Reflections on Clausewitz and Jomini: A Discussion on Theory, MDMP, and Design in the Post OIF Army

by Christopher Otero

What this task requires in the way of higher intellectual gifts is a sense of unity and a power of judgment, raised to a marvelous pitch of vision, which easily grasps and dismisses a thousand remote possibilities an ordinary mind would labor to identify, and wear itself out in doing so.

– Carl von Clausewitz

One of the most intellectually challenging moments in the United States Command and General Staff College is when after 10 years of serving in an Army at War you are finally introduced to the two major theorists of modern warfare, Antoine-Henri Jomini and Carl Von Clausewitz. Both are considered to be the most prominent theorists of the western way of warfare and the question that often gets framed by our instructors is which of these two best inform your understanding of modern war? Do you consider yourself Jominian or Clausewitzian in your outlook?

Imagine the surprise when I answered 'Both'. In this document, I will attempt to explain why the answer <u>NEEDS</u> to be both and why picking one has led the United States Army to a rather peculiar fault of breeding the best tacticians in the world, but generally creating very poor strategists. I will propose a unitary framework that blends the two theorists and endeavors to bridge the gap as well as begin a dialogue about the relationship between the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) and the Design methodology. It is my intention to eventually propose an update to the MDMP process in an effort to 'modernize' it IAW lessons learned.

Carl Von Clausewitz approached the subject of war consistent with the manner of late 18th century Romanticism. His writing was a reaction against the accepted norms and practices of the previous age of warfare. It was dialectic in its approach and Clausewitz's central theme was that war and the art of decision-making defied rote categorization and solutions. Beyond all the commonly known aphorisms (eg. 'War is a continuation of politics by other means'), Clausewitz attempted to get at the nature of the contest of war between nation-states though some of his later revisions delved into revolutionary and guerilla warfare.

Antoine-Henri Jomini took an opposite approach and categorized warfare not as art but science with an adherence to basic principles such as lines of operation and an emphasis on practical knowledge although he attempted to refute this statement in the conclusion of his essay. Jomini's writing also had the virtue of being eminently more readable and accessible than Clausewitz's writing. Jomini's work was immensely popular and served as the basis of American Officer tactical and strategic education for almost half a century. While Clausewitz sought to explain war in terms of a debate, Jomini explained war in terms of an experiment with clear results derived from empirical means.

May 25, 2011

As previously mentioned, the United States Army has a long history with Jomini with whose work formed the basis of pre-Civil War Officer Education. While Jominian principles never left the Army's doctrine, his work saw increased application in the post-Vietnam US Army in that 'AirLand Battle' Doctrine and its successor, 'Network-Centric Warfare' were modern day distillations of Jominian principles along evolutionary lines. This is not a criticism of General Depuy, Starry and other luminaries of the age that had to take a demoralized Army undergoing a dramatic shift to an all-volunteer force during an age of financial austerity and provide it with a vision forward against its most existential threat. The conception of war in the minds of the Army Leadership at the time had fared unfavorably in the crucible of uncertainty and reverses that was Vietnam. The Army leaders of the day sought to provide an intellectual and professional azimuth for the new all-volunteer Army that emphasized the professional application of war. That application was conventional, high-tempo, integrated and extended through the depth of the battlefield. The Army Doctrine prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom that served as the professional basis for Officer Education was a battle-tested Doctrine that was highly organized, coherent and extremely Jominian in practice right down to the terminology that was used. To this day, Jominian concepts and words can be heard in every MDMP process and professional discussion on tactics and strategy in every Army Headquarters and Tactical Operations Center.

This is the time to ask ourselves if this Jominian fixation still should serve as our doctrinal basis. The question is especially relevant given the events of the past decade. In my opinion, the battle-tested Doctrine based on Jominian principles created a circumstance where we won many battles but nearly lost the campaign in Iraq in 2005-2006. It also led to a situation where although the jury is still out on Afghanistan, the situation deteriorated to the point where after 10 years of presence the issue is still very much in doubt. Central to this assertion and intrinsically linked to the notion that our doctrinal basis led us down the path that we walked is this: The modern Army has bred generations of brilliant tacticians, but has bred very few good strategists. I will attempt in the following paragraphs to outline why I feel that is so and describe how we arrived there.

