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**KEEPING OPERATIONAL ART RELEVANT FOR CANADA:  
A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH**

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## Synopsis

**This paper proposes that Canada has a requirement to develop its own operational art doctrine to meet the current practice of the Canadian Forces and to meet future challenges.. Furthermore it proposes a model that suggests operational art is the employment of operational art functions. Specifically the functions proposed are operational level command, campaigning, operational level structures and operational level infrastructure. It uses this new model as a analytical tool to examine if one recent Canadian deployment was at the operational level and what operational art functions were utilized and to what extent. The paper presents a novel and unique way to consider operational art – certainly different from the American doctrine centric approach of he current Canadian operational art doctrine. The positive results of this case study strengths the argument for a functional model of operational art. As the Canadian Forces does consider itself to be doctrinally based constant examination and useful refinement of that doctrinal base is required. Based on the realities of past military operations and the projection of future operations this doctrine needs to be broad and less focused on war fighting scenarios. In fact, and as noted in this paper, the integration of the theory and doctrine of manoeuvre warfare and of mission command with the theory and doctrine of operational art only serves to complicate the applicability of these distinct but often related doctrines and, therefore, the requirement for their separation. Always mindful of the Canadian definition of operational art as “ “the skill of employing military forces to attaining strategic objectives in a theatre of war or theatre of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations,”the model proposed by this paper meets the requirement of this definition while increasing its usefulness to the planning and conduct of all military operations. It is flexible and inclusive enough to accept that not all situations will require a formalized operational level or even any of the operational functions. What it does demand is that this decision be made by the appropriate (i.e. strategic) level in an appropriate proactive manner after a full mission analysis. The paper ends by noting the appropriateness of a Canadian Centre of Excellence, arguably the Canadian Forces College, to further examine the issue of “Canadian operational art” by way of formalizing a construct useful for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Undoubtedly it will all come down to how best to visualize and put into action the most effective use of tactical military forces to achieve strategic goals. According to this paper operational art, besides being the “link” defined above, is a method of best utilizing military forces for mission accomplishment.**

## **Keeping Operational Art Relevant for Canada: A Functional Approach**

*“This work was not born from a desire to establish a new method of the art of war; I compose it to amuse and instruct myself.”<sup>1</sup>*

### **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

The stated focus of the Canadian Forces Advanced Military Studies Course, its very essence, is “the role and functions of the commander and senior staff officers at the operational level.”<sup>2</sup> But what is the operational level? The word operational has been a common term in military environments for a very long time.<sup>3</sup> It is still used by many to declare a capability or readiness.<sup>4</sup> Many battalion commanders, for example, will say “Sir, my battalion is operational,” meaning it is ready to accept assigned tasks and through the use of tactics and combat functions apply this operational capability. There is, however, a greater and more specific meaning of the word operational in a military context especially when it is partnered with the words, art, level and command. The manual Canadian Forces Operations defines operational art as “the skill of translating this strategic direction into operational and tactical action.”<sup>5</sup> This manual, in a very brief segment, links the concepts of operational level decisions, campaign design and planning, sequencing, deployment and operational objectives, amongst others, to operational art. Canada’s Army summarizes operational art as essentially “...: the skill of employing

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice de Saxe, Reveries on the Art of War, December 1732 as translated and edited by Brig. General Thoas R. Phillips (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1944), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Forces College Letter 5570-1(Cmdt) dated 27 May 2003

<sup>3</sup> See Brigadier-General (retired) G.E. Sharpe and Allan D. English, Principles for Change in the Post-Cold War Command and Control of the Canadian Forces (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Forces Training Materiel Production Centre, 2002), 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example Christopher Bellamy, Knights in White Armour (London: Random House, 1996), 276 (Glossary) which defines operational as “A military system or organization which is up and running.)

<sup>5</sup> Canada, Canadian Forces Operations, B-GG-005-004/AF-000 dated 2000-12-18, 3-1.

military forces to attain strategic objectives in a theatre of war or theatre of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations.”<sup>6</sup> It goes further to state “generally speaking, operations at the operational level will always be joint and often combined.” This overarching Army publication pictorially represents operational art as follows:

**Diagram 1 – The Army Operational Art Model**



*Figure 6 — Operational Art*

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McKercher and Hennessy in their book The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War, have nimbly selected a number of theorists who attempt to define either operational art or its place in warfare. However, as McKercher and Hennessy note in their foreword, “the efficacy of extending a concept born on the battlefields and military academies of nineteenth-century Europe to the demands of the twenty-first century has remained largely unexamined.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Canada, Canada’s Army, B-GL-300-000/FP-000 dated 01/04/1998, 103.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>8</sup> B.J.C. McKercher and Michael A. Hennessy, The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 4.

There is, therefore, and without a doubt, considerable divergence on what encompasses operational art.<sup>9</sup> Two fundamental questions follow. Has Canada fully embraced a concept of operational art and why is this relevant for Canada? Is Canada's requirement for, and use of, operational art different from our allies? In essence, why shouldn't a unique military organization such as the Canadian Forces need its own unique arrangements to employ a concept of operational art to capitalize on any advantages this framework of doctrine might provide?

