, the overlap of territorial boundaries with international straits can result in tensions over the jurisdiction and interests between coastal and user states. As the primary coastal states astride the Malacca Straits, Malaysia and Indonesia have fiercely defended against any perceived infringements on their sovereignty, while at the same time seeking assistance to support their responsibility as coastal states to enhance the safety, security and environmental protection of the straits. It was no surprise that Malaysia and Indonesia raised strong objections when a mis-reporting of former Commander US Pacific Command, Admiral Thomas Fargo’s congressional testimony on RMSI implied the deployment of US forces to the Malacca Straits, because it was viewed as an affront and violation of their national sovereignty.

While the coastal states are resolute about undertaking sole responsibility for the maritime security along their vast coastlines and inside their territorial waters, the reality is that many are incapable of effectively doing so. In 2003, it was reported that only about

30% of Indonesia's 117 navy ships were operational.¹⁵ Many of the force modernisation programmes started by Southeast Asian states were curtailed by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and despite the economic recovery since then, the capabilities of coastal states remain limited. Furthermore, the priority placed on maritime security, and concomitantly the level of resources applied, varies from state to state where it is often subjugated by other national priorities such as alleviating poverty, economic development, education, health and human disaster recovery relief.¹⁶

The vast majority of the world's oceans are the global commons which by their very definition and nature, are unregulated and "lawless". Unlike highly regulated civil airspace where commercial aircraft are continuously tracked from take-off to landing, the location of any of the world's 96,000 merchant ships and many more small craft is rarely known with any degree of certainty once they sail beyond the horizon. The vast oceans of the world provide criminals and terrorists the freedom to disperse, deploy and from which to launch attacks. Furthermore, the sheer volume and vitality of international seaborne trade linking a multitude of seaports and crucial transshipment hubs worldwide offer a myriad of tempting and attractive targets, many within close proximity to principal city centres. In his analysis of contemporary maritime terrorism threats, Herbert-Burns contends that the current international maritime corporate and business practices form a "corporate veil" which can be used by astute individuals or organisations to

conceal their identity and by extension, their true motives and intentions.¹⁷ This anonymity can be achieved through three interlocking mechanisms – exploiting business modalities such as bearer shares and nominees to conceal true ownership, shell companies in offshore financial havens that virtually guarantee freedom from regulatory scrutiny and lastly, judicious selection of flags of convenience. Security officials are deeply concerned over the potential for ship owners, operators, criminal organisations and terrorists to use flags of convenience to obscure their operations. Paradoxically, flags of convenience are legitimised under Article 91 of the UNCLOS which states that there "must exist a genuine link between the State and the ship".¹⁸ However, there is *no stipulated requirement for the declaration of ownership*.

Terrorist organisations have clearly demonstrated the ability to exploit these loopholes. In May 03, the *Abu Hassan*, an Egyptian-registered fishing boat was intercepted off the coast of Lebanon by Israeli forces. Subsequent inspection revealed that it was carrying a consignment of weapon components and training materials bound for Hezbollah. In other developments, intelligence agencies have assessed that Al Qaeda and its affiliates now own dozens of "phantom ships", mostly hijacked ships that have been renamed and repainted, and operate under false documentation by crew with forged papers.¹⁹

Another challenge in establishing an effective maritime security regime is the lack of and difficulty in establishing *a robust regional security framework*.

While fora exist for the discussion of political and security issues such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the political calculations by nation-states in maintaining the status quo versus developing regimes, as well as the ASEAN principle of non-interference have resulted in a very cautious approach towards issues concerning security beyond voluntary bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks.²⁰ Thus, apart from a web of bilateral and focused multilateral arrangements, there is currently no substantive multilateral security arrangement encompassing the region. Existing bilateral and multilateral defence agreements are largely aimed at diplomacy and confidence building, and on fostering interoperability among naval forces in conventional warfare areas. For example, the annual FPDA exercises between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore is a defense arrangement arising

from British obligations to her former colonies.²¹

By far the greatest threats to maritime security are piracy and terrorism and the possible nexus between them. The hardening of air and land transportation networks have made maritime targets increasingly attractive, such that the prospect of a maritime 9/11 has become not a matter of “if”, but “when”. Dr Tony Tan, Singapore’s former Deputy Prime Minister, said in a keynote speech at a maritime security conference in 2004, “We cannot just wish the problem away. Doing nothing cannot be an option. If an incident happens, or should I say when it happens, everyone will wake up and scramble for a solution, but it will be too late... The time to act is now.”²²

According to International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reports, Asia remains a hotspot for piracy²³ and armed robbery,



Asia remains a hotspot for piracy and armed robbery with the region accounting about half of the world’s attacks.

with the region accounting about half of the world's attacks. Though the worldwide attacks have decreased in recent years from a high of 445 in 2003 down to 230 in 2006, Asia still accounts for a large proportion of the attacks (38% in 2006). After spending more than a year being classified as a war-risk zone, Lloyds suspended the war risk premium for vessels plying the Malacca Straits in 2006 due to a decrease in piracy incidents, which fell from a high of 28 in 2004 to just seven in 2007.²⁴ While increased regional and international efforts have likely contributed to this decline, figures alone do not tell the whole story. A worrisome trend is the increasing sophistication and violent nature of the attacks. Coordinated attacks by multiple fast boats, and the use of automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades are becoming common. In addition to taking cash and valuables, pirates are also resorting to ransoming kidnapped crew, an act which IMB Director P. Mukundan described as "reprehensible and appalling".²⁵ In other instances, whole ships vanish only to re-emerge as "phantom ships".

By far the most sinister scenario has been the possibility of a convergence of terrorism and piracy. Opinions on this phenomenon are mixed. Some regional experts argue that such connections have been overplayed and that terrorists and pirates have divergent interests and modus operandi. The former seeks to disrupt world trade and draw maximum publicity, while the latter depends on the continuity of international trade and avoids drawing attention to themselves.²⁶ Still, the possibility of an apocalyptic maritime 9/11 attack

remains as the lines between piracy and terrorism are increasingly blurred. On 26 Mar 03, the chemical tanker *Dewi Madrim* was boarded, robbed and piloted by pirates off the coast of Sumatra. Combined with the fact that the captain and first officer were kidnapped without a ransom demand, this incident was an apparent attempt to acquire operational expertise to stage maritime terrorist attacks.²⁷ Analysts have also pointed to the increasing capabilities of terrorist organisations in Southeast Asia with maritime traditions such as the Gerakin Aceh Merdeka (GAM), Abu Sayyef Group (ASG), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and their links with Al Qaeda. These organisations have been responsible for several attacks such as the Superferry 14 bombing in the Philippines in 2004 (ASG), the 2002 Bali bombing (JI) and the attack of *MT Penrider* (GAM). Like Al Qaeda, the JI had also planned attacks against military vessels in the region including a plot to attack US military vessels berthed at Changi Naval Base.²⁸

Prospects for Partnership – An Analysis

Despite the apparently dim outlook, several developments point towards greater maritime security cooperation in safeguarding the Malacca Straits, including greater acceptance of regional cooperation as a norm and increasing prioritisation of maritime security. Some have arisen out of the recognition of piracy and terrorism as the foremost threats to global seaborne trade while others are an evolution of the warming regional geo-political climate.

Following more than a decade of bilateral coordinated patrols²⁹, the littoral states of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore expanded their cooperation with the launch of trilateral Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrols (MSCP) on 20 Jul 04.³⁰ Through coordinated, rather than joint, patrols within their respective waters, the littoral states have managed to improve operational effectiveness without infringing on each others' sovereignty. The following year, the Malacca Straits Security Initiative (MSSI) was expanded to include maritime air patrols with the launch of the "Eyes in the Sky" (EiS) initiative on 13 Sep 05.³¹ Thailand, which lies at the northern end of the Malacca Straits, has also been invited to participate and is keen to do so.³² While such efforts may have been initiated in part to forestall any intervention by external powers in security matters which are considered to be the primary responsibility of the littoral states, they nonetheless demonstrate the willingness of the littoral states to cooperate and develop mutually acceptable and effective "homegrown" solutions. After nearly four years since MSSI was started, more positive indications have emerged. When Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister was recently asked if the coordinated patrols could eventually be turned into joint patrols, he answered, "We can examine them but we have to overcome some sensitivities."³³ While he did not elaborate, these sensitivities likely refer to sovereignty issues regarding cross-border enforcement and rights of hot pursuit.

At a wider multilateral level, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery

against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is the first regional government-to-government agreement to promote cooperation against piracy and armed robbery at sea in Asia.³⁴ Initiated by former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2001 and finalised in Tokyo in 2004, it involves 16 regional countries.³⁵ At the heart of the initiative is the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC), an independent international organisation hosted in Singapore. It is noteworthy that while Indonesia and Malaysia have continued to express their support for the initiative, they have not signed the agreement, reportedly due to uncertainties in way the ISC would operate³⁶ and concerns that the pact would infringe on their sovereignty over the Malacca Straits.³⁷ Being the main littoral states, their participation is considered vital to the success of the initiative.

Recognising the impact on their national security and economies, Southeast Asian states have been increasing the priority accorded to maritime security threats. This is seen in recent substantive changes in military and governmental organisations, force structures and operations to increase capacities and capabilities in maritime law enforcement and crisis response. In Nov 05, the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) was launched. Modelled after the US Coast Guard, it was formed by ships and personnel drawn from its navy, police, customs, fisheries and marine department, with plans in the pipeline to refresh and update its fleet.³⁸ Likewise, Indonesia is expanding its naval fleet³⁹ and Singapore has

enhanced its maritime security measures through increased round-the-clock security patrols of the Singapore Strait, deployment of Accompanying Sea Security Teams (ASSET) and streamlining operational linkages between its Navy, Police Coast Guard and port authority.⁴⁰ Maritime security has also become a regular feature in bilateral and multilateral maritime exercises, both among regional maritime forces as well as with extra-regional partners, with the aim of enhancing interoperability and cooperation in anti-piracy and counter-terrorism. Many of these initiatives were an expansion of conventional warfare-oriented exercises such as Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)⁴¹ and the FPDA⁴² series, while others are new initiatives such as Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism (SEACAT).⁴³ Several firsts include joint anti-piracy exercises between Japan, Malaysia and Thailand⁴⁴, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Maritime Security Shore Exercise⁴⁵, both of which were conducted in Jan 07.



Maritime security has also become a regular feature in bilateral and multilateral maritime exercises.

Opportunities and Challenges for Global Maritime Partnership

While the climate for regional cooperation appears favourable, gaining acceptance of the GMP concept among prospective regional partners is an uphill task. Critics cite that one of the biggest obstacles is the perception that this US-led initiative serves more to secure its homeland than improving global maritime security. They point to the lack of support for PSI⁴⁶ and RMSI⁴⁷ as one of the imperatives for the GMP, and that the GMP amounts to “PSI by other means”. Proponents of the GMP carefully point out that unlike PSI and RMSI, this concept is benign in nature and that respect for national sovereignty is high. In building the needed relationships, a key challenge will be designing a maritime network that will match activities with regional and local interests, as well as the capabilities of various nations. Given the strong objections by coastal states towards direct external involvement in maritime security affairs, the application of soft power by extending financial aid, access to technology and training is an attractive alternative with better mileage in generating goodwill while allaying sovereignty concerns. Such measures would serve to improve the coastal states’ capabilities for law enforcement at sea and in protecting the safety of navigation and environment of the Malacca Straits. Some ongoing developments bear this out. Following the lifting of an arms embargo in 2004 and resumption of full military ties, the US is seeking to expand military cooperation with Indonesia in counter-terrorism, law enforcement, information exchange and personnel exchange.⁴⁸

Opportunities also lie in supporting a burden-sharing arrangement for the upkeep of the Malacca Straits. The majority of vessels using the straits do not call at any of the straits states' ports and thus the coastal states do not receive any direct benefit from their passage. Yet Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore bear the burden in providing for the safety of navigation, as well as the consequences arising from accidents. So far, Japan has been the main donor, having voluntarily contributed more than US\$150 million since the 1960s. The Nippon Foundation has estimated that approximately US\$300 million would be needed to upkeep navigational equipment over the next decade in the already congested straits.⁴⁹ Concrete commitments by the US would help advance the initiative by encouraging other major user states such as China, India and South Korea to participate.

The US can also continue to engage the region without increasing its footprint by supporting regional multi-track diplomatic mechanisms such as the ARF (Track one) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)⁵⁰ (Track two), as well as promoting leadership among regional users with direct stakes in the security of the sea lanes, namely China, India and Japan, and by supporting local maritime security initiatives. These confidence and security building efforts will pave the way for the GMP concept to take root and assuage regional concerns over US hegemony.

With more than 90% of the world's trade shipped by sea on some 96,000 ships (of 100 gross tons or more)⁵¹, there is enormous potential for merchant

marines to complement and extend the intelligence and information gathering capabilities of nations and navies. Furthermore, shipping and port industry participation is vital for the successful implementation of other overlapping initiatives like the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code)⁵² and the Container Security Initiative (CSI).⁵³ In order to convince the shipping industry to voluntarily share information on vessel locations (usually considered proprietary), cargo and crew manifests, and suspicious activity, the GMP concept will need to address information management and security issues, and explore providing incentives to the industry with breaks on Automatic Identification System (AIS) costs, government-industry cost sharing associated with new security measures, and expedition in cargo inspection processes for compliant vessels. A further step towards improving regulation of the global commons could be re-crafting international law by amending international conventions, such as UNCLOS, to eradicate "corporate veils" arising from the use of flags-of-convenience and overcome legal issues associated with the boarding and seizure of suspicious merchant vessels on the high seas.

A key enabler of the GMP concept is maritime domain awareness (MDA), defined as "the knowledge of anything at sea that affects a nation's security, safety, economics or its environment".⁵⁴ It envisions a system where information from extensive sources is collected, fused into a common operating picture (COP) and shared with users with appropriate access, so as to generate actionable intelligence for response(s)

by appropriate forces or agencies. Achieving MDA as envisioned will require a tailored approach to address regional sensitivities and complement existing capabilities and systems. In the Malacca Straits, some level of information sharing has existed since 1998 through the Mandatory Ship Reporting System (STRAITREP).⁵⁵ Implemented by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, its main purpose is for navigation safety and marine environmental protection. More recently, Singapore and Indonesia established a joint sea surveillance system in 2005 called Project SURPIC to share a common real-time picture of the Singapore Strait.⁵⁶ Given the political sensitivities highlighted earlier, a supportive yet non-intrusive approach is needed to improve the littoral states' technical and operational surveillance capabilities and information sharing capabilities while recognising their rights over the straits. Interoperability is a main factor in successful information sharing, requiring common procedures, communication systems and protocols. The US CENTRIX (Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange) system is a possible solution already in operation among multinational naval forces. Cost-sharing measures or technical assistance grants would make such systems more affordable for resource-strapped states. In mid 2006, the US pledged to help Indonesia develop a coastal radar system to monitor the Malacca Straits, similar to a system in operation along the Malaysian coast.⁵⁷ A more important factor is transparency and ensuring that all authorised users have equal access to information. Undoubtedly, this would limit information sharing to unclassified data in the beginning. However, it could progress to include

intelligence information in the same way confidential credit card information is shared worldwide, but closely protected, by the banking industry.

Conclusion

The strategic trends in the geopolitical environment in Southeast Asia, with particular regard to the Malacca Straits, indicate a general readiness for increased cooperation in maritime security which points towards fairly good prospects for an initiative like the GMP. However, actualising the concept as envisioned by its designers will require substantial effort to work out the practical operative mechanics. For the US, gaining the acceptance and commitment of littoral states without provoking regional sensitivities lies in a non-intrusive yet supporting approach towards locally bred and led initiatives through the application of its soft power. Beyond this, realising the Thousand Ship Navy is a matter of time. 🇺🇸

Endnotes

- ¹ While the phrase "1,000-Ship Navy" captures the essence navies networked globally for maritime security, the term Global Maritime Partnership is being formally used to avoid any connotations alluding to a USN force structure of 1,000 ships, or that other nations' ships would be incorporated into a US-led coalition.
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- ³ The Straits of Malacca and the adjacent Singapore Strait have a symbiotic relationship and one cannot be discussed without the other. The term Malacca Straits is used to refer to them in the collective.
- ⁴ Stephen Saunders, "Executive Overview: Jane's Fighting Ships", *Jane's Fighting Ships 2006*.
- ⁵ Since November 2006, the Naval War College has embarked on a series of public talks

- across the country in an effort to broaden awareness and garner support for the 1,000-Ship navy concept as it prepares the US Navy's future maritime strategy. In addition, the Naval War College has been conducting gaming and analysis in an effort to advance the concept. Source: Amy Klamper, "The Thousand Ship Navy", *Sea Power* (13 Feb 07). Also available from <http://www.military.com/forums/0,15240,125158,00.html>
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 - 7 Klamper, "The Thousand Ship Navy".
 - 8 James Boutelier, "The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: The Global Maritime Outlook 2004", in *The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: Maritime Security in the Asia-Pacific*, eds. Joshua Ho and Catherine Zara Raymond, (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and World Scientific, 2005), pp13 – 31.
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 - 13 Fadil, "Riau Islands Halts All Sand Exports", *The Jakarta Post* (5 Dec 06). Prior to this ban, former president Megawati Sukarnoputri's administration halted all exports of coastal sand to Singapore in 2002.
 - 14 "Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/Singapore)", *International Court of Justice Press Release 2006/38*, 16 Nov 2006. Available from <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=1883&p1=3&p2=1&case=130&p3=6&search=%22pedra+branca%22>
 - 15 Tiarna Siboro and Arya Abhiseka, "Two New Warships Head to Aceh to Curb Gunrunning", *The Jakarta Post* (15 Apr 03).
 - 16 The 2007 Indonesian draft state budget gave priority to nine programmes including poverty alleviation, creation of more employment, revitalisation of the agricultural, fishery, forestry and rural sectors, improvement of access to the education and health sectors, law enforcement and protection of human rights, eradication of corruption and bureaucracy reform. Source: *People Daily Online*, "Indonesia Budget Deficit Forecast at 0.9 pct of GDP in 2007", 17 Aug 2006. Available from http://english.people.com.cn/200608/17/eng20060817_293811.html
 - 17 Rupert Herbert-Burns, "Terrorism in the Early 21st Century Maritime Domain", *The Best of Times, the Worst of Times*, pp155-177.
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- ⁴² The annual FPDA exercises were expanded to include maritime security in 2004.
- ⁴³ SEACAT is an annual week-long at-sea exercise designed to highlight the value of information sharing and multinational coordination within scenarios that gives participating navies practical maritime interception training opportunities. Led by the US, the last exercise in May 2006 involved the navies of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. More information is available from <http://www.clwp.navy.mil/seacat2006/>
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Developing Leaders As Learners

by LTC Karuna Ramanathan
& MAJ Henry Koh



Introduction

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) is unique in that it develops leaders at all levels in order that the military requirements for national duty can be met. Military leaders need to learn how to think and lead, and a big part of this is to know how learning occurs, in order to optimise learning opportunities for individuals, teams, groups and ultimately, the SAF as an organisation. Learning is an essential part of leadership development; it contributes towards building one's self-awareness, self-management and personal mastery. A widely held view is that in the transformed SAF, Officers will need to learn, think and create better, so as to lead soldiers, airmen and sailors to meet the challenges and demands in the new operating

environment. Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute, Military Institute (SAFTI MI) has already embarked on a transformation drive to shift the training and education paradigm. This essay discusses the need to strengthen the systematic preparation of the SAF Officers, with the necessary education and practice to enable reflection, such that these practices can be transferred into the workplaces to enable systematic organisational learning.

Transformation Challenge

As the 3rd Generation (3rd Gen) SAF starts to gel its many parts into a cohesive fighting force, service interoperability and "jointness" would be the desired end-states of future training and operational structures. Information Knowledge Command and Control (IKC2) by itself

is a joint undertaking, and beyond the concepts and the technology, the next and difficult step would be to build the learning competencies and skills to enable exploitation of information and higher decision-making states.

Another ongoing challenge is keeping both the operations and training environments on the same knowledge curve as it will be critical to SAF's operational readiness. At the system level, the learning processes and tools will facilitate inter-service knowledge exchange to constitute a foundation for "jointness".

Interestingly, this is very much a knowledge management issue; though the term has been bandied around rather liberally, to the SAF it means that we need to leverage on our learning abilities in order to gain from our experiences and stand prepared for uncertainties. We are quite unlike Siemens, IBM, Accenture or any other commercial organisations. SAF develop leaders, and leaders influence people, so that the SAF can continue to carry out its dual duties of deterrence and diplomacy.



SAF develop leaders, and leaders influence people, so that the SAF can continue to carry out its dual duties of deterrence and diplomacy.

The tasks ahead are not without major challenges; there is a lack of time and resources, and we need to enhance our understanding of priorities, and existing structures and systems which need improvements. These are frequently cited as insurmountable challenges; nevertheless, newer and novel ways will have to be found to bring change while continuing to operate within current structures.

This essay then proposes the building of reflective practices at the individual, team and organisational levels in order to enable the SAF to better prepare our leaders for the uncertainties in a 3rd Gen fighting force.

Knowledge Hub

Knowledge is multi-dimensional. Explicit knowledge is objective and formal by nature and can be transferred to others within the organisation. Nonaka (1995) reports tacit knowledge is undocumented and, accordingly, is hard to transfer to anyone else. Naturally, the tacit knowledge store is much bigger than we think.

In the 3rd Gen SAF, SAFTI MI will lead and work with major training institutions and schools to position itself as a knowledge hub, serving knowledge and information sources for the workplace. With access to workplace electronic repositories, the major training institutions and schools will be able to validate, summarise and manage the currency of content and structured thought for re-use, with the help of information technology. Having access to data and information is however only a necessary condition for new knowledge generation; the greater

challenge is to imbibe in our Officers the methodologies and motivations to seek new ways of doing things and to learn from other’s experiences.

The nature of work in the knowledge era is fundamentally different from what we have traditionally known and hence, requires a different order of thinking. It also needs new structures and processes as well as changes in many areas and types of work. Despres and Hiltrop spell out some of these differences between traditional work and knowledge work, in Table 1.¹

One significant outcome of this shift from traditional to knowledge work has been the growing recognition that an organisation’s wealth exists principally in the heads of its employees. This understanding fundamentally changes priorities, work processes and employee relations. As de Geus put it: “Within companies, our success depends on our

skill with human beings: building and developing the consistent knowledge base of our enterprise”.²

Today, many workplaces’ knowledge is collective; it is taken for granted yet, at the same time, socially shared. Indeed, collective knowledge is embedded in social activity in ways that are relatively hidden from the social actors involved. Spender notes that dynamic concepts are not only held collectively but also generated and applied collectively within a pattern of social relationships.³ These social relationships are sometimes referred to as “communities of practice”. It has been customary to think about knowledge under the context of the individual knower, a useful distinction can be made between individual knowledge which is consciously held, and that which is tacit and implicit. Today, learning processes which are emerging in a knowledge economy both influence and are influenced by

	Traditional work	Knowledge work
Skill/ Knowledge sets	Narrow and often functional	Specialised and deep, but often with diffuse peripheral focuses
Locus of work	Around individuals	In groups and projects
Focus of work	Tasks, objectives, performance	Customers, problems, issues
Skill obsolescence	Gradual	Rapid
Activity/ feedback cycles	Primary and of an immediate nature	Lengthy from a business perspective
Performance measures	Task deliverables	Process effectiveness
Career formation	Internal to the organisation through training, development, rules and prescriptive career schemes	External to the organisation, through years of education and socialisation
Employee’s loyalty	To organisation and his or her career systems	To professions, networks and peers
Impact on company success	Many small contributions that support the master plan	A few major contributions of strategic and long-term importance

Table 1. A comparison of traditional work and knowledge work



The ability and potential to continue learning is important for leaders to add value to SAF and by doing so, ensure continued employability for themselves through learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge.

the dynamic changes in organisational structures and practices. The ability and potential to continue learning is important for leaders to add value to SAF and by doing so, ensure continued employability for themselves through learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge. In sum, learning is not only important to individuals but also to teams and organisations.

Nurturing Thinking Leaders

The word “thinking” could have been used with the same understanding as reflection. There have also been several instances where reflection has been mentioned alongside emotions, affections or feelings. In the common-sense meaning of reflection, there is an overlap between the use of words such as “reflection” and “thinking”. The notion of the “reflective practitioner”⁴ is largely captured in the colloquial phrase “thinking on your feet”. The individual’s progression from dealing with basic “certain” knowledge to working with uncertainty is one of the strands that underlies the developmental stage approaches to reflection and the development of thinking.⁵ Most

of the accounts of reflection in the literature describe reflection in cognitive terms when a personal experience of reflection is involved – such as journal writing⁶ or the use of reflection in personal development or counselling. The inextricable link between reflection and emotion becomes apparent when the subject matter is relatively intellectual⁷ and is a basic mental process, with either a purpose, an outcome or both, that is applied in situations where material is ill-structured or uncertain and where there is no obvious solution.

The non-attributable training environment in our training institutions and schools provide sanctuary for reflection, reconstruction, sense-making and formulation of ideas and thinking. Nurturing such cognitive competencies in turn constitutes a larger base of innovative human capital and thinking leaders. Eisner said, “I came to believe that humans do not simply have experience; they have a hand in its creation, and the quality of the creation depends on the ways they employ their minds”.⁸ In 1994, Eraut described self-knowledge as referring to strengths and weaknesses,

the gap between what one says and one does and what one knows and does not know; self-management in such matters as the use of time, prioritisation and delegation; self-development in its broadest sense including knowing how to learn and control one's own learning; the ability to reflect and self-evaluate, that is to provide oneself with feedback; and generalised intellectual skills like strategic thinking and policy analysis, which involve the organisation of one's own knowledge and thinking.

Generation “Y” New Entrants

In the near future, young Singaporeans that grow up with the Internet will be exposed to a lot more of everything than the generation before them. Because of this, their attitudes and sensitivities will be different. In addition, with a significant increase of new emigrants into our society in the coming years, the cultural aspects will be more diverse than ever. The new Singapore generation “Y” will come with a set of values, beliefs, practices, rituals and customs that are nurtured by their grandparents and parents. The SAF has its own corporate culture in which learning is recognised as absolutely critical for mission success; when learning has become a habitual and integrated part of all organisational functions. This rich, adaptable culture creates relationships and enhances learning by encouraging values such as teamwork, self-management, empowerment and sharing. This will then help the new entrants to connect and find meaning to their national duty.

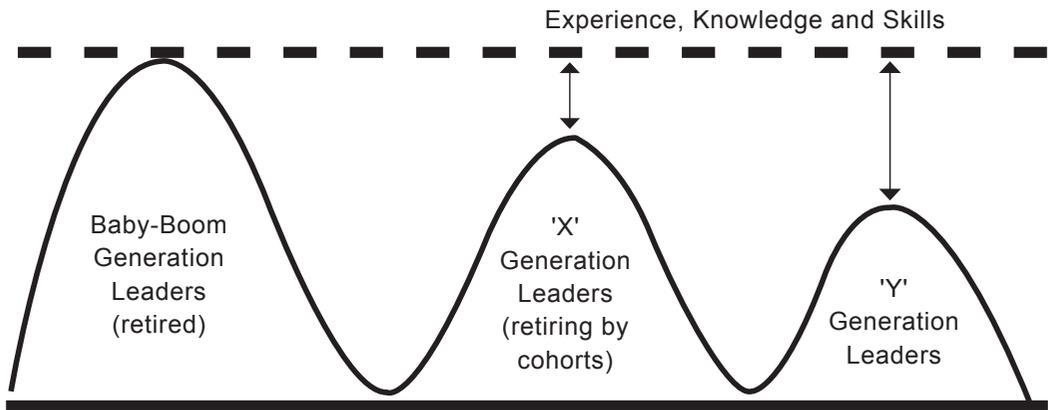
Generation “Y” audiences are intolerant to previous methods of

learning, like textbooks and manuals, but respond very well to technology-based gaming and simulation learning. With the new policy on national service full-time duration reduced from 2 ½ years to 2 years for servicemen with tertiary qualifications, this has added more challenges to their new portfolios, yet with no compromise on safety, training and operational readiness requirements are acceptable. SAFTI MI will need to explore and develop new approaches to optimise learning opportunities for new entrants, including the pervasive use of technology. This effort will not only actively engage these new entrants within the organisation but also in bridging the experience, knowledge and skills gaps from one generation to another through its knowledge and learning management systems.

Learning

In today's workplace, things are changing so fast that it is difficult for individuals to keep up with the pace. Those who cannot keep up with changes may find themselves “downsized” or “rightsized” – or some other euphemism for *out of work*. With knowledge and technology progressing so quickly, individuals do not have years to “get up to speed” and cannot expect their current level of knowledge and expertise to serve them for years ahead.

Learning is not the same thing as acquiring knowledge any more than data is the same as information. When an individual learns, behaviour changes. As Peter Senge wrote in *The Fifth Discipline*:



**Leaders: Officers, Warrant Officers and Specialists.*

“Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. There is within each of us a deep hunger for this type of learning.”

It is painful and frustrating for individuals to do nothing and watch their organisation inhibit learning; they cannot apply what they know and slowly they will disengage with their organisation. This effect has a significant impact on the people’s spirit in the workplace.

People learn through their experiences of work and workplaces. Learning is inherent in work, and work is inherent in learning. That is a double story, worth understanding, even under conditions of relative stability. But under conditions of “supercomplexity”, this double story becomes doubly more forceful. Under conditions of

“supercomplexity”, work demands learning; it does not just promote it or encourage it. Correspondingly, under conditions of “supercomplexity”, learning becomes ever more challenging, fraught and unsettling. It takes on the features of work; it becomes work. The interrelationship between learning and work happens at different levels and in different modes – personal and organisational; formal and informal. Hence, they are different concepts. Sometimes work offers little in the way of learning opportunities; some learning would not be called work. However, these two concepts overlap. It is apparent that work can and should offer learning opportunities; much learning is demanding, calling upon the learner to yield to certain standards, and contains the character of work. The challenges to our ways of looking at the world are so considerable that we find it difficult to embrace them. Change becomes daunting because it often calls for fundamental changes in self-conception.⁹ Everything starts from experiences and from the fact that we have the desire to learn from them. Experience cannot be developed into appropriate

learning if the learner does not intend to learn or if the flow of experience is too fast.¹⁰ The desire to learn, a certain kind of curiosity, or wondering, is raw material for learning. Importantly, we should also have time for reflection; we need time to deliberate and acquire knowledge connected to the experience. Learning through experiences includes an abstract conceptualisation. The thinking process generates knowledge that has been fully understood and absorbed into practices and experimented with in different contexts, and it will be used in the interpretation of the experience. Possibly, knowledge can be further expanded and deepened in the application phase. It is critical to understand that the learning process includes all these phases:

There are two key components to effective learning within a military context. Firstly, **learning transfer** is a key concern, and this is well anchored in SAF schools, with increasingly modern adult pedagogical approaches and optimisation of technology. As SAF

transforms, the second and arguably more difficult component that we will need to start building on is **reflective practice**. Reflective practice is an active, dynamic, action-based and ethical set of skills, placed in real time and dealing with real, complex and difficult situations.¹² The ability to reflect and internalise lessons learnt for subsequent reuse is a cornerstone in capitalising on individual and collective operational experience.

Desired Outcomes

Reflective practice can be built in the SAF through Community of Practices (CoPs) and After Action Reviews (AARs). The SAF Officer’s behavioral aspects can be developed by SAFTI MI through systematic leader development programmes, and the professional aspects through continued attention to operational military knowledge – these two key thrusts should drive the building of our military culture. While we cannot possibly teach young Officers everything, SAFTI MI can instil SAF’s

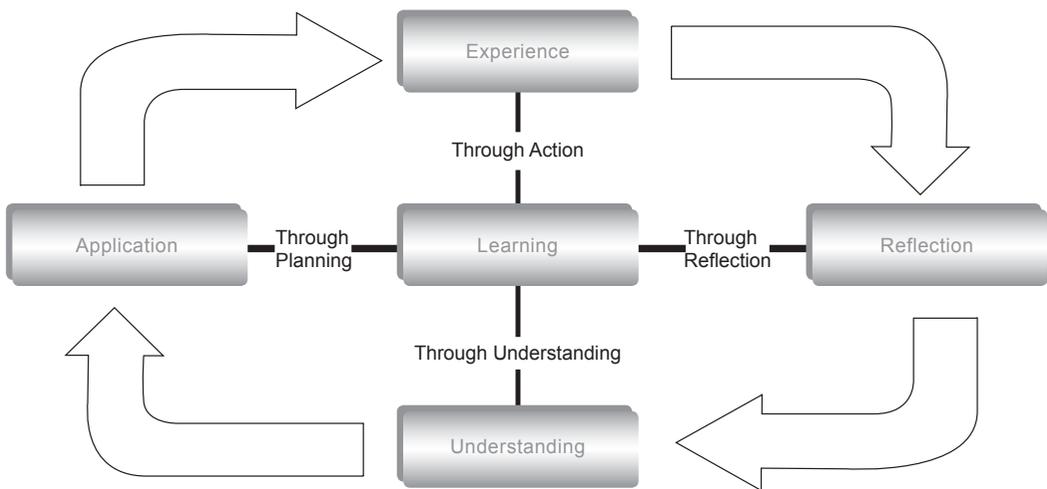


Figure 1. The Basic model of the learning process¹¹

culture through one's training and prepare one for the dynamic operating environment for which one is going to operate in. Knowledge Management (KM) tools will support the entire process.

As leaders, we will then continue to learn when we are back in the unit and more importantly, lead reflective practice at the individual, team and organisational levels. In this way, we are able to learn effectively and perform new tasks, take on different roles and be easily redeployed in our flexible new workplace.

There are three levels at which reflective practice can be institutionalised and these are the individual, group and organisational levels. At the **individual level**, SAFTI MI will work with SAF schools to institutionalise reflections as the overarching learning approach for leader development. Individual level tools will include blogging, journaling, and learning pairs. For reflective practice at the **team level**, SAFTI MI has introduced team building and team learning in all schools. To build reflective practice at the **organisational level**, SAFTI MI will lead in process development and tool-kitting for CoPs. For example, the current Officer Cadet School CoP will link with Army Training Institutes and Service schools and by doing so, build knowledge repositories relevant to instructors in the areas of teaching, Operation Military Knowledge (OMK) development and physical training. In parallel, the Leadership/Organisational Development (L/OD) CoP and the Command and Staff Colleges' CoP will also throw up new ideas for SAF-wide learning through

reflective practice. Another area to address the organisational level is the After Action Reviews (AARs), which can build on reflections at individual and team levels to deepen their learning, and the use of technology to plan, capture and disseminate lessons learnt to be shared across the organisation for learning.

Conclusion

In the Age of the Smart Machine, Zuboff wrote:

The [truly successful] organisation is a learning institution, and one of its principal purposes is the expansion of knowledge. That comes to reside at the core of what it means to be productive. Learning is no longer a separate activity that occurs either before one enters the workplace or in remote classroom settings. Nor is it an activity preserved for a managerial group. The behaviours that define learning and the activities that define being productive are one and the same. Learning is not something that requires time out from productive activity; learning is the heart of productive activity. To put it simply, *learning is the new form of labour*.¹³

In the 3rd Gen SAF, we will see our organisation shifting from the “telling” mode to a “learning” mode. When learning transfers take place, our organisation grows. Technological advancements, organisational restructuring and workplace redesign give our leaders new opportunities for skill development and self-realisation through their work. Also, it can help

filter the learning environment in order to mitigate information overload, which will distract the knowledge worker from the real issues. The real challenge is to commence the systematic build-up of reflective practice across the SAF and to optimise the learning opportunities. 🌐

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The Protection of Muhammadwail Barud's House by Voluntary Human Shields: Considerations under International Humanitarian Law

by LTC Victor Huang

Introduction

On 18 Nov 06, Muhammadwail Barud, a commander in a Palestinian armed group called the Popular Resistance Committees, received a phone call from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) commanding him to leave his house as the IDF planned to destroy it with an air strike within 30 minutes. His house was located in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. Instead of leaving, he rounded up neighbors from a mosque to protect his house by acting as human shields. After observing the large number of civilians surrounding the house, the IDF canceled the attack.¹ Subsequently, volunteers continued to shield his house by taking turns to be present around-the-clock.

This event was repeated in Beit Lahiya, when Hamas militant Wael Rajab received a similar warning. A call was broadcast from mosques for neighbors to gather at his house to protect it.²

The behavior of such voluntary human shields is disturbing. These civilians have voluntarily interfered in what appears to be military operations conducted by the armed forces of a state

against a militant. It is not immediately clear what the responsibilities of a military commander are in these cases. Some may argue that the laws of armed conflict apply, and that voluntary human shields forfeit their non-combatant status by their actions. However, a more in-depth analysis shows that there is controversy over their legal status.

Voluntary human shields have an unclear status under international humanitarian law. Depending on whether they are considered combatants, civilians or somewhere in between, military commanders will face difficulties in applying the principles of *distinction* and *proportionality*. The Barud case is illustrative, and the lessons learned from studying this case may be applicable to other militaries that encounter voluntary human shields.