This paper will argue that operational art is composed of four distinct functions; operational level command, operational level structures, operational level infrastructure and campaigning. There may be those who argue that strictly speaking operational structures and operational infrastructure are not functions but rather enablers or components of an operational capability. This paper takes the view, in line with the Oxford English Dictionary, that function refers to the mode of action by which something (operational art in this specific example) fulfils its purpose and that this action can be physical or mental.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, when viewed as separate functions<sup>11</sup>, Operational Art becomes more relevant for Canadian Forces facilitating employment as a complete system of inter-related functions or by one or more functions in combination.

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<sup>9</sup> Clayton R. Newell, The Framework of Operational Warfare (London: Routledge, 1991), 175. Newell notes that while the term operational art is relatively new to Western nations and armies it was used by the Soviets from the 1930s and as a concept back to the eighteenth century when "the combination of organization and technology began to allow armies to move to the battlefield by multiple routes and converge of a battle as opposed to having to move simply as one large army."

<sup>10</sup> As defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (on-line edition) at <http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl> accessed on 10 October 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Note that there is a related concept – that of the operational war functions of Command, Act, Sense, Shield, and Sustain currently endorsed by the Canadian Army. For example see "The Interim Army: A Force Employment Discussion Paper" prepared by The Directorate of Army Doctrine (Draft v1) dated Sept 2003. These functions, however, have a genesis in the combat functions of command, information operations, manoeuvre, firepower, protection and sustainment which commanders at the tactical level attempt to integrate to generate combat power to bring to apply against the enemy.

Following this it will argue, from a Canadian perspective, that operational art is more relevant for Canada if viewed by its functions which may be employed either individually or in combination for the purpose of realizing strategic objectives. If employed in this manner the identification of the requirement to employ one or a combination of operational art functions and the oversight of the implementation of those functions remain a strategic level responsibility.<sup>12</sup>

There are a multitude of practical issues dependent on a complete review of Canadian operational art. For example if campaigning is accepted as a function of operational art but it is likewise accepted that campaigning need not be tied to an operational level commander and staff and, perhaps, completed by a tactical level commander, where in the professional development and training of the Canadian Forces elements is the expertise currently developed? This paper can be only one step to a wider debate on the theoretical and practical issues of operational art in a Canadian context.

## **A FUNCTIONAL REVIEW: DE-CONSTRUCTING THE WHOLE**

Operational art as a concept has limited use to the Canadian military unless accepted as doctrine. But what is doctrine? The Oxford dictionary defines doctrine as “A body or system of principles or tenets; a doctrinal or theoretical system; a theory; a science, or department of knowledge.”<sup>13</sup> The US Army officially defines doctrine as “fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their

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<sup>12</sup> Certainly the responsibility of the strategic level to be the “architect” is not a new concept. Jomini, for example divides the responsibilities of the conduct of war between different level (strategy, grand tactics (operational level?), logistics and tactics. His list of the strategic responsibilities include many of the decisions required to determine the extent of activities at the other levels. See Brig. Gen. J.D. Hittle, Jomini and his Summary of The Art of War (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1947), 66-67.

actions in support of national objectives.”<sup>14</sup> This is compatible with the stated Canadian purpose of doctrine to “provide the fundamental principles by which all CF Operations are conducted.”<sup>15</sup> It is certainly not within the scope of this paper to examine the development and adherence to doctrine by the Canadian Forces other than to acknowledge that the Canadian Forces is doctrine based. That is to say that conceptually we organize, equip and train on the basis of established doctrine.<sup>16</sup> By extension, and within reason, it is logical to assume that military forces are committed and employed in military missions based on doctrine – albeit in a flexible manner. Additionally, as evidenced in the definitions above, doctrine is not proscriptive but rather a unifying guide which should serve as a framework for the use of military forces.<sup>17</sup> Doctrine should be debated, developed, challenged and refined in an endless cycle.

For the Canadian Forces operational art is doctrine. It is well embedded in our doctrinal publications. However, it is not precise and it is not static. It should be accepted that it is many things to many people but in order for it to have a unifying

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<sup>13</sup> This is one of the definitions at <http://dictionary.oed.com/> accessed 1 Oct 03.

<sup>14</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Internet, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/data/d/01729.html> as accessed 1 Oct 03.

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Forces, Internet, [http://www.forces.gc.ca/dcads/jointDoc/default\\_e.asp](http://www.forces.gc.ca/dcads/jointDoc/default_e.asp) as accessed 1 Oct 03.

<sup>16</sup> For example the Canadian Land Force has a well established Directorate of Doctrine co-located with both the Canadian Land Force Command and Staff College and the Directorate Land Strategic Concepts. The synergy between these three key intellectual and functional elements of the Canadian Army safeguards the foundation of doctrine.

<sup>17</sup> In fact the keystone publication, Canadian Forces Operations provides the following guidance: “CF doctrine provides the fundamental tenets for the employment of military forces to translate the CF mission and strategic objectives into action. More specifically, it provides commanders with underlying principles to guide their actions in planning and conducting operations. While CF and Environment specific doctrine are separate bodies of doctrine, the two must be compatible. All CF plans and operations will be based on the doctrine contained in this publication. The CF will operate internationally as part of an alliance or coalition. Thus, CF doctrine should be consistent, as far as practicable, with the doctrine of major allies to provide the capacity to conduct combined operations. Operational effectiveness of the CF depends on the development of doctrine and sufficient personnel, training and equipment to employ it effectively. Procedures should be developed from doctrine so that they will be suitable for use in any operation, with only minor changes to cater for different command structures or variations in force levels, structures and/ or capabilities.” Internet, [http://www.forces.gc.ca/dcads/jointdoc/pages/keydocs\\_e.asp](http://www.forces.gc.ca/dcads/jointdoc/pages/keydocs_e.asp) as accessed 1 Oct 03.



purpose for any specific group it must have some acceptance of commonality within that group. In fact some may view it as a “popular catch-phrase for how military conducting war from the operational perspective balance the end, ways and means of war.”<sup>18</sup> By extension this could be applied to all military operations – regardless of size or complexity.