This article will consider which treaties and customary law govern the Barud case and whether Barud's house was a military objective based on the available evidence. Several scenarios are discussed. In the scenario where Barud's house is a valid military objective, the status and rights of voluntary human shields under international

humanitarian law is examined with reference to expert opinions. Finally, the paper discusses the responsibilities of military commanders when faced with voluntary human shields.

Background

The Jabaliya refugee camp is located north of Gaza city and has a registered population of 106,691 persons.³ Occupying only 1.4 square kilometers, it is one of the most densely populated regions in the world, with a population density roughly three times that of Manhattan.⁴ It was also the birthplace of the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987.⁵



The Jabaliya refugee camp, the birthplace of the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987, is located north of Gaza city.

Israel practices the demolition of homes in Palestine in order to deter terrorist attacks.⁶ The IDF claims that this is “purely a measure for deterrence, aimed at preventing potential terrorists from carrying out additional attacks”.⁷ The Israeli Supreme Court has repeatedly ratified this practice as legal.⁸ The legal basis of IDF actions is Regulation 119(1)⁹ of the Defense Regulations, incorporated into Israeli law from the time of the British Mandate over Palestine.¹⁰ The IDF claims that the decision to demolish a home is made only “after a legal

query has been conducted” and “only after a thorough investigation has been conducted, which indicates, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the owner of the property is a member of a terrorist organization, or that terrorist activity had been conducted from the property”.¹¹ According to Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, the Israeli military destroyed 251 homes in Gaza between Jul and 15 Nov 06, leaving 1,577 people homeless.¹² This took place just before the Barud incident of 18 Nov 06.

Applicability of International Humanitarian Law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Israel respects the 1907 Hague Regulations,¹³ which is recognized by the Israeli Supreme Court to be applicable customary international law.¹⁴

According to international opinion, the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention apply in the occupied Palestinian territories. This was affirmed by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention¹⁵ and the International Committee of the Red Cross.¹⁶ Several UN Security Council Resolutions such as Resolution 1435 also affirm this.¹⁷ However, Israel differs from this opinion.

Israel ratified the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1951. In principle, Israel rejects the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as it considers those territories as captured in 1967 as the result of a defensive war against countries that had illegally occupied

them in 1948.¹⁸ However, Emanuel Gross argued that “this position relies on a very problematic legal basis, since the Fourth Geneva Convention does not make the application of its provisions contingent upon recognition of property rights, but rather applies to every case of full or partial occupation of the territory of a signatory party”.¹⁹ In practice, the governments of Israel had undertaken to act in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the Israeli High Court of Justice considered that Israel holds the Palestinian territories by virtue of belligerent occupation.²⁰ Therefore, this paper will consider that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the Barud case.

Civilian protections under conditions of international armed conflict are detailed in the 1977 Geneva Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions. Neither Israel nor the Palestinian Authority is party to Protocol I. While Amnesty International argues that “[Protocol 1’s] provisions regarding the protection of the civilian population are regarded as norms of customary international law”,²¹ this assertion is debatable. There is controversy over whether the situation in Palestine can be considered as armed conflict,²² and there is a lack of agreement as to whether, and to what extent, the laws governing international armed conflict apply.²³ There is also uncertainty as to the status of Palestinian fighters under international humanitarian law.²⁴

Many states also have reservations about Protocol I.²⁵ In particular, the provisions of Articles 51 to 56 prohibiting reprisals has “caused certain states to be concerned about what action could

legitimately be taken in response to an adversary violating provisions of the Protocol”.²⁶ Therefore, Protocol I may not be directly applicable to the Barud case. However, its provisions for the protection of civilians, including its codification of the principles of *distinction* and *proportionality*, will be taken to be customary international law. In addition, it is useful to consider the Barud case under Protocol I, and its implications for military commanders of states that *are* parties to Protocol I. Although the US has not ratified Protocol I, it considers many parts of Protocol I to be customary international law and abides by them accordingly.²⁷ These include the protection of the civilian population and individual civilians from being the objects of attack and from the dangers of indiscriminate attack (Article 51); protection of civilians from use as human shields (Article 51(7)); and precautionary measures to spare the civilian population in attack, including by giving effective advance warning to civilians unless circumstances do not permit (Articles 57-58).²⁸

Was Barud’s House a Military Objective?

There is uncertainty regarding the facts of the Barud case. It is not known whether Barud’s house was a legitimate military objective, as defined under Article 52(2) of Protocol I.²⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW) claims that eyewitnesses, including two journalists on the scene, saw no evidence that the house was being used for military purposes.³⁰ In addition, the IDF has not responded to HRW’s requests “to explain what military objective it could

have had in targeting not a militant but his home after having ordered it vacated”.³¹ If IDF did not possess such evidence and *doubt exists* as to whether the house was used to make an effective contribution to military action, it should be presumed not to be so used and would not be a military objective, in accordance with Article 52(3).³² In this case, *and if one considers the law of armed conflict to apply*, the IDF would be prohibited from attacking Barud’s house, as such attacks are prohibited under Article 52(1) protecting civilian objects.³³

As explained earlier, some scholars consider that the law of armed conflict would *not* apply, and the protections offered by Protocol I would *not* be applicable. Even so, Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the destruction of private property “except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations”.³⁴

In the special case of the occupied Palestinian territories, the issue of what constitutes *necessary military operations* and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention remains in dispute.³⁵ Israel views demolition of homes as a *preventive* “administrative action” authorized by Resolution 119 and upheld by its Supreme Court as a *deterrent* act.³⁶ On the other hand, some scholars argue that such action is essentially punitive in character,³⁷ and HRW considers the demolition of houses to be unlawful.³⁸ Israeli “administrative action” is beyond the scope of this paper and will not be studied further. For our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize the considerable disagreement in this area.

Let us now suppose that this situation was not one of international armed conflict, and refrain from applying Protocol I either as treaty law or customary law. Did Barud violate basic international humanitarian principles in summoning his neighbors to protect his house? The answer could be *yes*, *no*, or *partly*. These various alternatives will be further considered under international humanitarian law in the later parts of this paper.

“Yes.” By calling his neighbors to surround his house, which was at risk of imminent attack, he was exposing them to great risk of being hurt. This is in violation of the fundamental principle of sparing civilians from harm,³⁹ which is stated in Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁴⁰ However, this culpability would be mitigated when the context of his situation is taken into account.⁴¹

“No, because the attack would be deterred and his neighbors would not be harmed.” Barud was probably familiar with the IDF *modus operandi* and deduced that his house was under observation. If so, he surmised that the IDF would not carry out its attack once he had summoned his neighbors. However, such a view is problematic as he could not *know* for certain that he was being observed. It is also difficult to justify the assertion that his neighbors would not be at risk of harm.

“No, because he was recruiting his neighbors to serve, and his neighbors participated willingly and with full cognizance of the risk of harm.” Barud’s neighbors were fully aware of the risk of harm and *knowingly* chose to serve in Barud’s cause, at least for the short-

term. Therefore, they must assume responsibility for their actions.

“Partly.” This is a combination of the above. The responsibility for placing civilians at risk was not entirely his decision. The civilians volunteered to be human shields. As such, responsibility for their action is shared by all.

It is this author’s opinion that, strictly speaking, Barud violated the fundamental principle of sparing civilians from harm stated in Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention in putting his neighbors at risk. Due to the extreme urgency of the situation, as well as the lack of precedent for voluntary human shields at that time and place, it is difficult to accept that his neighbors would have been fully apprised of the situation or of the risk of harm. This is especially likely considering that “a crowd of hundreds of Palestinians”⁴² gathered around his house in a short span of time.

After the initial moments, it became clear that Barud’s actions had deterred the IDF from conducting an air strike, and the continued presence of civilians at Barud’s house were no longer at risk of being hurt. Since the IDF can reasonably be expected not to attack, the continued presence of civilians as human shields is not in violation of humanitarian principles. Barud’s actions had also set an important precedent deterring future IDF air strikes against other houses. Future appeals for voluntary human shields would thus have a much smaller risk of endangering them.

Supposing Barud’s House were a Legitimate Military Objective

For the sake of argument, suppose that the IDF had proof that Barud’s house was being used for military purposes, and the situation could be characterized as an international armed conflict. Barud’s house would be considered a legitimate military objective under Article 52(2) of Protocol I, and the IDF air strike would be considered a military operation.⁴³ How would this impact our conclusions above?

First, the IDF acted in accordance with Article 26 of the 1907 Hague Conventions, which requires air strikes to be preceded by a warning.⁴⁴ Similarly, Article 57(2)(c) states that “effective advance warning shall be given of attacks which may affect the civilian population, unless circumstances do not permit”.⁴⁵

If Barud had *forced* his neighbors to be *involuntary* human shields, he would clearly have violated international humanitarian law. Besides Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention protecting civilians from violence, Article 28 also applies, stating that “the presence of a protected person may not be used to render certain points or areas immune from *military operations*”.⁴⁶ This point is expanded upon in Article 51(7) of Protocol I:

7. The presence or movements of the civilian population or individual civilians shall not be used to render certain points or areas immune from

military operations, in particular in attempts to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield, favour or impede military operations. The Parties to the conflict shall not direct the movement of the civilian population or individual civilians in order to attempt to shield military objectives from attack or to shield military operations.⁴⁷

However, Barud's neighbors volunteered to help him. Here, we come to a critical point. Do *voluntary* human shields lose their civilian protections as a result of their actions?

Do Voluntary Human Shields Lose their Civilian Protections?

Article 51(3) of Protocol I states that "civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Section, unless and for such time as they take a *direct part in hostilities*".⁴⁸

There remains no consensus regarding the status of voluntary human shields under international humanitarian law and the meaning of "direct participation in hostilities". To address this, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the TMC Asser Institute co-organized several expert meetings to discuss these issues, but there has been a range of interpretations and the case of voluntary human shields remains an ambiguous situation.⁴⁹ However, there is agreement that the presence of the voluntary human shields does not change the status of the military objective being shielded.

According to the *Commentary on the Additional Protocols*, "direct participation in hostilities implies a direct causal relationship between the activity engaged in and the harm done to the enemy at the time and the place where the activity takes place".⁵⁰ This connotes "acts of war which by their nature or purpose are likely to cause actual harm to the personnel and equipment of the enemy armed forces".⁵¹ According to this interpretation, the actions of the voluntary human shields would *not* constitute direct participation in hostilities, since they are not engaged in any activity that would *directly* cause harm to the IDF simply by locating themselves in the vicinity of a military objective. Although the military objective itself may be causing harm to the enemy armed forces, the fact that the civilians are present does not aid it in doing so. Similarly, other scholars have argued that civilians must in some way become active against the enemy in order to lose their civilian protections.⁵²

Other scholars disagree, and argue that "direct participation in hostilities" need not only apply to active destructive actions against the enemy, but could also consist of actions that deprive an enemy of a military advantage.⁵³ Rick Parrish argued that human shields actively attempt to contribute to the survivability of weapons and infrastructure by their presence, and thereby increase their effectiveness in attacking the enemy.⁵⁴ In Dec 06, the Israeli High Court, in a separate decision about targeted killings, ruled that human shields take a direct part in hostilities when they do so "willingly".⁵⁵

This author's opinion is that voluntary human shields do *not* directly participate in hostilities, as the author considers that there is no *direct* causal relationship between the presence of the voluntary human shields and harm done to the enemy. However, it is clear that there is *some* degree of participation in hostilities. By knowingly and willingly placing themselves in the vicinity of military objectives, voluntary human shields affect targeting decisions and inhibit military operations. They are thereby participating in the conflict at some level, and it seems that they should not enjoy the protections accorded to "true" civilians who "take no active part in hostilities"⁵⁶ at all. Parrish argued that voluntary human shields do not fall under any existing category specified under international humanitarian law; they cannot be considered belligerents or members of a *levée en masse* because they do not carry arms, nor can they be considered civilians as they are involved in combat.⁵⁷ He proposed that their status is most closely analogous to civilian personnel who accompany militaries, as described in Article 4(A)(4) of the Third Geneva Convention:⁵⁸

"(4) Persons who accompany the armed forces without actually being members thereof, such as civilian members of military aircraft crews, war correspondents, supply contractors, members of labour units or of services responsible for the welfare of the armed forces, provided that they have received authorization from the armed forces which they accompany, who shall provide them for that purpose with an identity card similar to the annexed model."⁵⁹

However, the lack of formal authorization and an identity card means that such an analogy can only serve as a rough guide. As Parrish pointed out, host militaries should be reluctant to authorize the presence of voluntary human shields due to the potential criminality of doing so.⁶⁰

Since there is disagreement over whether voluntary human shields lose their civilian status by their actions, this author's opinion is that, from a strictly *legal* standpoint, they should be accorded the higher level of protection under international humanitarian law. This is in line with the spirit of Article 50(1) of Protocol I, which states that "in case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered to be a civilian".⁶¹

In the specific case of Barud's house, there is no evidence that the civilians directly caused harm to the IDF by their presence, which means that they were not directly participating in hostilities. This assessment is helped by the fact that the object being protected was a house rather than a weapon system, which would have been able to cause harm to the IDF. Therefore, the civilians would not lose their civilian status and protections by acting as voluntary human shields. Again, interpretations can differ, especially when taking into account Israel's view of the law with regards to counter-terrorism operations.

However, from a *moral* standpoint, it is deeply troubling that voluntary human shields could enjoy the full protection accorded to civilians, simply

because there is a lack of international consensus on their legal status as they do not fall into any traditional category of person envisaged by the parties drawing up the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols. There is an urgent need to fill in this definitional gap and achieve consensus on how to deal with voluntary human shields.



Voluntary Human Shields protecting terrorists

Are Voluntary Human Shields Subject to Capture?

Are voluntary human shields subject to capture? Again, the answer to this question hinges on whether they are considered as persons who have taken part in hostilities, or as civilians, and the same difficulties emerge. Parrish argued that voluntary human shields are subject to capture. Those who have been authorized by their host military are entitled to be treated as prisoners of war, while those who have not been authorized are not.⁶² However, if they are considered as civilians, then they would not be subject to capture.

In practice, the legal challenges and political difficulties of pressing charges against voluntary human shields seem to have discouraged their capture.

For example, the US did not capture foreigners who had volunteered to be human shields in Iraq in 2003. They were allowed by coalition forces to return home whenever they wished.⁶³ This reluctance of the US to do anything more drastic was attributed to the high level of news coverage given to the human shields, their lack of impact on military operations and US policy.⁶⁴ Similarly, there have not been reports of capture in the Barud case. Considering the likely political fallout from such an action taken against ostensibly “non-violent” activists, the politically expedient policy of not capturing voluntary human shields appears more prudent for now.

The Principles of Distinction and Proportionality

Returning to the Barud case, what should be the IDF’s response to the gathering of civilians around Barud’s house?

In our scenario, where Barud’s house was assumed to be a military objective, Barud would have violated Articles 27 and 28 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 51(7) of Protocol I. In spite of this, the IDF is still obliged to act in accordance with international humanitarian law. This principle is codified in Article 51(8) of Protocol I, which specifies that “any violation of these prohibitions shall not release the Parties to the conflict from their legal obligations with respect to the civilian population and civilians...”⁶⁵

In considering whether to target Barud’s house, the principles of *distinction* and *proportionality* would apply.

Distinction (or discrimination) is codified in Article 48 of Protocol I which states the need at all times to distinguish between civilian population and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives, and to direct operations only against military objectives.⁶⁶ Article 57(1) requires that “in the conduct of military operations, constant care shall be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects”.⁶⁷ Since the voluntary human shields were “in, around and on the roof of the house”,⁶⁸ there would be no way to avoid casualties in an attack.

Barud created a blurring of *distinction* by enlisting civilians to shield him. With a body of people that were neither truly civilian nor combatant, it is not clear how the IDF should have conducted its assessment of distinction. Instead of clearly “military” and “civilian” persons and objects, there was a wide grey area that presented true difficulties in applying distinction.

If the IDF decides to act according to the Dec 06 Israeli High Court ruling which ruled that human shields take a direct part in hostilities when they do so “willingly”, then the voluntary human shields themselves are not entitled to protection. The IDF, acting on such a premise and in perfect conformance with Israeli law, could conduct an attack by announcing an air strike to warn away non-participating civilians and then conduct an air strike at the planned time. However, such a move would be viewed by many as a violation of international humanitarian law and morally repugnant. On the other hand, other scholars would agree that human

shields give up their non-combatant immunity and assume the risk of combat, and death or injury to voluntary human shields would not constitute civilian collateral damage.⁶⁹

Besides distinction, there is also a need to adhere to the principle of *proportionality*.

Proportionality is codified in Article 57(2)(b) which states that “an attack shall be cancelled or suspended if it becomes apparent... that the attack may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated”.⁷⁰ In the case of Barud’s house, the large number of human shields present probably meant that the attack would have caused incidental damage excessive to the military advantage gained by destroying his house, and the attack should not be carried out.

Some scholars contend that proportionality considerations differ radically depending on whether the human shields present were voluntary or involuntary. They reason that the desire of voluntary human shields to place themselves in the vicinity of a military objective would affect the proportionality test.⁷¹ Others propose that civilians involved in hostilities not amounting to direct participation in hostilities may be weighted less in proportionality considerations as compared to civilians that had taken no part in hostilities at all.⁷² However, such considerations are extremely complex and may not be properly

factored into a decision-making process where it was already difficult to decide between what was proportionate or disproportionate.⁷³ The most extreme view is that voluntary human shields are not entitled to protection and therefore need not be factored into calculations of collateral damage. Those scholars that consider voluntary human shields to be combatants would hold such a view.

Conclusion

There is a lack of consensus over the status of voluntary human shields under international humanitarian law. In particular, there is disagreement over whether and to what extent they lose their protections as civilians, and how their desire to protect military objectives would affect distinction and proportionality considerations. Further discussion is required in order to properly determine their status and protections under international humanitarian law. In view of the uncertain status of voluntary human shields, military commanders should proceed with caution.

In an international armed conflict, military commanders should not consider civilians acting as voluntary human shields to have automatically lost their rights to protection as civilians. Even if the enemy violates international law by the use of human shields, military commanders are not relieved of their obligation to act in accordance with international law. In deciding whether to attack the shielded military objective, they must proceed in accordance with the principles of the law of war. In particular, when considering the principles of *distinction*

and *proportionality*, they would need to seek expert legal advice and consider the political ramifications of their choice. In addition, they must be aware that whatever their decision, they would be setting an important precedent that would affect the enemy's behavior during future operations. 

Endnotes

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- 4 The population density of Jabaliya is 76,691 persons per square kilometre (author's calculation), based on 2003 data from the UNRWA. In comparison, the most populated county in the US, Manhattan, has a population density of 25,869 per square kilometre, according to data calculated from the 2000 Census. Federal Reserve Bank of New York, "District Profile: New York City", website, http://www.ny.frb.org/regional/profile_nyc.html (accessed 15 May 2007).
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- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid. The IDF cites Supreme Court (SC) case 6696/02 – Amar vs. the Chief of Staff of the IDF, and SC case 6868/02 – Salah-a-din vs. the Chief of Staff of the IDF.
- 9 "A military commander may by order direct the forfeiture to the Government of Palestine of any house, structure or land form in which he has reason to suspect that any firearm has been illegally discharged, or any bomb, grenade or explosive or incendiary article illegally thrown detonated, exploded or otherwise discharged or of any house, structure or land situated in any area, town, village, quarter or street the inhabitants or some of the inhabitants of which he is satisfied have committed, or attempted to commit, or abetted the commission of, or been accessories after the fact to the commission of, any offence against these regulations

- involving violence or intimidation or any Military Court offence, and when any house, structure or land is forfeited as aforesaid, the Military commander may destroy the house or the structure or anything in or on the house, the structure or the land...” Reproduced from Emanuel Gross, *The Struggle of Democracy Against Terrorism: Lessons from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), p94.
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- ¹¹ Ibid.
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- ²³ Amnesty International, “Israel and the Occupied Territories”.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ 1977 Geneva Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, Roberts and Gueliff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, p421.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p420.
- ²⁷ Michael J. Matheson, remarks on the U.S. Position on the Relation of Customary International Law to the 1977 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, Human Rights Watch, The Sixth Annual American Red Cross-Washington College of Law Conference on International Humanitarian Law: A Workshop on Customary International Law and the 1977 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, *The American University Journal of International Law and Policy* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1987) pp419-427, quoted in Daniel P. Schoenekase, “Targeting Decisions Regarding Human Shields”, *Military Review* 84, no. 5 (September-October 2004), pp26-31.
- ²⁸ Ibid., quoted in Human Rights Watch, *Razing Rafah: Mass Home Demolitions in the Gaza Strip* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2004), pp59-60.
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- ³⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Statement on our November 22 Press Release”, (16 December 2006), http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/11/22/isrlpal4652_txt.htm (accessed 15 May 2007).
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² “In case of doubt whether an object which is normally dedicated to civilian purposes, such as a place of worship, a house or other dwelling or a school, is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, it shall be presumed not to be so used.” Roberts and Gueliff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, p450.
- ³³ “Civilian objects shall not be the object of attack or of reprisals. Civilian objects are all objects which are not military objectives as defined in paragraph 2.” Ibid., p449.
- ³⁴ 1949 Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Roberts and Gueliff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, p319.
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- ³⁶ Boaz Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2005), pp209-210.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Statement”.
- ³⁹ Ibid.

- 40 Geneva Convention IV. Roberts and Gueliff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, p311.
- 41 Barud faced what he considered the illegal destruction of his home and had no other choice. He did so in the spirit of non-violent protest, which has been practised by notable world leaders elsewhere.
- 42 Human Rights Watch, "Statement".
- 43 It is important to note that it is Barud's house, and not Barud himself, that the IDF was targeting, since the IDF intended to conduct the air strike after warning Barud to evacuate.
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- 58 *Ibid.*, p9.
- 59 1949 Geneva Convention III Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Roberts and Gueliff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, p246.
- 60 Parrish, "Voluntary Human Shields". p11.
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- 62 Parrish, "Voluntary Human Shields", p11.
- 63 Schoenekase, "Targeting Decisions", p28.
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- 66 *Ibid.*, p447.
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Conversations with the Enemy: The Dilemma of Negotiating with Terrorists

by CPT Kim Jixian

“Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.”

*John F. Kennedy,
Inaugural Address, Jan 20, 1961*

Introduction

By urging us to consider negotiations with the Soviet Union, President Kennedy advocated for an alternative solution to the Cold War that went beyond the use of military force. Although his words were spoken in the context of inter-state conflict, the argument that negotiation can be useful in securing lasting peace is still persuasive in today’s security climate, where the discourse has become increasingly dominated by terrorism.

Traditionally, most governments have maintained a policy of non-negotiation with terrorist organisations. However in certain circumstances, states have been willing to open informal channels of communication or even convene secret negotiations with terrorist organisations despite the rhetoric against doing so.¹ If negotiating with terrorists really “incentivises” them to commit further acts of terrorism, as the official wisdom goes, then why have our governments

decided to negotiate with terrorists in the past? In particular, when will negotiation be useful as a tool in resolving a terrorist incident?

In this paper, I will argue that it is possible, within limits, for governments to engage in negotiations with terrorist organisations. Whether such negotiations occur directly or indirectly, negotiation has a crucial role to play in securing lasting peace and to reject negotiations categorically from the outset effectively denies governments of a valuable vehicle that could be used to save lives and resolve terrorist incidents peacefully. Part I of this paper will briefly discuss the official non-negotiation policy that many governments have adopted and the underlying rationale for it. In Part II, I will evaluate these policy justifications to examine if they hold up to scrutiny, and further consider what role negotiations might play in managing a terrorist incident. Drawing from examples in the past, I will finally analyse when negotiating with terrorists will be fruitful in Part III, and further consider how negotiation might be useful as a strategy to resolve the Middle East conflict, as an example of an intractable terrorist-related problem.

Part I: The Official Non-Negotiation Policy

The United States first announced its policy of non-negotiation with terrorists in 1980 when President Reagan declared emphatically that “it is high time that the civilised countries of the world made it plain that there is no room worldwide for terrorism; there will be no negotiation with terrorists of any kind”.² Since then, the policy of non-negotiation has formed a central tenet of Washington’s dealings with terrorist organisations. Singapore adopts a similar hard-line stance against negotiating with terrorists as they “cannot be persuaded by normal human interests”, and to negotiate with terrorists would only open us to more attacks.³ Other countries beset by terrorist problems such as Israel similarly maintain a policy of non-negotiation with terrorist organisations.

Three main reasons underlie this official policy. Traditionally, governments have argued that negotiating with terrorist organisations simply rewards them for violent behaviour.⁴ As then-Secretary of State Colin Powell remarked, negotiating with terrorists will only “incentivise them to do it again”.⁵ A second concern is that of legitimacy. To many governments, starting any form of negotiations with terrorist organisations has the effect of endorsing violent tactics as a legitimate outlet for political grievance. Hence, negotiating with terrorists might be construed as governmental recognition of these illegal organisations as co-equal political counterparts.⁶ Finally, negotiations have traditionally been understood as a form of *quid-pro-quo* where both parties make

corresponding concessions in order to reach an agreement. To negotiate with terrorists therefore necessitates making concessions to these rogue organisations and governments are understandably concerned about setting a precedent that may bind their future dealings with terrorists – a patently unpalatable outcome.

Part II: Should We Negotiate with Terrorists?

Evaluating the Policy of Non-Negotiation

One of the chief objections militating against negotiations is the concern about precedent setting. Indeed, Hayes presents evidence to suggest that governments that have a history of making *substantive* concessions during hostage taking incidents are more likely to experience an increase in terrorist activities.⁷ However, should these substantive concessions be kept secret, any impact on future terrorist activities is likely to be minimal. Similarly, he found little evidence to suggest that small *instrumental* concessions would lead to any increase in terrorism (e.g. the grant of amnesty if no hostages are harmed, provision of food and water to the terrorists while barricaded in exchange for more information on the number of hostages taken, their medical condition, etc).

In essence, to argue that negotiating with terrorists *per se* will have the effect of encouraging them to carry out further violent acts risks oversimplifying the matter. Crucially, such a result will only occur if terrorists are able to achieve a substantial degree of their demands by negotiating. As Zartman argues, if

negotiation only provides terrorists with a “purely symbolic” victory, such as media exposure in the newspapers and radio, then terrorists may not be encouraged to carry out further acts of terrorism as the results may not be worth the effort.⁸

Further, some studies have cast doubt on how effective the rhetoric of non-negotiation is in terms of deterring terrorists. In particular, studies have shown that terrorists *do not* take the threat of non-negotiation seriously as they do not believe a state will refuse to negotiate if attacked.⁹ As Mickolus demonstrates in his study of hostage crises, negotiation was actually attempted in over half of the cases from 1968-1991, notwithstanding the official rhetoric against doing so.¹⁰ In other words, there is evidence to suggest that terrorists are unlikely to be deterred from carrying out acts of terrorism, simply because the government proclaims its intention never to negotiate.

Accordingly, this paper puts forth the argument that a case exists for negotiating with terrorists. In particular, Professor Fisher at Harvard University argues that negotiation not only serves the functional purpose of diffusing a crisis and thereby saving lives; but more importantly allows us to engage the terrorists and in so doing exert influence over their behaviour.¹¹ By rejecting negotiations right from the start, we risk losing an extremely powerful tool in persuading terrorists to abandon their violent tactics and thereafter reintegrate them into the political mainstream. To cite an example, the success of the peace process in Northern Ireland to date has been largely due

to the Labour Government’s ability to entice the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) to the negotiating table. By addressing their underlying interests and offering sustainable alternatives such as the “equality agenda” that addressed fair employment, recognition of the Irish language and the issue of prisoners, the UK government was able to build a lasting peace process despite many years of entrenched violence.¹²



A more functional reason for negotiating with terrorists is that negotiation helps to save lives.

A more functional reason for negotiating with terrorists is that negotiation helps to save lives, especially in hostage crises. As Faure puts it, governments are under a moral obligation to intervene when its citizens are held by terrorists.¹³ By seeing negotiation as part and parcel of a wider military operation, the chances of successfully extricating the hostages multiply exponentially.¹⁴ As Cristal argues¹⁵, the strength of negotiation is that it allows governments to engage the enemy and thereby put oneself in a position to dictate the outcome of the incident. Specifically, negotiation could be used as a means to buy time while military rescue options are being put together, or as a means of

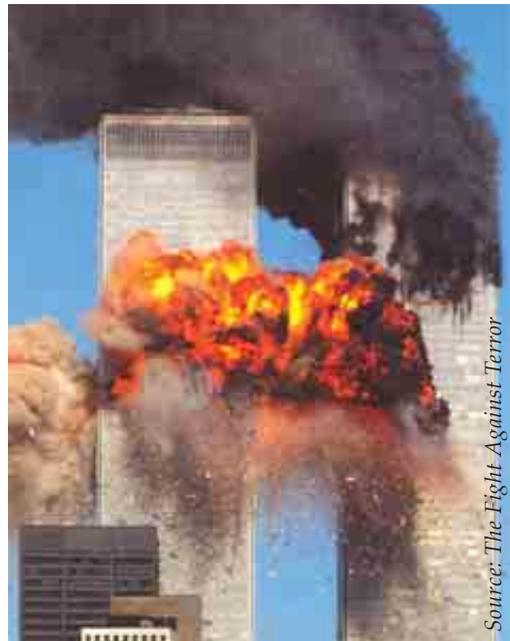
gathering information and intelligence on the whereabouts of the terrorists, the number of hostages held and their medical conditions, etc.

Detractors of negotiation argue that the strategy is impracticable as terrorists inherently lack credibility and hence, cannot be trusted to keep to their commitments. As Mnookin argues, terrorist negotiations differ inherently from business negotiations as in the latter, the parties negotiate under the “shadow of the law”.¹⁶ Should either side renege on their commitment in the business setting, legal mechanisms exist to resolve the dispute or to enforce the negotiated settlement. Comparatively, no legal mechanisms *per se* exist to ensure that terrorist organisations keep to their side of the bargain. Nonetheless, Mnookin’s argument should not be carried too far. Notably, terrorists groups do, as a matter of fact, operate under other institutional constraints that can be manipulated to ensure that they stick to their side of the negotiated peace. As I will argue below, negotiation needs to be seen in more nuanced light as an integral aspect of crisis management, as opposed to the “hard-line” position of non-negotiation that the current official rhetoric allows.

Part III: When will negotiation be useful?

Conceptually, it is a mistake to think that all terrorist organisations are alike. In particular, the choice of terror tactics by terrorist organisations greatly influences the possibility of a successful negotiated settlement. As proposed by Zartman, terrorists can be broadly divided into 3 categories based on the

choice of their terror tactics.¹⁷ On one extreme stands “absolute terrorists”. To them, the use of terror tactics is an *end* in itself and their sole objective is to create destruction and violence so as to achieve a particular political aim. Suicide bombers fuelled by fundamentalist passions, as well as the Al Qaeda operatives responsible for the World Trade Centre attacks on September 11, are quintessential examples of absolute terrorists.



Source: The Fight Against Terror

Suicide bombers fuelled by fundamentalist passions, as well as the Al Qaeda operatives responsible for the World Trade Centre attacks on September 11, are quintessential examples of absolute terrorists.

On the other end of the spectrum are “contingent terrorists” who use terror as a *means* to achieve other goals. Typically, innocent civilians are taken as hostage and traded by terrorists as commodity in exchange for other objectives, such as the release of their compatriots or to raise a ransom in order to finance the

terrorist organisation. In such cases, violence is contingent only on the non-fulfilment of their demands. A good example of this type of terrorists is the Black September faction of the PLO which was responsible for the Munich Olympic Massacre in 1972. In that case, the terrorists held 9 Israeli athletes hostage and demanded the release of 200 Palestinian prisoners by Israel. Another example of contingent terrorists is the Abu Sayyaf group that kidnapped 21 tourists from the Malaysian resort island of Sipadan in April 2000 so as to extract a ransom of US\$15 million from the Filipino government.

“Conditional absolute terrorists” lie in the middle of this spectrum. These terrorists typically choose to use suicidal or violent terror tactics which may be absolutist in nature. Nonetheless, these terrorists are also usually open to negotiation as there is often something to negotiate about, such as territory, independence or conditions of self-rule. In other words, the demands of conditional absolute terrorists are negotiable, although they do not seek negotiation as part of their terrorist activities. Two examples of this type of terrorists include the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland, as well as the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Indonesia.

Strategy in Negotiating with Terrorists

Absolute Terrorists:

Zartman asserts that it is impossible to negotiate with absolute terrorists since they have “nothing to negotiate about [and] they have nothing to negotiate with”.¹⁸ Citing Pape¹⁹, he argues that

any attempt to negotiate with absolute terrorists only encourages them further. In addition, absolute terrorists (such as suicide bombers) tend to be inaccessible as it is often impossible to make contact with them before they strike. The Al Qaeda operatives on board Flight AA11 and UA175 during September 11 did not seek to negotiate before crashing the hijacked planes into the World Trade Centre – indeed, the whole point of the terrorist act was to strike fear in the minds of Americans and not to exact any leverage *per se* by holding the passengers on board hostage. To that extent, *direct* negotiations with absolute terrorists is unfeasible.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that negotiation can never be utilised as a strategy to influence absolute terrorists. In particular, it is a mistake to think that terrorist organisations operate in a vacuum and exist free from any form of institutional constraints. Crucially, states that sponsor terrorist organisations often have enormous influence over the activities of these organisations as the latter are dependant on the former for diplomatic, financial, logistic and military support. Iran for instance, is a major sponsor of terrorism through their provision of “funding, safe haven, training and weapons” to the Lebanese Hezbollah as well as other Palestinian rejectionist groups including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.²⁰ In other instances, certain national governments are guilty of not only sponsoring terrorism, but have gone even further by employing their own agents to carry out acts of terrorism, in effect employing terrorism as a instrument of foreign policy. An example would be the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 during

the Lockerbie incident, a terrorist act that the Libyan government ultimately accepted responsibility for in Aug 03.²¹



Lockerbie incident, a terrorist act that the Libyan government ultimately accepted responsibility for in Aug 03.

In trying to understand the influence that state sponsors wield over terrorist organisations, Bapat constructed an economic model to explain the institutional constraints that absolute terrorists face. His conclusion was that the chances of a negotiated settlement with absolute terrorists improve dramatically if moderate costs can be exacted on them to ensure compliance with the agreement.²² This in turn can be achieved by pressurising state sponsors of terrorism to cooperate by terminating support to the terrorists or by assisting in the arrest of perpetrators. In other words, while *direct* negotiations with absolute terrorists may be futile, *indirect* negotiations through the exertion of pressure on state sponsors of terrorism may be feasible. For instance, Fisher credits the extradition of the perpetrators of the Lockerbie incident to the efforts of the US and the UK in negotiating with Moammar Qaddafi, the *de facto* leader of Libya.²³ Hence,

removal of sponsor support (safe haven in this case) can have a dramatic effect in imposing costs on absolute terrorists, and thereby ensure compliance with their end of the negotiated peace.

To be sure, negotiating with state sponsors of terrorism might involve incurring substantial political costs. In particular, such negotiations could have the counter-productive effect of encouraging other states to harbour terrorists, or at least confer legitimacy on a rouse regime that can be at least considered *partially* responsible for the terrorist attacks. Therefore, even though a case can be made for negotiating with state sponsors of terrorism, it is important to remain cognisant about the political costs of doing so. A possible way around this problem is to negotiate through third-party countries or to convene secret negotiations, so as to limit any damaging political costs. Also, negotiating with state sponsors that have little effective control over the terrorist organisations that they harbour may also be ineffective. For instance, the Taliban government was understood to have little or no control over the day-to-day operations of Al Qaeda even though the Taliban provided the group with a safe haven for training purposes. In such cases, the utility of engaging state sponsors through negotiations lie in the exchange and collection of intelligence on terrorist activity, and also possible concessions in the use of territory to launch a military offensive against terrorist cells.

Contingent Terrorists:

The chances of successfully negotiating with contingent terrorists, and in particular hostage takers are extremely high. Fundamentally, such terrorists seek to negotiate as the whole point of taking hostages is to create leverage for the terrorists to make certain demands on a state. To contingent terrorists, the lives of their hostages have no intrinsic value other than as bargaining chips and hence they are more likely to keep the hostages alive whilst the negotiations are in progress.²⁴

The value of negotiation in dealing with contingent terrorists is multi-fold. Where the demands of the hostage takers are easily met, such as requests for safe passage out of the country, negotiation can often be an effective way of resolving the conflict with minimal bloodshed. An example where negotiation with contingent terrorists was successful was the Bethlehem case, described in detail by Cristal²⁵ where armed Palestinian terrorists were besieged in the Church of Nativity by the Israeli military. The crisis was finally diffused after a negotiated settlement allowed for the voluntary exile of the terrorists to European countries in exchange for withdrawal of troops from Bethlehem. Likewise, the *Laju* incident in the early days of the SAF similarly demonstrated the success of negotiation in dealing with hostage incidents. On 31 Jan 1974, a group of terrorists comprising members from the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked the ferryboat *Laju* after a botched terrorist attack on the Shell oil refinery on Pular Bukom Besar, taking

the 5-man crew on board hostage. After days of intense negotiation, the group finally agreed to release the hostages in exchange for safe passage to Kuwait, escorted by a group of “guarantors” (led by Mr S.R. Nathan, then MINDEF Director for Security and Intelligence) on their flight out of Singapore.²⁶ What both these cases clearly establish is the idea that negotiation can be an effective tool in resolving hostage incidents peacefully; to that extent, the utility of negotiation should not be discounted.