Internationally there is a fundamental disagreement not only about the definition of operational art but the essence of its purpose. Specifically, as seen from the Canadian definitions previously presented in this paper, operational art is seen as a connection between the strategic and the tactical and certainly less confining (i.e. to war fighting scenarios) than some other stated purposes. Coupled with this is the overwhelming focus of the element of planning when discussing the operational level and operational art.<sup>19</sup> The Australian military, for example, is exact in the manner it ties the concept of manoeuvre warfare to the concept of an operational art through definition and tenet development.<sup>20</sup> The American military following from its Air-Land battle doctrine has defined the operational art in an almost completely war fighting construct.<sup>21</sup> It too sees the application of operational art tied to manoeuvre warfare.<sup>22</sup> While Canada is certainly not pure in its approach to describing operational art, it largely separates manoeuvre warfare (as an opposite of attrition warfare) and mission command from operational art and, therefore, lays the groundwork for a functional approach.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Clayton R. Newell, The Framework of Operational Warfare (London: Routledge, 1991), 38.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Ash Irwin, The Levels of War, Operational Art and Campaign Planning (Camberley: Strategic and Conflict Studies Institute, 1993), 12 – 24 and the discussion on military conditions, sequencing, resources and operational concepts. While the discussion highlights the complexity of issues at the operational level it does not posit any useful structural approach to applying operational art.

<sup>20</sup> See Australia, The Fundamentals of Land Warfare, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> See United States, FM 3-0 Operations, 14 June 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> See Canada, Canadian Forces Operations, 18 December 2000

It is interesting to note that the Soviets were very prescriptive in their explanation of the subjects of operational art. While being very formation oriented (i.e. size of force and activities of that force), Soviet operational art doctrine designates the subjects encompassing operational art.<sup>24</sup> An interesting note is their concept that all three components of the art of war (strategy, operational art and tactics) are required to deal thoroughly with all issues concerning the preparation and conduct of war and military operations. As the Soviets noted, “this is because each component of the art describes specific principles and provides practical recommendations for the preparation and conduct of military actions at a specific level and supplements the other two components.”<sup>25</sup>

Once again it is emphasized that Canada’s military is doctrine based and states that operational art is “the skill of translating strategic direction into operational and tactical actions.”

for some, the continued validity of all notions operational. It is proposed, however, that the break out of operational art functions permit a method of battling the friction of military operations caused by the chaos of the unknown. Similarly it allows for flexibility and freedom of action. Just as the strategic level allows for interaction between different stakeholders of government policy, the operational functions (if utilized) permit some form of synergy between different government organizations as it pertains to synchronizing efforts to achieve national objectives.<sup>27</sup>

Against this background of some uncertainty the following model is introduced. As posited in the introduction, this paper defines operational art functions as: operational level of command; operational level structures (staff, support, combat support and sustainment); operational level infrastructure; and campaigning. The selection of these four functions is based on the author's review of both the theory and the practical implementation of strategic military objectives to tactical actions. But what is the operational level? First off, as defined by this paper, it relates to the implementation of operational functions. It is situated somewhere between the strategic level and the tactical level. The unifying requirement for an operational level or operational art functions seems to be summed up in the following passage which points to joining a series of activities to achieve the objectives of war and, by extension, the use of military forces for strategic goals.

The conduct of war is the planning and conduct of combat. Were this combat a single act, there would be no need for further subdivision. But combat consists of a greater or lesser number of individual acts, each complete in itself, which we call engagements, which constitute new

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<sup>27</sup> Newell, 38. Newell notes that "military commanders with an operational perspective receive and pursue strategic military objectives." Therefore, senior commanders at the strategic and operational (and in some cases tactical) levels must understand how all elements of national power affect or have an influence on the other(s).

things. This gives rise to an entirely different activity, namely, individually planning and conducting these engagements and joining them together to achieve the objective of the war. The first is called tactics, the second, strategy.<sup>28</sup>

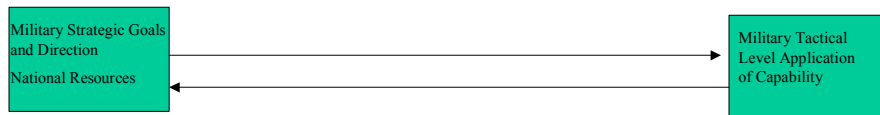
There are other arguments for the inclusion of other levels beyond the operational level in the construct of this strategic to tactical linkage requirement.<sup>29</sup> However, neither of two possible concepts – less levels or more levels – have sufficient acceptance to warrant further examination by this paper.