A group of terrorists hijacked the ferryboat Laju after a botched terrorist attack on the Shell oil refinery on Pular Bukom Besar, taking the 5-man crew onboard hostage.

In other cases, negotiation *per se* may not be an acceptable means of resolving the conflict as the price demanded by the terrorists may not be something the state is willing or prepared to pay, e.g., release of certain important prisoners or withdrawal from a war.²⁷ Nonetheless, by seeing negotiations as part of a wider arsenal of tools necessary in resolving a crisis, a more nuanced policy approach towards conflict resolution is possible. Implicit in this argument is the idea that negotiating with terrorists does not *per se* preclude the use of force. An example of this approach was the successful storming of SQ 117 on 27 Mar

1991. Hijackers claiming to be members of the Pakistan People's Party had taken control of the Singapore Airlines flight from Subang Airport, Kuala Lumpur and demanded the release of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's husband and other PPP members detained in Pakistani jails. Since the Singapore government had little control over the internal affairs of another sovereign state, the police negotiation team was successfully employed as a means to buy time and gather intelligence in preparation for the storming of the plane by SAF Commandos. Indeed, the contributions of the negotiation team was so central towards the successful resolution of the crisis that Superintendent Foo Kia Juah, leader of the police negotiating team, was awarded a Public Service Star after the incident.²⁸



SQ 117 Hijack

Conditional Absolute Terrorists

As discussed above, conditional absolute terrorists are usually open to negotiation as their demands are typically about territory, independence and conditions. Although the agents that carry out suicide attacks may be absolutist and hence non-negotiable, given the right conditions, it may be possible to negotiate with the mastermind

behind the acts of terror. The secret negotiation that the UK government entered into with the Provisional IRA is an excellent example of this dynamic at work.²⁹ The Joint Declaration issued in 1993 by the UK government recognised the right to self determination (a major demand made by the IRA) but also set out conditions for getting the IRA to the negotiating table. As a result of these efforts to reintegrate the IRA into the political mainstream, the IRA called for a ceasefire in 1994 which marked a major step forward in the peace process. These efforts finally culminated in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 where the IRA agreed to work towards a united Ireland through peaceful means. In July 2005, the IRA formally ordered an end to their armed campaign and by September that same year, the Independent Monitoring Commission reported that the IRA had in fact completed disarmament.³⁰

The use of negotiation as a key driver for sustainable peace was similarly demonstrated in the successful disarmament of the GAM in Indonesia. In Aug 05, the Indonesian government and GAM announced a peace deal ending nearly 30 years of insurgency and armed terrorist activities. Under the terms of the peace accord, GAM undertook to disarm voluntarily in exchange for withdrawal of forces by the Indonesian government. In addition, the government would grant Aceh limited self-government, release incarcerated GAM prisoners and allow the establishment of political parties so that the movement may be reintegrated into the political mainstream. By Dec 06, the Aceh Monitoring Mission, set up under the auspices of the EU and ASEAN, announced the successful

completion of the peace process with the fulfilment of all terms under the peace agreement by both parties.³¹ Hence, the examples of IRA and GAM above both illustrate positive experiences in negotiations with contingent absolute terrorists, in particular where the source of conflict is territorial in nature.

The Way Forward in the Middle East

The Arab-Israeli problem is a complex one, both because of the multiple interests involved and also because the root of the problem is ultimately intertwined in religion and history. This paper does not pretend to resolve the problem comprehensively, but makes the simple argument that negotiations, either *directly* with the terrorist organisations involved or *indirectly* through their state sponsors, offers the best way forward in the long road towards peace in the Middle East.

The complexity of the issue is further confounded by the dual-status of the so-called “terrorist organisations” involved. Although Hamas and Hezbollah are “terrorist organisations” in the definitional sense (in that they retain paramilitary wings that deploy violent tactics against civilians in the pursuit of political aims), they are also concurrently legitimate players in Palestinian and Lebanese politics, having been democratically elected by their respective populace.³² Hence, any protests that negotiating with Hamas or Hezbollah confers undue legitimacy on these organisations therefore become moot, since both are full players on the political main-stage.

Indeed, the possibility of negotiating *directly* with Hamas and Hezbollah through their political entities should not be discounted. By persuading them to renounce violence and further recognise Israel’s right to exist, the Israeli government could in return undertake to release Palestinian prisoners, reduce their security presence within the occupied territories and provide much needed aid to the Palestinian Authority.³³ By bringing other stakeholders in the peace process to the negotiation table, in particular Syria and Iran who as state sponsors have supported the activities of Hamas and Hezbollah in the past by providing funding and arms, *indirect* pressure could be exerted on these organisations to ensure compliance with any nascent peace process.³⁴ Drawing on the lessons of Northern Ireland and Aceh, where negotiations with rejectionist groups have yielded positive results in recent years with the disarmament of the IRA and GAM, one can at least be optimistic that a similar course of action would have corresponding prospects of success in the Middle East.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the official policy and rhetoric of non-negotiation with terrorist organisation deserves rethinking. As I have attempted to show in the discussion above, it is possible to negotiate *directly* with contingent and conditional absolute terrorists and use negotiation as part of our wider policy response towards terrorists; on the other hand, absolute terrorists may still be influenced through *indirect* negotiations

with their state sponsors. To that extent, an emphatic rejection of all forms of negotiation with terrorists essentially limits governmental response to violent means, which may have the counter-productive effect of creating martyrs and entrenching the terrorist cause.

In this age of terrorism, a multi-pronged approach towards crisis resolution is necessary. Drawing from the lessons of the IRA and GAM, a case can be made for incorporating negotiation into the wider arsenal of tools open to policy makers in determining how to deal with terrorists and other rejectionist groups. By rejecting the strait-jacket of a categoric non-negotiation policy, we free ourselves to the possibility of a more nuanced strategy that incorporates negotiation with the appropriate use of force to tackle the growing scourge of terrorism. Indeed, if we are truly sincere about securing lasting peace through long-term conflict resolution, as opposed to piecemeal crisis management, then perhaps it is about time we started talking to our enemies. 🗣️

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Endnotes

¹ During the Iran-Contra Affair in 1985, Hezbollah terrorists held seven US hostages captive in Lebanon. Hoping to influence Hezbollah into releasing the hostages, the US entered into secret negotiations with Iran (a major state sponsor of Hezbollah) and offered to sell arms to Iran in exchange for the hostages. Although President Reagan initially denied the deal, he subsequently admitted in a White House Press Statement dated 4 Mar 1987 that his administration did in fact engage in the Arms-for-Hostage deal.

² Carter-Reagan Presidential Debate, Oct 28, 1980. Transcript available at <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans80b.html>

³ Dr Tony Tan, “Singapore won’t negotiate with

terrorists”, *The Straits Times* (July 29, 2004).

⁴ Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

⁵ Colin Powell, Remarks After Meeting With the Community of Democracies, September 22, 2004. Transcript available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/36396.htm>

⁶ Guy Faure, “Negotiating with Terrorists: The Hostages Case”, *International Negotiation*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2003), pp469-476.

⁷ Richard Hayes, “Negotiations with Terrorists”, in *International Negotiation*, ed. Victor Kremenyuk, (Jossey-Bass, 2002).

⁸ William Zartman, “Negotiating with Terrorists”, *International Negotiation*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2003), pp443-448.

⁹ Scott Atkinson et al., “Terrorism in a Bargaining Framework”, *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1987).

¹⁰ Edward Mickolus et al., *International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events*, (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2000).

¹¹ Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving in*, (Houghton Mifflin, 1991).

¹² Michael Cox et al., *A Farewell to Arms?: From ‘Long War’ to Long Peace in Northern Ireland*, (Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹³ Faure, “Negotiating with Terrorists”, p476.

¹⁴ Statistically, 75% of all casualties in hostage-taking crises have resulted from an armed rescue attempt; on the other hand, studies have shown that a strategy of negotiation and containment could have a 95% chance of success. In hostage-taking situations, studies have also shown that the development of the so-called “Stockholm Syndrome” may increase hostage survivability rates as the terrorists and hostages begin to develop mutually “positive feelings” towards each other after being in a confined environment for a long time. This in turn makes the cold-blooded execution of hostages psychologically more difficult. The phenomenon was first observed in 1973 during a bank robbery case in Sweden when the hostages protected their captors with their own bodies during surrender. One of the victims subsequently even married one of the hostage-takers when he was in prison! See Adam Dolnik, “Contrasting Dynamics of Crisis Negotiations: Barricade versus Kidnapping Incidents”, *International Negotiation*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2003), pp495-509.

¹⁵ Mafoot Simon, “Could Beslan have been handled better?”, *The Straits Times* (September 16, 2004).

¹⁶ Robert Mnookin, “Afghanistan: Negotiating in the Face of Terrorism”, *Program on Negotiation Seminar Remarks, Harvard Law School*, November 13, 2001, available at http://www.pon.harvard.edu/shared/docs/mnookin_remarks.pdf

¹⁷ Zartman, “Negotiating with Terrorists”, p444.

- ¹⁸ Ibid., p446.
- ¹⁹ Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (2003), p343.
- ²⁰ US State Department Report, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (2003).
- ²¹ Felicity Barringer, "Libya Admits Culpability in Crash of Pan Am Plane", *The New York Times* (August 16, 2003), pA6.
- ²² Navin Bapat, "State Bargaining with Transnational Terrorist Groups", available at http://www.personal.psu.edu/nab12/ISQU_399.pdf
- ²³ Roger Fisher, "Afghanistan: Negotiation in the Face of Terror", *Program on Negotiation Seminar Remarks, Harvard Law School*, November 13, 2001, available at http://www.pon.harvard.edu/shared/docs/fisher_remarks.pdf
- ²⁴ Zartman, "Negotiating with Terrorists", p446.
- ²⁵ Moty Christal, "Negotiating under the Cross: The Story of the Forty Day Siege of the Church of Nativity", *International Negotiation*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2003), p549.
- ²⁶ Kian Seng Ong, "1974 – The Laju Incident", *MINDEF/SAF History Snippets*, Vol. 6, Issue 1 (2002).
- ²⁷ For instance, the Singapore Government issued a joint statement with 31 other countries stating that they will not withdraw from the US-led multinational force in Iraq even if they were subject to terrorist attacks. Contrast this with the reaction of the Philippines Government who withdrew their small contingent of troops in Iraq following a kidnap attack on one of their nationals. See Michael Richardson, "No backing down from resolve against hostage taking", *The Straits Times* (5 August 2004).
- ²⁸ Choi Kee Choy, "1991 - SQ 117 Rescue", *MINDEF/SAF History Snippets*, Vol. 3, Issue 3 (1999).
- ²⁹ Andreas Ninios, "Bringing Islamic extremist groups, in the Middle East, to the negotiating table: The lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process", available at <http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/files/03.09.pdf>
- ³⁰ Twelfth Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission, October 2006.
- ³¹ Aceh Monitoring Mission news archive, available at http://www.aceh-mm.org/english/info_menu/archive.htm
- ³² USA and Israel consider Hamas and Hezbollah to be terrorist organisations. Other governments, such as the UK, only consider the military wing of Hezbollah to be a terrorist group, but not the political side of the organisation. See "Quick Guide: Hezbollah", *BBC News* (August 22, 2006).
- ³³ The Palestinian Authority's income comes mainly from development funds and Custom duties that Israel collects on its behalf. Since Hamas formed the Palestinian government in Mar 2006, Israel has withheld funding totalling \$950 million. See Jonathan Eyal, "Palestinians stuck until Hamas, Fatah make peace", *The Straits Times* (December 19, 2006).
- ³⁴ To date, there appears to be a lack of political will on the part of Israel to negotiate with Syria and Iran. Israeli PM Ehud Olmert has in fact openly declared that conditions are not ripe to reopen talks with Syria. See Yan Zhonghua, "Olmert: Israel not to negotiate with Syria soon", *Xinhua News Agency* (7 Dec 06).



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Development and Implementation of New Control Law for Vision Based Target Tracking System on board Small Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Abstract

A new control law is being developed and implemented for the Vision Based Target Tracking (VBTT) system on board a small unmanned aerial vehicle (SUAV). The new control law allows for coordinated SUAV guidance and vision-based target tracking of stationary and moving targets in the presence of atmospheric disturbances and measurements noise. The new control law is tested for its performance and stability in both the theoretical 6DOF simulation and the Hardware-in-the-Loop (HIL) simulation. Principal results show that realistic measures of performance of the control law are continuous and exhibit predictable degradation of performance with increase of target speed. The results are encouraging and comparable among theoretical predictions, actual hardware simulation results and initial flight testing.

Introduction

a. Background

The Modern Unmanned Aerial Vehicle is an autonomous surveillance platform that has garnered prominent

and important roles in today's battlefield. At present, it is favourably situated to expand and extend its prominences and successes, in advancing its operational and technological influences for the research and development of the future network centric warfare concepts.

Central to the realisation of a fully unmanned autonomously synchronous surveillance goal is the culmination and amalgamation of several maturing technologies. These technologies encompass areas of a low cost, lightweight unmanned aerial vehicle, high speed wireless network communication technology and real-time simulation software for rapidly deployed hardware reconfiguration of advanced guidance and control algorithms.

b. Problem Statement

In the modern day's battlefield and the future network-centric battle space environment, building and maintaining a dynamic information and intelligence network architecture is a crucial and fundamental battlefield task. The integrated information overlay that is

constructed from the collected data will enable military missions and tasks to jointly utilise and leverage the real-time information and intelligence in order to pursue elusive enemies and fleeting targets in the most efficient and effective manner.

To aid in the information management process, fully autonomous unmanned aerial sensor platform and surveillance automation will be indispensable to alleviating the problem of human constraints. The necessity of controlling multiple airborne platforms will only complicate this task. A control law algorithm that automatically couples the dual objectives of manoeuvring the unmanned aerial sensor platform and its surveillance sensor will vastly aid the operator, enabling him to work with more spare cognitive capacity. Therefore, the operator can better manage a great deal of critical information, and can timely process key intelligence. The operator is protected from potential saturation while performing multiple tasks, such as the management of the platform flight dynamics, airspace de-confliction and safety, and the on board sensor control.

c. Overview of Tactical Network Topology (TNT) Experiment and its UAV Segment

The current research is an integral part of the Tactical Network Topology (TNT) field experimentation programme, a cooperative effort between the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), USSOCOM and its component commands. The programme – conducted quarterly at the Center for Interdisciplinary Remotely-Piloted Aircraft Studies (CIRPAS)

facility located at McMillan air field in Camp Roberts, CA – is a continuation of the Surveillance and Target Acquisition (STAN) programme and focuses on the exploration of network-based warfare capabilities and their integration into current real-world situations.

This article presents the development and testing of a VBTT system. The system controls a UAV and a gimballed camera to keep the operator-selected target in the centre of the video image and provide an estimate of target GPS position. The target can be stationary or moving.

The VBTT system includes a Senior Telemaster SUAV that was modified to carry a two-axis gimballed camera, which acquires video and sends the information to the automatic target tracking (ATT) computer in real time. During a mission, the operator of the ATT computer may identify the target of interest. The target appears inside a small rectangular polygon and is tracked by engaging the “Track mode”. The position of the target is identified by Cartesian coordinates in a camera frame. This passive information is processed by the control algorithm that sends commands to the SUAV and to the gimballed camera to keep the target in the centre of the video frame.



Figure 1: Modified Telemaster UAV

In order to make the VBTT, three major components were developed and integrated into one system. The first one includes a vision-based target tracking capability that uses imagery provided by a gimbaled camera. Development of this component involved the design of a miniaturised gimbaled camera and a controller, and integration of the automated motion tracking software by PerceptiVU, Inc.

The second component of the system includes the control law for the SUAV. The control algorithm was designed to solve two principal tasks. First, it had to navigate the SUAV around the target while keeping the target in the camera frame. Second, it had to reduce the range estimation errors, because the accuracy of the range estimation depends on the translating motion of the camera. The estimation error is minimised when the target moves parallel to the camera image plane.

In general, in order to estimate the target position efficiently, the target must exhibit translational motion in the camera frame tracked from the

SUAV. The differences in the translation motions of the target in the camera frame for frontal and circular approaches are presented in Figure 2.

In a frontal approach situation, where the SUAV flight path and its camera LOS is pointing forward and towards the target, the translational motion of the target in the camera frame is minimal at large distances and consequently, a large sampling time interval must be used in order to provide low dilution of precision (DOP) of the target position. An alternate strategy is to circle the SUAV around the target with the camera mid line pointing 90 degrees away from the SUAV forward velocity. This approach, which is traditionally used in triangulation, ensures maximum translational motion of the target in the camera frame, and thus, the sampling time interval can be significantly smaller for a continuous position estimate of the target. Although triangulation is not used in current projects for target motion estimation, the idea of translational motion and its effect onto position estimation is still valid and is used for control law development.

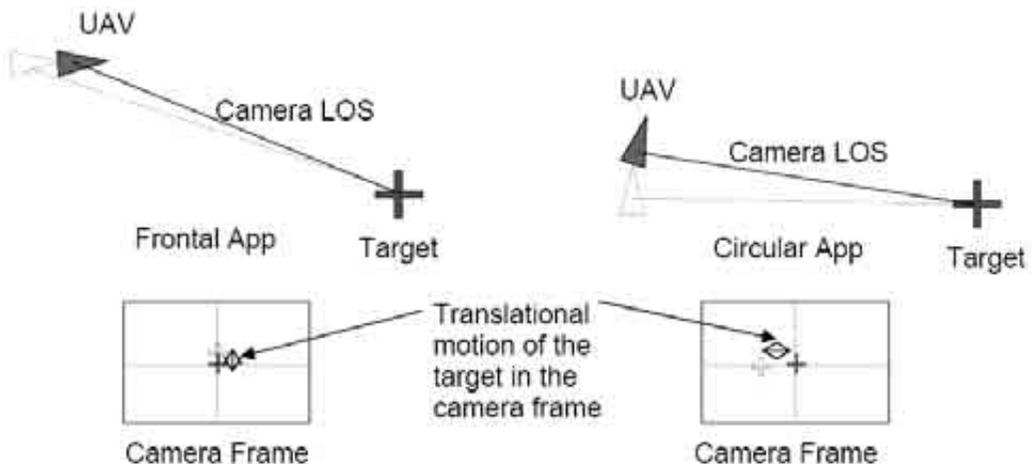


Figure 2: Translation Motions of Target in Camera Frame

The control concept is depicted in Figure 3 below. It illustrates a shape of an orbit above the centre of the target, while the SUAV is autonomously guided to accomplish the task of target tracking. The VBTT guidance algorithm controls the ground speed vector V_g of the UAV in such a way as to make it continuously perpendicular to the Line of sight (LOS). This control strategy guarantees a maximum of the translational motion mentioned above.

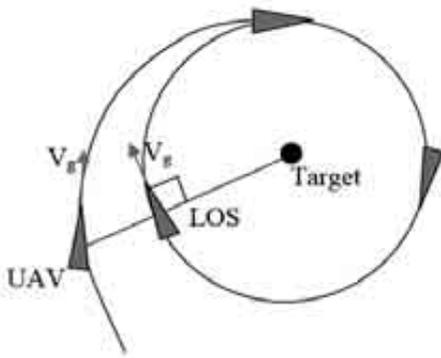


Figure 3: Conceptual Depiction of VBTT Guidance Algorithm

The third component consisted of two filters for target position estimation (not considered in this thesis).

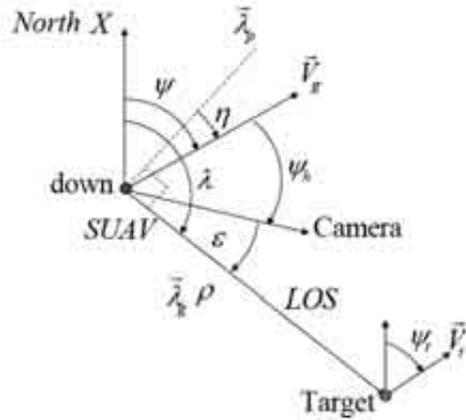
d. Article Objectives

The objective of this article is twofold. The first objective is to develop and implement a new control law algorithm for the VBTT system for SUAV, independent of target speed. The next logical goal of this project concerns Hardware-In-The-Loop (HIL) lab experimentation and following flight test experiments.

Control Law Development

a. Kinematics Equations of the SUAV-target Motion

The simplified two-dimensional (2D) kinematics model is presented in Figure 4; it is assumed that an autopilot can easily hold altitude, therefore converting the task to 2D. The figure depicts the relationships between the kinematics angles used to characterise relative motion of the SUAV-Target.



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--|
| ψ | = navigation error | ψ_s | = UAV heading in inertia frame |
| ϵ | = camera LOS Pan error | ψ_t | = Target heading in inertia frame |
| λ | = LOS angle in inertia frame | ψ_k | = Camera angle in UAV body frame |
| $\vec{\lambda}_k$ | = LOS vector | \vec{V}_g | = SUAV ground speed in inertia frame |
| $\vec{\lambda}_k^\perp$ | = Normal to LOS vector | \vec{V}_t | = Target ground speed in inertia frame |

Figure 4: Kinematics of the SUAV-Target Motion

From the kinematics above, we derive the SUAV-target kinematics' equations, as shown below:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{\eta} &= -\frac{V_g \cos \eta - V_t \cos(\psi_t - (\psi - \eta))}{\rho} + \dot{\psi} \\ \dot{\epsilon} &= \frac{V_g \cos \eta - V_t \cos(\psi_t - (\psi - \eta))}{\rho} - \dot{\psi} - \dot{\psi}_k \\ \dot{\rho} &= -V_g \sin \eta + V_t \sin(\psi_t - (\psi - \eta)) \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

The navigation angle error η is the angle subscribed between the SUAV's ground velocity vector and the perpendicular to LOS vector. The navigation angle error rate approaches zero when the SUAV establishes a circular orbit about a target at the desired range.

The camera LOS angle error ε is the angle between the camera middle line and the LOS vector. The camera LOS angle rate approaches zero when the camera LOS angle is pointing either 90° left or right of the SUAV's ground velocity vector (when the SUAV is in a circular orbit around a target at the desired range).

b. Control Law Design

A suitable form of the control laws for implementation on the SUAV AP Controller and Gimbal Platform controller is shown as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{\psi} &= \frac{V_g}{\rho_d} \cos \eta - k_1 \eta \\ \dot{\psi}_h &= k_1 \eta + k_2 \varepsilon \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

- η = navigation angle error
- ε = camera LOS angle error
- V_g =SUAV ground speed
- k_1, k_2 = gain constant
- $\dot{\psi}$ = UAV turn rate in inertia frame
- $\dot{\psi}_h$ = Camera turn rate in UAV body frame
- ρ_d =desired range

The chosen form of control law will allow for dynamic adjustment of the required turn rate of the SUAV ($\dot{\psi}$); this acts in accordance to the magnitude of the ground velocity vector of the SUAV

to converge to its desired range. If the SUAV begins by tracking a stationary target inside the desired range, it will spiral outwards to the desired range; if the SUAV begins by tracking the target outside the desired range, it will spiral inwards to the desired range. When the SUAV is established at its desired range in a circular orbit, the turn rate of the SUAV will approach the required turning “bias”, which will keep the SUAV in circular orbit around the target at the desired range. The gimbal turn rate of the gimballed camera will also approach zero when the SUAV has established the $\pm 90^\circ$ camera LOS angle in the circular orbit at the desired range.

The non-linear control law in Equation (2) includes an *interesting feature*. As it is shown below in (3), the control law is able to drive the range of target ρ to the desired value ρ_d . This is done for the *unknown* ρ . The control intuition suggests that this can be achieved by driving the SUAV's yaw rate to the desired value $\frac{V_g}{\rho_d}$.

By substituting control law (2) into the kinematics equation (1) and performing some algebraic manipulations, we discover the following feedback system:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{\eta} &= -V_g \rho_e \cos \eta - k_1 \eta + V_g \cos(\eta - \psi) \bar{\rho} \\ \dot{\varepsilon} &= V_g \rho_e \cos \eta - k_2 \varepsilon - V_g \cos(\eta - \psi) \bar{\rho} \\ \dot{\rho}_e &= \bar{\rho}^2 V_g \sin \eta - V_g \sin(\eta - \psi) \bar{\rho}^2 \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where $\rho_e = \frac{1}{\rho} - \frac{1}{\rho_d} \Rightarrow -\frac{1}{\rho^2} \dot{\rho} = \dot{\rho}_e; \quad \frac{1}{\rho} = \bar{\rho}$

It becomes apparent from equation (3) that, by driving the navigation angle error (η) and camera LOS angle error (ε) to zero, the range error ρ_e is indirectly driven to zero. Therefore, although range to target

is not measured directly, the proposed control law allows us to control it.

c. Eigenvalue Stability Analysis of the Feedback System

For purposes of stability analysis, it is convenient to rescale η by introducing a new state variable $\hat{\eta} = \frac{\eta}{\rho_d}$, substituting in equation (3) and rearranging:

$$x := \begin{bmatrix} \dot{\hat{\eta}} \\ \dot{\rho}_e \\ \dot{\varepsilon} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} -V_g \rho_e \cos \hat{\eta} \rho_d - k_1 \hat{\eta} \rho_d + V_t \cos(\hat{\eta} \rho_d - \psi) \bar{\rho} \\ \bar{\rho}^2 V_g \sin \hat{\eta} \rho_d - V_t \cos(\hat{\eta} \rho_d - \psi) \bar{\rho}^3 \\ V_g \rho_e \cos \hat{\eta} \rho_d - k_2 \varepsilon - V_t \cos(\hat{\eta} \rho_d - \psi) \bar{\rho} \end{bmatrix} \quad (4)$$

where $x = [\hat{\eta} \ \rho_e \ \varepsilon]^T$

Using Eigenvalue analysis, the stability of the system (4) is next addressed. If we first suppose that the target is stationary, then $V_t = 0$. Consequently,

$$\dot{x} := \begin{bmatrix} \dot{\hat{\eta}} \\ \dot{\rho}_e \\ \dot{\varepsilon} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} -V_g \rho_e \cos \hat{\eta} \rho_d - k_1 \hat{\eta} \rho_d \\ \bar{\rho}^2 V_g \sin \hat{\eta} \rho_d \\ V_g \rho_e \cos \hat{\eta} \rho_d - k_2 \varepsilon \end{bmatrix}, \quad (5)$$

and the origin $x = (0 \ 0 \ 0)$ is clearly the equilibrium of (5). Linearisation of (5) around the origin yields an LTI system

$$\dot{\xi} = \begin{bmatrix} -k_1 & -V_g / \rho_d & 0 \\ V_g / \rho_d & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & V_g & -k_2 \end{bmatrix} \xi \quad (6)$$

We may then also assume that the SUAV velocity V_g is constant, and $V_g \in [V_{gmin}, V_{gmax}]$, $V_{gmax} \geq V_{gmin} > 0$. Then the eigenvalues of the state matrix in (6) have negative real parts for any

$k_1 > 0, k_2 > 0$. Therefore, the non-linear system (5) is locally asymptotically stable for any $k_1 > 0, k_2 > 0$.

On the other hand, if the target is moving and $V_t \neq 0$, the equilibrium of (4) is at the relative heading $\psi = \frac{\pi}{2}$. This in fact corresponds to the circular motion of the SUAV around the target. In this case, linearisation of (4) around the equilibrium results in an LTI system

$$\dot{\xi}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} -k_1 + V_t / \rho_d & -V_g / \rho_d & 0 \\ (V_g - V_t) / \rho_d & 0 & 0 \\ -V_t & V_g & -k_2 \end{bmatrix} \xi_1 \quad (7)$$

The target velocity V_t is assumed constant and $V_t \in [V_{tmin}, V_{tmax}]$, $V_{tmax} \geq V_{tmin} > 0$. The eigenvalues of the LTI system (7) will have negative real parts if $V_g > V_t$, $k_1 > V_t / \rho_d$ and $k_2 > 0$. As a result, if these conditions hold, the non-linear system (3) is locally asymptotically stable. The Eigenvalue analysis plot for $V_t = 20\text{m/s}$ is shown in Figure 5.

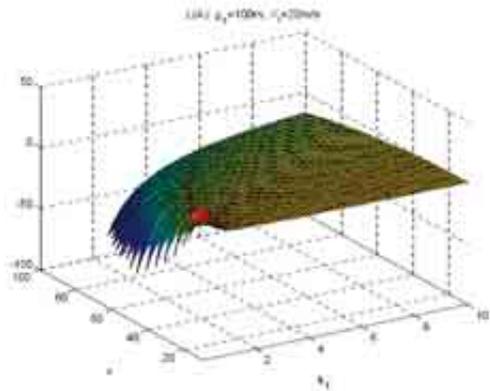


Figure 5: Eigenvalue Analysis Plot

The plot demonstrates that the eigenvalues of the state matrix in (7) are always negative, except the area

where V_g is less than V_f . The Eigenvalues analysis suggests that the feedback system is locally asymptotically stable.

Control Law Implementation

a. Modifications of Simulink Model for Implementation of New Control Law

The initial control law of the VBTT system has the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{\psi} &= \text{sign}(\text{Bias} - k_1\eta) \\ \dot{\psi}_h &= k_2\varepsilon \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

Two observations are worthy of mention here. First, the turning bias in the initial control law (See equation 8) is a fixed value and thus, does not vary with the SUAV ground speed or the desired range. Second, the camera LOS turn rate is independent of the SUAV turn rate.

The fixed bias value applied to turn the SUAV in equation (8) can be any arbitrary value. As a consequence, it is slow in converging to any other desired range commanded, except to the desired range that corresponds to the arbitrary turning bias value. In addition, because the camera LOS turns independently of the SUAV turn rate, the resulting control of the camera LOS is poor, and

necessitates a large k_2 value to keep the camera LOS closely aligned to the SUAV-target LOS.

Using the newly designed control law in equation (2), equation (8) adjusts to the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{\psi} &= \frac{\bar{v}}{\rho_d} \cos\eta - k_1\eta \\ \dot{\psi}_h &= k_1\eta + k_2\varepsilon \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

The turning bias in equation (8) is replaced with the dynamically adjusted quantity in equation (9), which varies with the UAV ground speed and the desired range. The control law in equation (9) improves upon equation (8) in that the dynamically adjusted quantity replicates the “old fixed bias” term in equation (8) and automatically adjusts turn rate command to the target motion. In addition, the camera LOS turn rate is coupled and compensated with the SUAV turn rate, which makes the camera control more efficient.

The control system architecture that implements control law (9) is presented in Figure 6. It consists of an autopilot and a gimbal driven by the control inputs $\dot{\psi}$ and $\dot{\psi}_h$. On board cameras provide real-time imagery to the image tracking software. In turn, the software

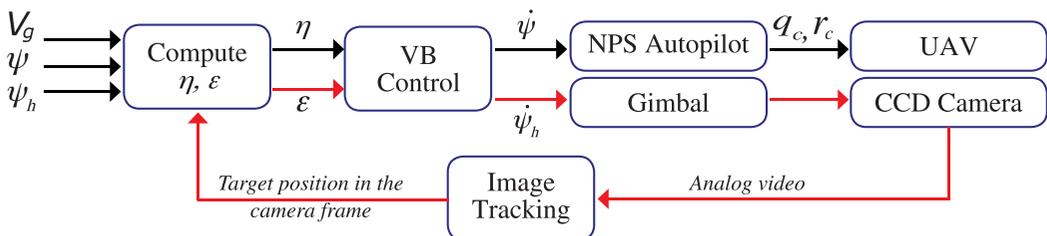


Figure 6: Control System Architecture

computes the tracking error ϵ , while on board GPS and inertial systems provide the solution for the navigation error η .

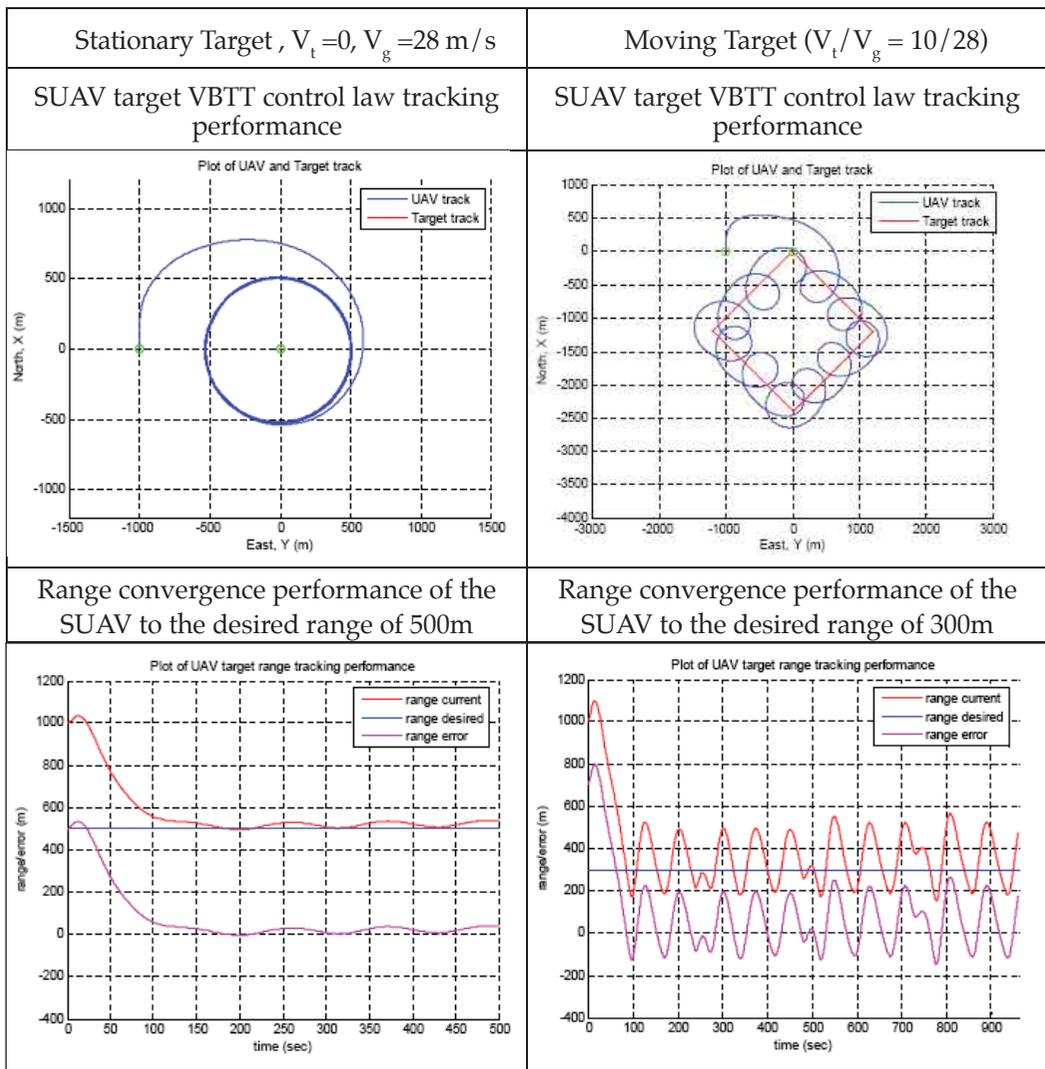
The VB Control block pictured in Figure 6 is the actual implementation of the control law (9).

b. Simulation Results

The performance of the newly developed control law is tested against

both a stationary target and a moving target under different target motion scenarios.

Two result examples of the convergence performance of the SUAV flight paths are shown as followed for the stationary and moving target motion scenarios. The ability of the SUAV to track through changes in target motion direction also demonstrates



the robustness of the control algorithm in its adaptation to changes in target dynamics in the moving target case.

Conclusion

In comparison with the initial control law, which uses the turn bias of the SUAV as a fixed quantity and does not vary with the SUAV speed and desired range, the newly developed control

law takes into account the SUAV flight dynamics and automatically computes a dynamic turn bias commensurate with the desired range. Moreover, the camera LOS turn rate is also coupled with the SUAV turn rate, thus resulting in a more efficient control of the camera. The newly developed control law is therefore more robust and efficient than the initial control law. 



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VIEWPOINT

The 3rd Generation Army: Harnessing the Full Potential of Our Soldiers



her people has to be the finest in order to sustain a robust economy and military. The question of “how” begs across a dynamic evolution of society and technology, and the current answer for the SAF can be derived from the broad framework of “Learning Army Thinking Soldier” that was aptly expounded.

By first establishing the tenacious challenges of the 3rd Generation Army, it enabled readers to grasp the contemporary context in which the value proposition in a Learning Army with Thinking Soldiers has been formulated to address. This writer relates it further to the manifestation of asymmetric warfare as a global phenomenon and rapidly-morphing battle space catalysed by nascent C2 technology, which have indubitably been grappling issues for modern armies. Perceivably, the hardware (weapons and equipment), software (skills and knowledge) and “heartware” (culture and values) of a military must be boosted concomitantly to meet the requirements of the 3rd Generation Army.