## Diagram 2 – Operational Art

### A Canadian Model of Operational Art\*- A Functional Approach

*\*Operational Art is defined as "the skill of employing military forces to attaining strategic objectives in a theatre of war or theatre of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations." (B-GG-005-004/AF-000)*

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The first function, and arguably the most important, which is possible to break out from operational art is the function of operational level of command. In fact there are two items requiring discussion here. First is the concept of an operational level. If functions are to be tied to time and space then a requirement is made for an operational level between (and possibly overlapping) the strategic and tactical levels. However it is difficult to conclude that the presence of an operational art function being utilized automatically dictates an operational level. Less the function of operational level command, the remaining functions require some sense of duration and intensity to demand an operational level. This sense of duration and intensity must remain subjective. Can there be an operational level without an operational level of command? As will be posited shortly – yes – if there is a requirement for a supporting function responding to direction coming directly from the strategic level and with a duration spanning the period of the military operation. However, returning to the first function of command we can see whenever the strategic level is convinced that the size, complexity or effect required is such that a level of command between the strategic and tactical levels are required there will be a requirement for the operational level of command. The commander can be accompanied by a supporting headquarters of varying sizes and/or capabilities.<sup>30</sup>

The second function to consider is operational level structures. By structures it is meant the staff organizations and the combat support and sustainment organizations required for mission success between those tactical and strategic organizations. These structures could be tied directly to a Canadian operational commander or by extension

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<sup>30</sup> For example see, *Ibid* , 3. As Brigadier Irwin notes it is the circumstances which matter and not the size of the force commitment with the Falkland's conflict, a case in point.

these could be operational level structures of other military forces with which Canada has agreed to participate. Examples of possible permanent operational level structures include the Joint Operations Group, 4 Canadian Forces Movement Unit and 1 Construction Engineering Unit.<sup>31</sup> Ad hoc or non-permanent structures would be mission specific but include such examples as national support elements and liaison detachments.

The third function is operational level infrastructure. Operational level infrastructure can be long-standing or temporary. It could have a be-prepared purpose or be mission and task specific. For example the Canadian forward basing of logistic sustainment materials in Italy could be considered operational level infrastructure to support some strategic purpose with the assignment of tactical tasks. Other non-permanent examples include forward support bases and certain logistic installations removed from the tactical level.

The fourth and final function is campaigning. Here we find the closest links to some of the operational art tenets as espoused by the Americans, Australians and others. That is to say that while campaigning is a process of translating strategic goals into tactical missions and tasks, there is the possibility of interposing the tenets of manoeuvre warfare into the process of campaigning during planning for military operations. This is not, however, the default setting. Campaigning, it is suggested, is the one function which is most readily utilized at all levels and not, necessarily, at the operational level. Campaigning refers to the practical process of interpreting strategic goals and converting these goals into tactical missions and tasks and supporting these missions with the appropriate plans. In certain environments where broad strategic objectives have yet to

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<sup>31</sup> These organizations, it could be argued, are at the strategic level; however in their role in support to operational level commanders they are considered operational structures.

be translated into tactical actions at an operational level the tactical level may have to complete this function.<sup>32</sup> In other cases, such as the case study to follow the function of campaigning could be completed at the strategic level with the resulting plan passed either directly to the tactical level or to an operational level commander for implementation.

Which functions are stand-alone and which demand the inclusion of others? It is argued below, after a review of a recent case study, that all functions have the possibility of standing alone. Unfortunately, there is no test that will dictate which functions are required or what actions are automatically at the operational level.<sup>33</sup> This is a testament to the continued subjective nature of operational art.

### **WE ARE WHAT WE PRACTICE: OPERATIONAL ART FUNCTION EMPLOYMENT IN TASK FORCE EAST AFRICA (OPERATION ECLIPSE)**

To this point the paper has introduced the requirement for doctrine, the requirement for operational art doctrine and the current state of that doctrine in Canada. Finally, it has been posited that Operational Art, from a doctrinal perspective, can be examined and systematically broken down into a number of functions. The paper will now use this model to analyze a recent mission and, through that examination, identify whether operational art in its entirety or by function was utilized. This case study will

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<sup>32</sup> For example, General Rose, at the tactical example, completed a detailed campaign plan for UNPROFOR involvement in Bosnia in full transparency of the operational level UN headquarters in Zagreb.

<sup>33</sup> However Irwin (Op. Cit., 8) does pose three questions to measure if actions are at the operational level. The answer yes to any of the three would identify the operational level. 1. Is there a political dimension? 2. Does the action achieve, or has the possibility of achieving, a decision that materially alters the situation in terms of the overall campaign? 3. Does the action achieve, or have the possibility of achieving, a decision that materially assists in achieving the strategic goals?

lead to a greater clarity in the division of operational art between functions in the model posited. The value of the model as an analytical tool can also be assessed.