The authors proceeded to dissect the need for a “Learning Army Thinking Soldier”, espousing the concept as a necessity in the face of increasingly

The article “Learning Army Thinking Soldier” by BG Goh Kee Nguan *et al.* illuminated the assiduous emphasis in the SAF on people development. From the first edition of the “Code of Conduct for the SAF” that was published in May 1967 to the ongoing initiatives, the urge to develop the strength and fibre of our soldiers has never lost its relevance. For a nation that lacks the size and resources *vis-à-vis* her neighbours, the quality of

complex situations. Bloom's three-pronged development of people through the "Psychomotor", "Affective" and "Cognitive" domains was found to be truly informative as it provided a more systematic insight to the SAF's organisational efforts. These domains not only emanate a holistic approach, but they are also integral to the end-product. More importantly, we must not only communicate this notion to commanders but also to every soldier such that they are able to appreciate the higher intent of related measures. Critically, the article debunked the common argument that the "Thinking Soldier" poses a threat to an effective military. Indeed, the "Thinking Soldier" was defined as one who is able to understand the higher intent and perform accordingly. As Sun Tzu wisely stated, "Victory belongs to the side which is able to unite all ranks as one mind, spirit and purpose" (上下同欲者胜).

The article continued by elucidating the characteristics of a "Thinking Soldier" and "Learning Army", underlining *sense-making* for the former as well as *culture* and *structure* for the latter. We must unanimously acknowledge that in this Information Age, or what Alvin and Heidi Toffler posited as the Third Wave of Socio-economic Change, such superior cognitive edge is even more pivotal. There should be zero doubt that no amount of information dominance and smart weapons can deliver victory without higher order thinking skills and better decision-making abilities. With the theoretical construct of the article still rather wide at this juncture, the readers' comprehension is subsequently ameliorated by a reconciliation of the

above-construed concepts with the "Learning Army" initiatives that have been implemented in the SAF so far.

The Army Learning System (ALS), as articulated, seeks to facilitate learning at the individual, team and organisational level. With the conceptual objectives clarified by the authors, this writer feels that the responsibility to drive these initiatives falls heavily on the ground management. It is easy to overlook the ALS as it does not directly affect operations. However, such "sharpening of the saw" will certainly enhance organisational culture and capabilities such as innovative and receptive "solutioning". Notably and rightly, Information Technology (IT) undertakes a vital function in the ALS. We must therefore heed the impetus to educate and enthuse personnel to value-add themselves through employment of the IT services. It may appear that the development of human infrastructure presents a stiffer challenge than the IT, but equally ostensible are the intangible benefits to be harvested in the long run.

The article concludes with the Army's Training Philosophy and Principles, explaining how operational capabilities are buttressed through the three Training Principles of Realistic Training, Outcome-based Training and Progressive Training. It must be stressed that ultimately, the Learning Army with Thinking Soldiers has to be developed in tandem with operational training. This will equip our soldiers with the adequate operational skills and knowledge as well as proper "learning

and thinking” mindset to effect an Army of sterling calibre.

As shared by the Chief of Army, MG Neo Kian Hong, in the article “Values-based Leadership in the Army”, exemplary leadership is a cardinal element in the SAF. Hence, the propensity to engage every soldier in a learning and thinking environment must be actively exerted by the higher echelons of the SAF in day-to-day operations. This will serve the purpose of a cascading effect, an impact which cannot be undermined in such an inherently hierarchical organisation. It is an unshakeable fact that by optimising the intellect of every soldier, the SAF will be able to maximise its competitive advantage of a strong educated base.

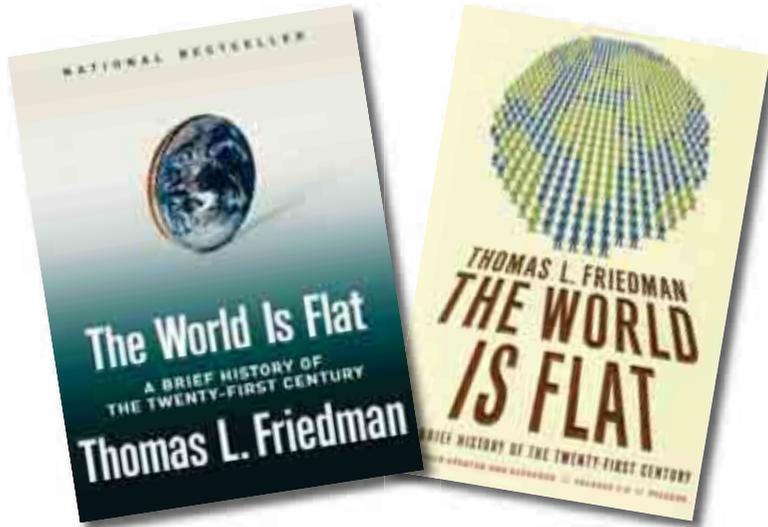
Peter Schwartz, an eminent futurologist, asserted various strategies for organisations to steer across turbulent waves in a sea of uncertainty. They not only include a learning culture but also sensory and intelligence systems at the organisational, group and individual level. These cannot be more justified for the SAF, whose mission is to defend a nation in a region that is subject to breakneck development and sporadic instability. This writer firmly believes that only with the fostering of a Learning Army and grooming of Thinking Soldiers, can the potential of the 3rd Generation Army be fully exploited. 🇸🇬

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BOOK REVIEW

The World is Flat

by CPT Lawrence Leong



Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, (London: Penguin, 2006)

“Any thing that can be digitised can be outsourced to either the smartest or the cheapest producer or both.”¹

“The gains in productivity will be staggering for those countries, companies and individuals who can absorb the new technological tools.”²

“In Globalisation 3.0, individuals have to think globally to thrive, or at least survive. This requires not only a new level of technical skills but also a certain mental flexibility, self-motivation, and psychological mobility.”³

“A country’s decision to develop when the world becomes flat is really a decision to

focus on getting three basic things right: the right infrastructure to connect more of your people with the flat world platform; the right education to get more of your people innovating and collaborating on the flat-world platform; and the right governance to manage the flow of people and the flat-world platform in the most productive way possible.”⁴

These four sound-bites sum up the underlying thesis of the latest edition of *The World is Flat* by American journalist, columnist, author and three-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, Thomas Friedman. In his latest book, Friedman argues that the triumph of capitalism, the rise of India, China, and the ubiquity of the internet and advanced computer software have

led to the decentralisation and increased efficiency of business-making. Firms are able to maximise their operations on a global scale and hence, individuals must adopt higher-order skills in order to stay employable. Therefore, countries have to invest wisely in their human resources and ensure that they are governed responsibly.

Friedman builds on his earlier book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* by further tracing trends in globalisation – the catch-all word that describes the increasing inter-connectedness of the world, the spread of values, cultures and people, and the impact of technology. In *The World is Flat*, Friedman talks of a “Globalisation 3.0” which he asserts is the “new information revolution”⁵. This is the phase where the world is more inter-connected than ever due to the worldwide network of fibre-optic cables laid down during the late 1990s dot-com bubble. Globalisation 3.0 has heavy repercussions on how businesses, individuals and countries must act to survive in this increasingly flat world.

Firstly, Friedman’s emphasis is on how businesses are capitalising on certain globalising trends to out-source and restructure to take advantage of the cheapest and / or most productive labour force. Friedman places heavy emphasis on India and China – more specifically, Indian software engineers and call operators, and Chinese factory workers. He argues that the “grunt work” of the First World is gradually being undertaken by Third World countries like China and India; for example, the out-sourcing of American tax returns to India. Why this is possible and why the phenomenon is here to stay is because of

ten factors that Friedman identifies. The most important include the triumph of capitalism, the creation of the internet browser, the over-investment in fibre-optic cables, the creation of search engines and the presence of “steroids” equipment like palmpilots that allow us to take advantage of technology. Also because of these factors, the other factors constituting business practices such as in-sourcing (letting someone else run your business), supply-chaining (creating value by collaborating with suppliers, retailers and customers) and off-shoring (shifting production offshore and integrating it with the global supply chain) are becoming more common.

Friedman also argues that because of these phenomena, those who wish to thrive in today’s world, particularly those who hold “old middle-class” jobs, must adapt fast. These are the jobs that can be taken over by the rising economies of India and China. As such, the middle-class (Friedman addresses the American middle-class) must adopt higher-order skills in order to survive. The more important of such skills include being great collaborators (making complex systems work), great synthesisers (making diverse disciplines work together), great explainers (making sense of complex systems) and great adapters (constantly learning, growing and adopting new technologies). For the SAF, this view vindicates the emphasis placed by the organisation on upgrading its people. For example, the Continuous Learning Academic Study Scheme (CLASS), introduced in 2001, enables Warrant Officers and Specialists to pursue higher education in the Institutes of Technical Education (ITE) and polytechnics.

Another repercussion of globalisation in Friedman's view is that individuals cannot upgrade themselves without state support. He particularly emphasises education. His stance is that in today's world, how much we educate our people is as important as how we do it. For example, learning "how to learn" is a higher-order skill that enables one to stay employable. Friedman also advocates the development of people skills and the motivation to learn. Apart from education, the state also has to provide the necessary infrastructure and good governance for its citizens to compete globally.

It is difficult to disagree with the general trends that Friedman has identified in today's world. The fact that he has managed to neatly capture these trends in easy-to-understand metaphors such as "flatness" and "The Dell Theory of Conflict" is testament to the degree of his understanding of the implications of these trends. However, it is his deep understanding of these trends that serve to highlight the three main shortcomings *The World is Flat* suffers from.

It can be argued that Friedman does not do justice to his knowledge of these trends through his excessively optimistic style. His fresh innocence about the phenomena sweeping the Globalisation 3.0-world and transforming it makes *The World is Flat* seem almost naïve. He does not deal adequately enough with factors that can halt this transformation – chief among these are war, environmental damage and poverty. For example, Jared Diamond in *Collapse*⁶ argues convincingly how the ignorance of the impact of environmental damage can

undermine entire civilisations. More emphasis could have been given to chapter twelve, "The Unflat World".

The second related shortcoming is that *The World is Flat* lacks substantial intellectual rigour. Although identifying and explaining trends are no mean feats, Friedman could have gone further by dealing with the existing criticisms and alternative views of globalisation. This is even more pertinent given the supposed fluffiness surrounding the concept of globalisation since it is used to encompass such diverse elements and may mean totally different things to different people. For contrast, one book that does a comparison of the pros and cons of globalisation brilliantly is Martin Wolf's *Why Globalization Works*.⁷ Another point is that many of the people Friedman interviewed were chairpersons and CEOs of corporations and organisations – people who have an important stake in the Globalisation 3.0 world. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that he may have been lulled in some way, through his primary sources, into too optimistic a tone.

The third shortcoming concerns the book's theme and content. Although Friedman correctly identifies the trends, he fails to conclude what they all ultimately mean from a broad world perspective. To better understand this shortcoming, it is perhaps worth recounting some of Friedman's achievements. He is not only a triple Pulitzer Prize winner but is also the recipient of the 2004 Overseas Press Club award for lifetime achievement and named Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II. He has also hosted several high-profile documentaries

mainly on Discovery Channel where he touches on important geo-political subjects. Therefore, Friedman fails to bank on and live up to his reputation to tell everyone once-and-for-all what the critical organising principle of world politics will be from now on – will it be the struggle against fundamentalism or protectionism, or a return to old-style nationalism? He seems to suggest economics will dominate world politics through sheer number of pages devoted to the subject yet he acknowledges also that al-Qaeda has been using global trends to facilitate terrorism. He could have defined a grand narrative that will dominate in the increasingly flat world. Friedman comes achingly close to being able to resolve the issue when he deals with the concept of imagination in his conclusion. But alas, he fails to definitively present the reader with what we, in a broad sense, should *really* be concerned with in a globalised world.

In conclusion, if one wishes to catch a glimpse of some of the most important trends in the globalising world and how these trends will benefit those who recognise it, *The World is Flat* is indeed a worthy read. However, if one prefers a more critical and in-depth discussion of the pros and cons of globalisation,

it is more helpful using this book as a general guide before turning to others.

For the SAF, *The World is Flat* underlines above all else, the need to be flexible and nimble. The SAF has leveraged on globalisation through the outsourcing of administrative tasks and the drive in upgrading the education skill set of its people. At the same time, it has to remember that when push comes to shove, it will have to be Singaporeans sacrificing their lives at the front line. At this front line, the economic dimension to threats have indeed increased as evidenced by the competition over resources and rising global commodity prices, which might breed inter-state tensions and social discord. However, traditional problems such as territorial disputes and terrorism continue to fester. If indeed the world is flat, the battlefield of the future might not be so. 🇸🇬

Endnotes

- 1 Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century*, (London: Penguin, 2006), p14.
- 2 Ibid., p47.
- 3 Ibid., p276.
- 4 Ibid., p398.
- 5 Ibid., p47.
- 6 Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, (New York: Viking, 2005).
- 7 Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works*, (London: Yale Nota Bene, 2005).



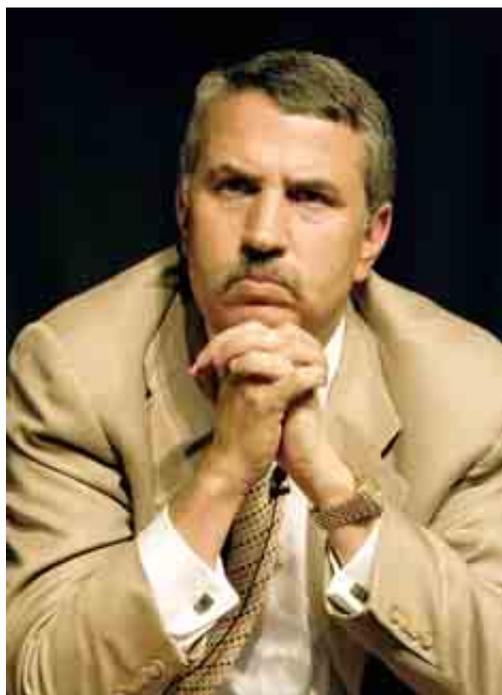
CPT Lawrence Leong is a Naval Officer by training and currently serves as a Additional Officer on board RSS Resilience. CPT Leong is a recipient of the SAF Academic Training Award (Overseas). He holds a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours) in History and International Relations and Masters Of Science (Distinction) in History of International Relations from London School of Economics, U.K.

FEATURED AUTHOR

Thomas Friedman

Since writing his first opposition-editorial (op-ed) article in 1975, Thomas Lauren Friedman has never stopped. With his creative and enchanting writing abilities, he has also penned several ground-breaking books. Throughout this process, he has won numerous awards, as a columnist and as an author.

Born in the US, Thomas Friedman's passion for journalism and the Middle East started early in 10th grade. He was deeply inspired by his high school teachers and in that year, his parents brought him to Israel to spend the summer on a collective farm where his interest for the Middle East developed. During high school, he wrote articles for his school's newspaper, including one in which he interviewed Ariel Sharon, an Israeli general who later became Prime Minister of Israel. He graduated *summa cum laude* from Brandeis University in 1975 with a degree in Mediterranean studies. He then attended St Anthony's College in the University of Oxford on a Marshall scholarship, receiving a Master of Philosophy in Middle Eastern studies. He has served as a visiting professor at Harvard University and has been awarded honorary degrees from several US universities.



Upon graduation, Friedman joined the London bureau of United Press International and was dispatched to Beirut where he stayed until 1981. He was then hired by the New York Times as a reporter and was again posted to Beirut at the start of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. He won a Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting with his coverage of the war and the incriminating Sabra and Shatila massacre. With David K. Shipler, he won the 1982 George Polk Award for

Foreign Reporting. His second Pulitzer Prize came with his coverage of the First Palestinian Intifada when he was assigned to Jerusalem from 1984 to 1988. During President George H. W. Bush's term, he covered Secretary of State James Baker. Following Bill Clinton's election in 1992, he became the White House correspondent for the Times. In 1994, he started to write more about foreign policy and economics and progressed to the op-ed page of *The New York Times* in the next year as a foreign affairs columnist. After the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, his writing focused more on the threat of terrorism and the Middle East. He was awarded the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary "for his clarity of vision, based on extensive reporting, in commenting on the worldwide impact of the terrorist threat". He is the recipient of the 2004 Overseas Press Club for lifetime achievement and has been named to the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II. Presently, he lives in Maryland with his wife and their two daughters.

After being posted out of the Middle East and back to the States to cover domestic politics, Friedman wrote the book, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (1989). Thought-provoking and incisive, the book gives a panoramic view of both the political and personal conflicts in the volatile Middle East. *The Wall Street Journal* describes it as "a sparkling intellectual guidebook... an engrossing journey not to be missed." It was the winner of the National Book Award for Non-fiction in 1989 and is now used as a basic textbook on the Middle East in many high schools and universities. Distinct from the many

other books which strive to interpret the conflicts, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* is well-written, able to capture carefully the psychological mannerisms of the Lebanese and Israelis. This could only be possible with Friedman's field experience as a reporter in the region for a decade. His informative explanations of daily life in Lebanon during the civil war help to make sense of the bizarre existence to anyone foreign to the place. For example, the most frequently asked question after a car bombing in Beirut is not "Who did it?" or "How many were killed?" but instead "What did it do to the exchange rate?". Similarly, "How is it outside?" refers to the security situation and not to the weather.¹

The book contains a condensed and sharp history of the Middle East and personal reflections on his journalist career in the region. It also explores the complicated issues: problems arising from the multiple religious factions obstructing Lebanese and Israeli politics; the agendas of various posturing, media-loving Arab and Israeli leaders; the wanton murder in Lebanon of US marines and Palestinian refugees; America's fascination with Israel; and the deteriorating relationship between Israeli and American Jews. Friedman proposed new guidelines to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict: "The Palestinians must make themselves so indigestible to Israelis that they want to disgorge them into their own state, while at the same time reassuring the Israelis that they can disgorge them without committing suicide." To accomplish this, the Palestinians have to adopt this method: "the stick of non-lethal civil disobedience and the carrot of explicit recognition".²

Library Journal praises the writing style as “vastly descriptive, incredibly illuminating, very educational and marvellously persuasive”. Through anecdotes, history, analysis and self-examination, every part as well done as the newspaper pieces, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* provides a much-needed framework for understanding the psychology and politics of the Middle East and the future of this unique region.

His next book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalisation* (1999), is one of the best-selling business books in 1999 and the winner of the 2000 Overseas Press Club Award for best non-fiction book on foreign policy. Shifting the spotlight on the new post-Cold War world, this book examines the “globalisation system”. Explaining the two paradigms in simple and common terms, Friedman is able to make the picture clearer for the reader. For example, in his view, if the Cold War system was a sport, it would be “sumo-wrestling”. On the other hand, the “globalisation system” would be a 100-metre dash; one which occurs over and over and over again. Additionally, he presents the increasing role of individuals and markets in the world, in contrast to the previous roles of nation-states and superpowers during the Cold War, with interesting examples of Bill Gates and the Asian Financial Crisis. Undoubtedly, the World Wide Web replaces the Cold War symbol of the wall that divides humanity, uniting people across the globe in the new system.³ Furthermore, four main ideas shaping the world are also proposed in the book: the democratisation of finance, the democratisation of technology, the

democratisation of information and the democratisation of decision-making.⁴ Each contributes to the quickening pace of globalisation.

In the title, the two items mentioned exemplifies two contrasting attitudes in our present day world. The olive tree symbolises everything that roots us and identifies us in this world – whether it be belonging to a family, a community, a nation, a religion or most of all, a place called home. On the other hand, the Lexus, which is the brand name of a car, symbolises an equally basic, age-old human drive for sustenance, improvement, prosperity and modernisation.⁵ This book is about the need for sustenance, the need for the sense of identity and community, and the right mix of the two.⁶ Using insightful and sometimes humorous anecdotes and interviews, Friedman produces a sharp, short but captivating investigation of globalisation. Described by *The New York Times Book Review* as “a brilliant guide to the here and now”, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* is certainly one book about globalisation not to be missed.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks which shook the world, the topic of terrorism and the Middle East featured prominently in his newspaper commentaries. His next book, *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11* came not long after. As described by Friedman himself, the book is “not meant to be a comprehensive study of September 11 and all the factors that went into it. Rather my hope is that it will constitute a ‘word album’ that captures and preserves the raw, unpolished, emotional and

analytical responses that illustrate how I, and others, felt as we tried to grapple with September and its aftermath, as they were unfolding”. *Longitudes and Attitudes* was a repackaging of his *New York Times* columns from September 2001 through June 2002 and included an analytical post-September 11 diary, documenting his encounters and travels throughout the period. His columns promoted thoughtful and measured consideration of the US role in the world through examination of several issues of economics and geopolitics.

His diary accounts, perhaps providing the most insights, was written when he was travelling throughout the Middle East. (He was stranded in Israel during the World Trade Center attacks) During this journey, he talked to many people from different countries and in different parts of the cities. In the bazaars, schools and alleyways, he discovered how the terrorist attacks affected the region and uncovered many of the root causes of anti-American sentiments. Drawing the links between economic conditions, the ruling systems, the relationship with US and religious extremism, he explains the cause of the Muslim anger in the Middle East as a “poverty of dignity” and “not a poverty of money”.⁷ Arguing for more action to be undertaken by the US, Friedman believes that the democracy message should be spread further and deeper. Another key theme presented in the book is the Israel-Palestine conflict. Friedman feels that its resolution holds the key to the future of the rest of the world. “A readable guide to the issues and arguments facing American policymakers” as commented by *The Economist*, *Longitudes and Attitudes* is a brilliantly informed work that is

indispensable for understanding today’s radically new world and the complex position of the US. Unapologetically pro-American, Friedman has certainly given the voice to America’s realisation of its role in an environment facing new threats and challenges.

Not just another columnist, Friedman has certainly influenced millions of people with his commentaries, interviews, books and even documentaries. Travelling hundreds of thousands of miles covering the Middle East conflict, the end of the Cold War, US domestic politics and foreign policy, international economics and the worldwide impact of the terrorist threat, he has been able to provide first-hand information and understanding of the world we live in. With climate change increasingly endangering the world, he has started to raise awareness on individual contributions to saving Gaia. His next book, entitled *Hot, Flat and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution – And How it Can Renew America*, will focus precisely in this area. Indubitably a leader on topics of significance to the world, we at *POINTER* highly anticipate the release of this new book in September 2008 and are indeed pleased to do a write-up on its highly-acclaimed author, Thomas Friedman. ☺

Endnotes

- ¹ Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), p34.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp385-388.
- ³ Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalisation*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), p8.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp41, 47, 53, 70.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p27.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p35.
- ⁷ Thomas Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11*, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), p355.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

World War I – Against the Odds **Major Charles White Whittlesey**

To commemorate the 90th anniversary of Armistice Day, which ended active operations for World War One, *POINTER* is proud to present a new four-part series under the theme of “Against the Odds”. Under this series of Personality Profiles, we will feature four remarkable commanders who overcame great adversity to achieve victory. For this issue, the focus is on Major Charles White Whittlesey.

The key players in the First World War (1914-18) were European powers with the USA joining the war at a rather late stage. Despite this, there was a heroic battle featuring a US battalion during this war which captured the imagination of many and became the subject of two movies of the same title “The Lost Battalion”.¹ The term “The Lost Battalion” was first used by a United Press reporter to describe a group of American soldiers surrounded by German troops as a lost or doomed cause rather than as missing troops. This battalion led by Major Charles White Whittlesey survived behind enemy lines for five days and six nights despite severe lack of food, water, medical supplies, ammunition, mounting casualties, suffering bombardment by friend and foe, and assaults by superior forces. Despite such harrowing conditions, they refused to surrender and survived great odds to become one of the most famous military units in US history.



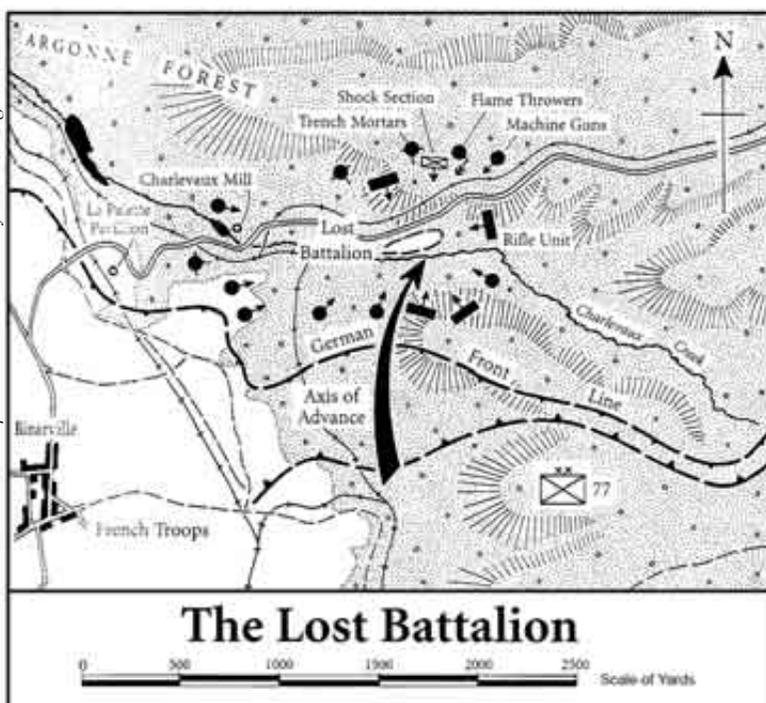
In April 1917, the US entered the First World War on the side of the Entente Powers (UK, France and Russia), and US forces that participated in the Western Front, termed American Expeditionary Force, came under the command of General “Black Jack” Pershing. In late 1918, during the final Allied offensives against Germany, General Pershing was unhappy with the failure of US forces to destroy the German troops in their area of operations due to excessive concern with flank security. He then directed the US 77th Division under Major General Alexander to launch a full-scale attack in the heavily wooded and hilly Argonne Forest (in eastern France). Charles Whittlesey’s battalion was one of the participating units in this attack which started on 2nd October 1918. The 456 mostly conscript personnel who made up this force came from three different battalions of the 308th Infantry Regiment, part of the 77th Division.

Whittlesey’s First Battalion started off well. It advanced along a ravine with Captain George McMurtry’s Second Battalion and machine-gun detachments to capture the Charlevaux Mill “without regard to losses” as ordered. The Americans found a gap between the German wired obstacles and pushed toward their objective despite heavy casualties from sniper fire. The already understrength companies took cover in what was subsequently called “The Pocket” on the night of 2nd October in preparation for the morning assault on the mill.² Unfortunately, the Americans were soon surrounded because Whittlesey was the only commander to achieve his objective that day. His scratch

force was the only one to breach the main German defences in the Argonne Forest. However, Whittlesey’s troops had not replenished their supplies and no proper liaison was established with French forces advancing immediately to Whittlesey’s left. These factors turned his unexpected success on 2nd October into a death trap.³

To compound matters, Maj-Gen Alexander did not reveal the lack of progress of the units on either side of Whittlesey so that the latter would not be tempted to withdraw as prudence dictated.⁴ German units started to infiltrate men to Whittlesey’s rear, eliminating the runner posts he established to maintain contact with Regimental Headquarters. He then sent patrols out on either flank to establish contact with units that, unknown to him had retreated to their starting positions. By the early afternoon of the 3rd October, futile attempts to re-establish contact with his Regiment confirmed his suspicion that the “Battalion” was trapped behind enemy lines.

Fortunately, Whittlesey had chosen his position well. “The Pocket” was located on a steep, wooded reverse slope. There was sufficient open ground to his front and rear to enable his men to mow down any attacks from these directions. The Major sensibly positioned most of his machine-guns to cover his relatively short flanks. His men dug funk holes (WWI name for foxholes) and prepared firing positions further out from the centre of their position. Unfortunately, the “Battalion” was rushed into action without sufficient rations, practically all of which was consumed on the first



Battle area of “The Lost Battalion”

day. Eighty men were already seriously wounded before the German assaults began.

On the morning of 3rd October “The Lost Battalion” received its only substantive reinforcement when “K” Company of the 307th Regiment wandered into “The Pocket” with ninety-eight men. Whittlesey ordered it to try one last breakout to the south but this was unsuccessful as the Germans were positioned in strength behind barbed wire obstacles by this time. Whittlesey then decided that it was the “Battalion’s” task to hold their ground as ordered until relieved: “Our mission is to hold this position at all costs. No falling back. Have this understood by every man in your command.”⁵ Whittlesey’s men managed to repel two German attacks on 3rd October,

making good use of generally superior US marksmanship.

At this point, the men were still optimistic that they would soon be relieved as they could hear American rifle and artillery fire to their rear. Whittlesey knew better. He sent three messages to the rear by homing pigeons. The last read “Present effective strength of companies here, 245. Situation serious.”⁶ Whittlesey’s message was spot-on. While German artillery failed to make much impact because of the reverse-slope position, a heavy trench mortar and two light mortars tormented the beleaguered force. Detachments sent to silence them were repeatedly repulsed by a well-placed machine-gun nest. His first-aid men were already making improvisations such as re-using the bandages of the dead, taking

chances with infection and gangrene to prevent death from bleeding. Whittlesey could not relocate because he had too many wounded to evacuate. He sent out patrols to ascertain the situation but these inevitably returned with more casualties. The men became too fatigued and weak to bury the dead. Worse, effective German sniper and machine-gun fire prevented them from refilling their canteens from the muddy Charlevaux brook. Random German firing at night kept up the pressure. The situation was therefore very desperate. Whittlesey's fifth pigeon message reported: "Men are suffering from hunger and exposure; the wounded are in very bad condition. Cannot support be sent at once?"⁷ Whittlesey was to regret this request.

"The Lost Battalion" initially cheered as an American artillery barrage tore into the German positions around them. Glee turned into horror as the firing crept down on their position and stayed there for one hour and thirty-five minutes.⁸ Apart from direct injury, the barrage removed part of the American cover, exposing the defenders to renewed German mortar and machine-gun fire. Whittlesey managed to send out one last pigeon-carrier message: "We are along the road parallel 274.6. Our artillery is dropping a barrage directly upon us. For heaven's sake, stop it."⁹ The bombardment did not abate until "its ordained end".¹⁰

Despite this hiccup, the Americans repulsed two subsequent German attacks on this second full day in "The Pocket" (4th October). The battalion suffered thirty additional casualties, reducing the number of effectives to

around 200.¹¹ It is remarkable how the officers managed to keep the men from giving up after such a morale-sapping episode although some were beginning to crack. Second-Lieutenant Revnes, eventually the only surviving machine-gun officer, urged Whittlesey to consider surrender. Whittlesey and his senior commanders were however made of sterner stuff. "K" Company's commander, Lieutenant Holderman was already seriously ill the day he entered "The Pocket". He nonetheless continued to lead and fight with his men despite several painful injuries. Another officer, Captain McMurtry was wounded by shrapnel in the knee and took little notice of the "potato-masher" grenade handle impaled into his shoulder during the only German attack on October 6th. McMurtry, a veteran who served with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders,¹² told Whittlesey that he had never met a finer officer than the Major. None of the men seemed to have known that their indefatigable leader cried in his sleep despite his steady demeanour.¹³

Other American divisions began to penetrate German defences to the east of the 77th Division in strength. This actually increased the danger to "The Lost Battalion" as German General Richard Wellmann risked encirclement to deal Whittlesey a crushing final blow. He requested Stormtroopers but received only sixteen of these elite assault soldiers as his superiors were planning a general retreat.¹⁴ Two desperate assaults were launched by the Germans on 7th October. Seven of the nine American Hotchkiss machine-guns were no longer serviceable and ammunition for these guns, the less reliable Chauchats, rifles and pistols was very low. There were

no grenades left. Air drops, possibly the first organised operation of this sort, invariably ended up in enemy hands. The Germans hauled an artillery piece to the wooded flanks of “The Pocket” where it fired into the flanks of the American position. The infantry went in around noon but was repulsed after half an hour of intense fighting. Around 1600hrs, the Germans sent an impassioned plea advising surrender on humane grounds through an American POW. The American officers correctly interpreted this as a sign of desperation. Whittlesey ordered the retrieval of white panels which marked their position for friendly aircraft lest these be mistaken as flags of surrender.¹⁵ The men strongly supported his decision.

It took every last ounce of willpower the “Battalion” could muster to make one last defiant stand. They shouted angry expletives in reply to enemy taunts. The wounded stumbled out of funkholes into firing positions while those too badly injured helped to load weapons. Potato-masher grenades and mortar rounds rained down from German positions as infantry attacked the left flank of “The Pocket”. Stormtroopers attacked the right-flank with flamethrowers, hoping to break the will of the defenders through the introduction of this fearsome weapon. Lieutenant Holderman sustained further injuries as his Company broke this attack. The American left flank even managed to counter-attack while the centre held its final fall-back position. Almost all the American ammunition was expended in this twenty-minute fight. Another deliberate assault would probably have succeeded but relief

companies from the 307th Regiment were closing in on “The Pocket” while other formations were threatening to cut General Wellmann’s units off. Having put up their finest performance at the limit of their endurance, “The Lost Battalion” was finally rescued.¹⁶

“The Lost Battalion” has been held out as a fine example of American soldiery ever since. Whittlesey, McMurtry and Holderman were awarded Congressional Medals of Honour, the highest American military award. The newly promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Whittlesey was also selected as a pall-bearer for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.¹⁷ He was however uncomfortable with the limelight he received and tended to give credit to his men during post-war speaking engagements.¹⁸

The question then is how did “The Lost Battalion” pull off such an incredible achievement? Neither Whittlesey nor most of his men could be considered elite in any way. The Major was competent but exhibited neither exceptional leadership qualities nor tactical brilliance before this Argonne exploit. His prominent peacetime role as a Pacifist activist also raised questions about his commitment. Most of his men were conscripts and these included a fair number of barely-trained replacements. In fact, Whittlesey’s upper-class mannerisms might have set him apart from his men at times.¹⁹ Yet, they could sense his determination, honour and sincerity and responded with genuine respect, loyalty and inspired fighting spirit. The saga of the “Lost Battalion” demonstrated the importance of strong leadership in overcoming great odds

and it is an inspiring testimony to what ordinary men can do under pressure if suitably led.

Lt-Col Whittlesey passed away just three years after the end of World War I.²⁰ His great leadership can be discerned from the following lines of a poem with which his men mourned his death:

Six hundred men slowly
 bow their heads,
 With hearts that are heavy our
 tears all shed,
 Weary and heart-sick and
 war-twained sad
 We mourn the best leader
 men ever had.
 Six hundred strong this
 message we send,
 “Command! We are yours
 unto the end.”²¹ 

Endnotes

- ¹ The two movies titled *The Lost Battalion* were made in 1919 and 2001 with the latter being an HBO movie available for loan at SAFTI Library.
- ² Robert H. Ferrell, *Five Days in October: The Lost Battalion of World War I*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), pp15-16. “A” Company had only 18 men and “E” 21. “C” Company was the largest with 85 men. AEF Companies were supposed to have 250 men each.
- ³ The 2001 movie contained Whittlesey’s alleged pre-battle protests to General Alexander which ended with the prediction “Well I don’t know if you’ll hear from us again.” The Major’s Brigade commander was also believed to have said “not bad for a New York Lawyer!” after reports of his breakthrough reached General Alexander. These anecdotes could not be verified by other accounts.

Erwin Bleckley and Harold Goettler, *For the Men on the Ground*, web version, http://www.homeofheroes.com/wings/part1/3_lostbattalion.html accessed 3rd July 2008.

- ⁴ Ferrell, *Five Days in October*, pp14-5.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p24.
- ⁶ Bleckley and Goettler, *For the Men on the Ground*.
- ⁷ Edward G. Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Battle of Meuse-Argonne 1918*, (London: Aurum, 2008), p231.
- ⁸ Whittlesey had sent reasonably accurate coordinates of his position with every pigeon-carrier message. The only surviving data from artillery units were not those he passed on. Ferrell, *Five Days in October*, pp33-5.
- ⁹ Bleckley and Goettler, *For the Men on the Ground*, “An Unlikely Hero”.
- ¹⁰ The fatally injured pigeon *Cher Ami* is generally credited for ending the ordeal with its heroic flight back to Division lines but this is unlikely since Whittlesey sent the bird out at the beginning of the long barrage. Ferrell, *Five Days in October*, p36.
- ¹¹ Lengel, *To Conquer Hell*, p232.
- ¹² This volunteer cavalry unit led by future President Theodore Roosevelt achieved fame for its exploits in Cuba during the Spanish-American War in 1898. See http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/Rough_riders.htm for a short account.
- ¹³ Lengel, *To Conquer Hell*, pp232-3.
- ¹⁴ Ferrell, *Five Days in October*, p62.
- ¹⁵ The sensationalised reply “Go to hell” came not from Whittlesey but General Alexander during a press conference. Ferrell, *Five Days in October*, p64.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp62-66.
- ¹⁷ See http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org/visitor_information/tomb_of_the_unknowns.html for a short history of the monument.
- ¹⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel C.W. Whittlesey, “A Tribute”, L.C. McCollum, *History and Rhymes of the Lost Battalion by Buck Private McCollum*, web version, <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/memoir/Lost/LostBatTC.htm>, accessed 3rd July 2008.
- ¹⁹ Lengel, *To Conquer Hell*, p232.
- ²⁰ Whittlesey apparently committed suicide by jumping off a ship in 1921 because he could not come to terms with the trauma of his experiences during the War. Bleckley and Goettler, *For the Men on the Ground*, concluding remarks.
- ²¹ Lines from “Our Commander”, L.C. McCollum, *History and Rhymes of the Lost Battalion*. Whittlesey committed suicide just three years after the Armistice.

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