For this review the Canadian Forces 2000/2001 deployment to the Horn of Africa on Operation Eclipse was chosen.<sup>34</sup> While widely acknowledged as a monumental success little has been written or discussed about the deployment and this review might serve to highlight valuable observations and lessons. It was a unique mission in that it was tied to the deployment of the Stand-by High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) and it was a quick-in quick-out mission with planning required for mission deployment, employment and redeployment. These facts all contribute to a need for planning and control at all levels. Finally the aspect of a deployment of a medium sized element to Africa calls into importance many sustainment planning and implementation issues.<sup>35</sup>

There are three significant characteristics of the Ethiopian and Eritrean political scene and the war between the two countries that are key to putting Operation Eclipse into its proper context.<sup>36</sup> The first characteristic is the short and bloody war between Eritrea and Ethiopia was conducted by two, relatively, professional and disciplined armies. These two armies used a combination of World War I trench warfare and guerrilla tactics. The ground was not generally suitable for mechanized or motorized operations and favoured the defender. Military casualty figures have never been released

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<sup>34</sup> Certainly, there are many other missions where Canadian Forces officers have been involved at the operational level (theatre level headquarters) most notably in staff positions but, likewise, in command positions. UNPROFOR during the mid 1995 period would be a case in point when Canada filled the Deputy Commander position, Force Provost Marshall, Force Engineer, and Force G3 all at the same time and all at the operational level. However for the purposes of this review a deployment has been selected which highlights national and operational level interactions.

<sup>35</sup> Medium size is not defined in any doctrine. To be more specific this Task Force deployed with three tactical elements – an augmented LAV III Infantry Company Group, a LAV Coyote equipped reconnaissance platoon and a first line combat service support element to sustain the center sector in partnership with the Netherlands Contingent. It was supported at the operational level with a national



by either side due to the governments fear that such news would demoralize the civilian populations and lead to internal unrest, However, it is estimated that 70,000 soldiers died in the two year war and that double that number were wounded on both sides. The military campaign failed to show either side any reasonable prospect of achieving their political objectives. The third key characteristic to this operation is that both sides had exhausted their military strength, badly damaged their economies and had been ostracized by the international community. When it became clear to both sides that a military victory was unachievable both countries recognized that they needed the assistance of the international community if their economies were to recover. Both President Isaias of Eritrea and Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia realized that a continuation of the war could lead to internal civil unrest. These three key characteristics set the scene for a pure chapter 6 UN peacekeeping operation: both sides were exhausted from the war, both sides had a motive to restore their economies and both sides needed the good will of the international community to further their own aims. Operation Eclipse was, therefore, conducted in a permissive environment with the consent and cooperation of both sides.

Canada agreed to participate in the United Nations mission in partnership with the Netherlands and under the auspices of SHIRBRIG. This was an un-forecast mission and one that required a compressed planning process and time saving initiatives. The Canadian involvement at the Task Force level will now be examined under the functions of operational level command, operational level structures, operational level infrastructure and campaigning. Finally an assessment will be made to determine if operational art was practiced and in what form.

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support element and a national command element. The deployed strength varied from 500 to 800 military personnel dependant on the period and tasks.

Operational level command was exercised, in one sense, by virtue of the appointment of an operational level commander and the provision of an operational level supporting headquarters.<sup>37</sup> It is clear in the written Chief of the Defence Staff direction that the Commander of TFEA was an operational level commander<sup>38</sup> and was responsible to the strategic level commander (CDS through DCDS if appropriate).<sup>39</sup> This was further amplified in the written DCDS Intent for Commander Task Force East Africa.<sup>40</sup> The operational level terms of reference for this commander is summarized as follows:

- National military commander-in-theatre;
- Senior Canadian military representative in Eritrea and Ethiopia; and
- Monitor situation within Ethiopia and Eritrea and take necessary action to ensure that Canadian policy and Canadian interests are represented and respected.<sup>41</sup>

Canadian political and military (CDS) objectives were provided the operational level commander in written form and amplified in personal briefings by DCDS prior to deployment on 20 December 2000 and by the CDS during an in-theatre visit and discussion on 18 January 2001.<sup>42</sup> It was during the 18 January discussion that the CDS noted the importance of the mission for future Canadian Forces missions in Africa. He wanted the mission not only to be successful but to be seen as being successful. This

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<sup>36</sup> Mission synopsis based on Task Force Commander's brief to DIOB/DEM 22 Jun 01 at NDHQ, Ottawa.

<sup>37</sup> Chief of the Defence Staff letter – Terms of Reference Commander Task Force East Africa Canadian Contingent to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea (UNMEE) dated 21 December 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., paragraph 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., paragraph 14.

<sup>40</sup> Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff letter DCDS's Intent for Commander Task Force East Africa (TFEA) dated 20 Dec 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Personal diary Commander Task Force East Africa.

intent required a proactive approach by the operational level commander including proactively seeking opportunities to expand Canadian involvement in the mission. Two examples of how this was accomplished include the Canadian deployment to Sector East in advance of the late deploying Kenyans and the use of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) contracted Peace Building Advisor and the funds provided by CIDA allowing Canada to take a leading role in the use of mission quick impact projects to further the peace process.

Beyond the appointment of an operational level commander what were the issues that would necessitate the requirement for command at this level? Like many past missions there were a number, however, one which involves force protection and mission accomplishment at the operational level was the issue of rules of engagement and the identification of the international personnel who should be protected under United Nations rules of engagement. The United Nations bureaucracy at the theatre (UNMEE) and political levels (UNHQ New York) did not compile a list of designated international personnel and so, the Canadian Task Force Commander, had a list compiled and staffed for approval. In the absence of this approval, direction was given to Canadian military personnel to accept the list as amplification of the UN rules of engagement (with Canadian amplification) to avoid tactical level uncertainty.<sup>43</sup> This operational level staffing and decision would likely not have been taken without an operational level commander, headquarters and staff to engage the issue.

There were three Canadian operational level structures used to support Operation Eclipse and Task Force East Africa. Firstly, the Joint Operations Group (JOG) was

involved in the strategic level reconnaissance and, as part of this reconnaissance, planned the theatre activation options for consideration by NDHQ. As a follow on to the reconnaissance it left a “foot-on-the-ground” with a satellite communications detachment and a planning and liaison cell, which then transgressed, into the nucleus of the headquarters for the Theatre Activation Team, which eventually came under command of the Task Force Commander. The JOG with major augmentation, therefore, led the way on theatre activation and ensured a successful commencement to the mission. Two other groups had supporting, but essential roles – 4 CFMU and 1 CEU – both of which brought operational level expertise to the mission.

Operational level infrastructure was less obvious but, never the less, still involved. The Canadian forward basing of re-deployable camps in Italy was used to rapidly construct a camp from scratch in Africa – a camp which was the envy of Canadian partners and which was fully functional in a matter of three weeks. This allowed the force at the tactical level to focus on mission accomplishment and was, thereby, an operational level force enabler and, perhaps, a peacekeeping force multiplier.

There was no formal campaign plan conducted for Operation Eclipse. There were certainly elements of campaign planning conducted by the Joint Staff at NDHQ before the strategic recce and after the strategic recce as part of mission planning refinement. This was embedded into the operations order and in the DCDS Guidance for the Task Force Commander. The late appointment of the Task Force Commander precluded his involvement in the campaign planning process. However, this, in itself, should not be viewed as negative. With the time demands of this mission deployment and the

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<sup>43</sup> Based on the following documentation which amplifies the issue: Canadian Task Force East Africa 3350-123-29 (A/Comd) dated 4 March 2001, 3350-129-29 (Comd) dated 29 March 2001 and 3350-123-29

shortened planning timelines for positioning forces in theatre campaign planning would likely be centralized and involve an overlap of strategic level and operational level factors, considerations and staffs. Once deployed in theatre the Task Force Commander adjusted certain elements of Joint Staff planning and Theatre Activation Team implementation based on his personal interpretation of the mission and tasks and in line with his abbreviated campaign plan.

From this brief examination of the Task Force East Africa experience, an assessment can be made that, while operational art in its complete and purest form was not evident, the four functions of operational art were exercised to different degrees and, on this basis, an assessment can be made that there existed an operational level. This operational level can be further evidenced in two distinct activities or periods of the deployment. Firstly early in the mission a request was made to Canada<sup>44</sup> to deploy a force to another sector (Sector East) due to delays in the arrival of the Kenyan contingent. This deployment was necessary in order to meet a pre-condition for the withdrawal and re-positioning of the Eritrean and Ethiopian forces throughout the mission area. It came at a sensitive time in the peace process. After review at the national level Canada agreed to accept the additional task and the issue was handed to Commander Task Force East Africa to plan and implement. The decision was largely based on the recommendations and risk assessment of the Task Force Commander and staff. Without a commander and headquarters removed from the tactical level this flexibility and implementation of a

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(Comd) dated 15 April 2001.

<sup>44</sup> A request was also made to the Dutch and Danish partners to participate but both declined for national reasons.

strategic decision would not have been possible. The ability and willingness of Canada to accept this additional task did not go unnoticed in the international community.<sup>45</sup>

The second issue involves the role of the operational level commander to continually complete risk assessments in line with the national interests and other national guidelines and, based on those risk assessments adjust the national parameters for tactical level actions - in other words to over-ride UN command decisions and dictate force protection measures if required. One example of this was the imposition of caveats on the actions of the Canadian tactical element at Eritrean checkpoints into the Temporary Security Zone. The tactical level commander (UN sector commander) had given direction that if passage was not afforded UN patrols they were to force their way through. This tactical level approach, while understood, was not in line with Canada's desire to work with the former warring nations under chapter VI arrangements. The risk of this type of response, as assessed by the national operational level commander, was not acceptable and operational level action (command direction) was taken. This was just one of a number of issues under the umbrella of security, safety and sustainment (force protection) which was the focus of the operational level commander on this mission.

The practice of operational art as separated by the functions presented in the model is summarized in diagram three below.

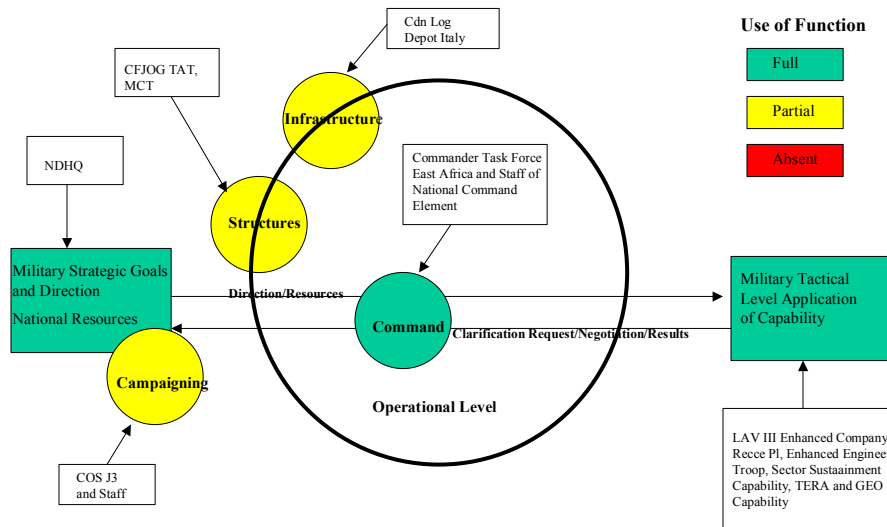
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<sup>45</sup> Comments by Ambassador Shram, Canadian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Djibouti as noted in personal diary of Commander Task Force East Africa, February 2001.

### Diagram 3 – Operational Art: A Case Study Analysis

#### A Canadian Model of Operational Art - A Functional Approach

##### Assessment For Operation ECLIPSE – Task Force EAST AFRICA



For this mission, and undoubtedly for many others, the operational level headquarters ensured that national objectives were achieved by the application of military forces at the tactical level. While there was no application of the tenets of manoeuvre warfare there was, none-the-less, ample, if not complete, application of the four operational level functions.

#### RE-INFORCING SUCCESS: A FLEXIBLE OPERATIONAL ART MODEL

“ A discussion of the operational level must face the following issues: In what distinct aspects does it differ from the strategic and tactical levels? What are the criteria by which an operational problem is to be identified? How should one differentiate between the practical aspects of the operational art and the cognitive aspects deriving from the operational level? And,

finally,; What is the justification for the assertion of a distinctive operational cognition?”<sup>46</sup>

Shimon Naveh, as evidenced in the passage above, is just one of many who has tried to develop a clearer understanding of operational art and the operational level. One idea is clear in his work, all effort should be made to make operational art useful.<sup>47</sup> To this point this paper has presented operational art as Canadian doctrine, has tried to identify the environment of operational art including some of the conflicting definitions and uses and, from a Canadian perspective, proposed a series of functions which stem from operational art and how these functions are linked to the operational level. It is suggested that Canada’s development of doctrine related to operational art and to the operational level, in general, has been largely influenced by the development of doctrine in the United States specially the move from the Air-Land doctrine to operational art codified in FM 100-5 and following doctrinal publications.<sup>48</sup> A shift away from this close link to American doctrine will be difficult but necessary to keep in line with the Canadian realities of military operations and doctrinal requirements.<sup>49</sup> Specifically the framework of the doctrine needs to be tied to what the Canadian Forces is actually doing and is likely to be doing in the future. To not take this approach opens the Canadian Forces to the criticism that, while it states it is doctrine based, it actually does not adhere to the tenets of that doctrine. Furthermore, doctrine is nothing if it is not useful.

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<sup>46</sup> Shimon Naveh, In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997), 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Note the commonality of issues in the Canadian Forces College symposium on operational art compared with the doctrinal discussions occurring in the United States in the preceding two years.

<sup>49</sup> Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire is but one of a growing number of senior commanders who point out that “Canada’s recent experiences in military operations are likely to the norm for the decades to come.” See Dallaire, “The Theatre Commander in Conflict Resolution” in Horn and Harris, *Generalship and the*



In line with this and to clarify the ideas presented one case study was briefly introduced to identify the operational art functions which played a part in the application of military forces and capabilities to a strategic goal(s). It is now time to make an assessment if this form of doctrinal model is useful in analyzing past military involvement or in maximizing the future use of military forces.

Operational art as a concept is only useful if it is understood as a concept, widely accepted in structure and use and functionally applicable. That is to say it must be useful to the professional officer and soldier in the application of military capability. The case study on Task Force East Africa, as one of many possible examples in the last decade, clearly demonstrates that there is the practice of operational art by the Canadian Forces. It is further proposed that there are many other examples of international operations where operational art functions, individually or in combinations, were exercised. For example in the mid 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, Canadian officers filled operational level staff positions (structures) and operational level command positions as part of the United Nations Protection Force Headquarters (UNPROFOR) arguably a theatre level operational/strategic headquarters of the United Nations.<sup>50</sup> The upcoming deployment of the Army Commander as the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan is a clear indication of the future demands that are likely to be placed on the professional Canadian Forces officers and soldiers. None of this discussion has touched on the domestic operations of the Canadian Forces where, arguably, there is even

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Art of the Admiral: Perspectives on Canadian Senior Military Leadership (St. Catharines, ON: Vawell Publishing Limited, 2001), 249.

<sup>50</sup> In 1995 Canada provided (at the operational level) the Deputy Force Commander (Ray Crabbe), the Force Provost Marshall, the Force Engineer, the Force G3 and a myriad of other very senior tactical level positions. In fact, General Crabbe, was the acting Force Commander during a number of the crucial periods including during the Croatian offensive in Sector West and during two high profile NATO air

a more compelling case of operational art requirement and utilization, including in its complete form.<sup>51</sup> Suffice it to say that this is an important sub-topic and examination beyond the scope of this paper.

If an operational art model was to be further developed that fully mirrored the American model its usefulness for the Canadian Forces would be suspect. To this point Canadian doctrine and corresponding understanding of operational art has been broader and less constricting. It is now time to formalize this understanding even further and embed the very flexible functional operational art model into Canadian Forces doctrine. This model should support the argument that the greater the number and interaction of the functions the clearer is the need for acceptance of an operational level. For example if only the function of campaigning is utilized the need for an operational level is not certain with, perhaps, the function being completed at the strategic level and the resulting products being utilized at either the strategic or tactical level, or both. If, however, operational level sustainment and command and control is also required (such as in East Africa) then there is a clearer case for the requirement of an operational level. This model then should help visualize the flexible requirements of the Canadian Forces for international operations and put into perspective the possible operational level structures and strategic level interfaces.

Finally, using the questions posed by Shimon Naveh, as previously introduced at the start of this section, this model would lead to the following responses. From the perspective of answering the question of distinct aspects of the operational level

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mission sorties approved under the “dual key” formula to force compliance with UN Security Council resolutions by the Bosnian Serb authorities.

compared to the tactical and strategic, this model would propose that the functional requirements are situation dependent and are driven by need. Clearly this need must be assessed at the strategic level and acknowledged at the tactical level and, in doing so, there is a recognition that “one size does not fit all.” The question related to the identification of the criteria by which an operational problem is to be identified, again, is one determined by need. It is suggested, however, that the starting point for that consideration of need is based on an assumption that operational art as a complete package of functions are there to be used and the non-requirement of specific operational functions is non-need driven. That is to say do not commence without the entire tool box but only take out those tools which will be useful to the execution of the strategic level requirements. The question pertaining to a differentiation between the practical aspects of the operational art and the cognitive aspects deriving from the operational level is more complicated.

Certainly a model that is based on functionality and product is very practical. Further it does not lessen the cognitive aspects of the model. The very requirement to make a subjective assessment on the number and extent of the functions required for any given operation denotes a cognitive element based on professional knowledge and experience. Within the functions there are, obviously, cognitive aspects - none more evident than in the construct of campaigning where the better method of application of tactical capability to strategic goals is a fundamental aim. Finally, the justification for assertion of a distinctive operational cognition in a functional package is determined by the practical requirements. Operational art is a practical and cognitive process of

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<sup>51</sup> See for example the Lessons Learned and the After Action Reports of the Canadian Forces Y2K preparations such as the campaign plan, formation of the operational level headquarters and the supporting

assisting in the realization of strategic goals by the use of military capability. It is nothing more complicated than this.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Martin Van Creveld made a bold statement in 1991 when he noted that the “demise of conventional war will cause strategy in its traditional, Clausewitzian sense to disappear.”<sup>52</sup> But his point that, in the absence of nuclear holocaust or large conventional war and in the changing political landscape, we should expect change and the increase of low-intensity conflict in the developing world belies the requirement for military forces, and the doctrine of employment, which can respond to a changing environment and changing requirements.<sup>53</sup> The Soviets in their revival, or introduction, of operational art in the twentieth century brought in the concept of operational art with more of a military science and pragmatic approach.<sup>54</sup> While in a somewhat different manner this paper has taken an equally pragmatic approach as to what operational art means, or should mean, to the Canadian military. As Brigadier Ash noted in his 1993 paper if we examine the levels of war (indeed of military operations) as a “chain of three links” the operational link will ensure that tactics will lead to the strategic conclusion that is required. It is

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plans and pre-deployments and preparative operations.

<sup>52</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 225.

<sup>53</sup> Another useful examination of the environment which will face military forces in present and the future is Mark Duffield’s *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001). For example he notes that “organized violence may no longer take the earlier form of short but world-shattering outbursts. While operating at a lower destructive level, it appears to assume more systemic, intrusive and non-controllable forms.” (257)

<sup>54</sup> See Wardak,

because of the redundancy and overlap between the links that the operational level is difficult to define and to act upon.<sup>55</sup>

This paper has created a generic but useful model based on a functional approach and well grounded in the realities of current Canadian military operations. This has been accomplished by the use of a case study to determine within a stated framework of operational art functions Canada could be acknowledged to be employing operational art. The positive results of this case study strengths the argument for a functional model of operational art. As earlier stated, the Canadian Forces does consider itself to be doctrinally based and, therefore, constant examination and useful refinement of that doctrinal base is required. Based on the realities of past military operations and the projection of future operations this doctrine needs to be broad and less focused on war fighting scenarios. In fact, and as noted earlier in this paper, the integration of the theory and doctrine of manoeuvre warfare and of mission command with the theory and doctrine of operational art only serves to complicate the applicability of these distinct but often related doctrines and, therefore, the requirement for their separation. Always mindful of the Canadian definition of operational art as “the skill of employing military forces to attain strategic objectives in a theatre of war or theatre of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations,” the model proposed by this paper meets the requirement of this definition while increasing its usefulness to the planning and conduct of all military operations. It is flexible and inclusive enough to accept that not all situations will require a formalized operational level or even any of the operational functions. What it does demand is that this decision be made by the appropriate (i.e. strategic) level in an appropriate proactive manner after a full mission

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<sup>55</sup> Irwin, Op Cit., 7.

analysis. It is now appropriate for a Canadian Centre of Excellence, arguably the Canadian Forces College, to further examine the issue of “Canadian operational art” by way of formalizing a construct useful for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Undoubtedly it will all come down how best to visualize and put into action the most effective use of tactical military forces to achieve strategic goals. Operational art, therefore, besides being the “link” defined above, is a method of best utilizing military forces for mission accomplishment.

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