The pre-GWOT Doctrine was predicated off a system of Field Manuals, Army Training and Evaluation Programs (ARTEPs), and Mission Essential Tasks Lists (METL) derived statements built off Mission Training Plans (MTPs) with clear task conditions and standards. Mnemonic aids like the 8 step training model were rigorously applied and live-fire training was heavily managed along a track of gunnery tables, combined live fire exercises and high-intensity CTC rotations. As a Platoon Leader and an Executive Officer, I can attest that this system produced technically proficient organizations that were capable of achieving extraordinary battlefield feats. However, from my viewpoint, training was extremely regimented and there was very little room for innovation or risk-taking. There was a 'playbook' (MTPs) that we were evaluated by and deviating from the script was not rewarded. This appeared to be a common feeling amongst junior Officers of the day.

My first assignment in the Army was as an Armor Officer at Fort Polk, Louisiana where I supported JRTC rotations. It was quite clear that just about every unit that we faced as OPFOR executed the same plan in the same manner and often at the same locations as the units previous. Units that were faced with unexpected situations usually fared poorly in their reactions. In retrospect, we were producing units that were extremely tactically proficient when faced with a situation that was roughly within their expectations and adaptable to within a set range. Those

units were not particularly adaptive when faced with situations that were beyond the core competencies or outside their expectations. The situation only got worse as I rose in rank and moved into the Staff realm as an Assistant S3. The system seemed to get more prescriptive and the form of training management and operations allowed even less flexibility than I had had as a troop leader. The process of MDMP, Quarterly Training Briefs, Unit Status Reports, Training Meetings and Orders production was emphasized often at the expense of results and intellectual thought suffered. The further along I went there seemed to be less options for innovation and creativity there seemed to be in training.

It would have been satisfying to attribute this state of affairs to ineptness and negligent conduct but the truth of the matter was that most everybody from Lieutenant to General, Private to Command Sergeant Major had honorable intentions and wanted to be successful for the right reasons. They were good men and women that loved their country and their Army and they remain among the finest professional Soldiers that this country has produced. During the second half of the 1990s, the United States Army practiced stability operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, nations that liked Iraq had three competing ethnic groups with religious, linguistic and nationalistic differences. Though the level of combat was less, the Army faced many of the same stability concerns that it later faced in Iraq and Afghanistan and showed itself capable of conducting nuanced partnered operations in a post-conflict environment.

The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were cunningly planned and audaciously executed with battlefield success was achieved but strategic victory proved to be elusive. There were several operational and strategic errors made during the course of Iraq and Afghan operations:

➢ The glaring deficiencies in joint organization that occurred at ANACONDA.
➢ The passive response by the military during the civil disorder after the fall of Saddam.
➢ The precipitous withdraw of C4I from Iraq after the conventional campaign was over.
➢ The dismissal of the Iraqi Army by the CPA without much protest from Army Commanders.
➢ The over-reliance on kinetic strikes in lieu of comprehensive counter-insurgent tactics in Afghanistan in 2005-2008.
➢ The misguided push to execute counter-narcotic operations in Helmand Province in 2006 that inflamed the insurgency.
➢ The move out of the neighborhoods in Baghdad in 2005.
➢ The push into the Korengal and Waygul valleys in Afghanistan.

The list of errors made was legion and in most cases were military decisions made in line with the situational and doctrinal understanding of the Commanders of the time. The paradox was how could the military education and training establishment that produced a cadre of leaders that were capable of successfully invading Iraq with a only a fraction of the force that fought a more limited campaign in 1991 make the operational and strategic mistakes that it did later in the war? How could an Army that practiced stability operations successfully in the Balkans in the 90s fail to incorporate the lessons learned a mere five years later?

In order to support my contention that the Jominian principles underpinning Army Doctrine led these difficulties, I would further explore Jomini's work. The principles laid out by Jomini were very prescriptive and mechanistic in nature. The document lays out situations and then annotates the correct dispositions and layouts of formations depending on the situation presented. The second thing that immediately strikes me as I read the document is that the

largest chapter entitled 'Strategy' is really an extended work on tactical dispositions relating to maneuver that never truly exceeds the Operational level.

Webster's defines 'Strategy' as the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war. In contrast the definition of 'Tactics' is the science and art of disposing and maneuvering forces in combat. In the concluding paragraphs of the document, Jomini further reinforces the prescriptive nature of the document by stating that if the principles and theories are followed, it will produce successful and productive generals. Jomini barely touches the subject of civil wars and intrastate wars, simply covering a few surface details and advising that such wars be avoided. Taken as a whole, the Jomini's book has a lot of merit in furthering the understanding of maneuver but excepting a few basic principles, the document seemed to me to have far more applicability to warfare as practiced between large Armies fighting linear battles on 19th Century battlefields.

In comparison, Clausewitz's document in its original form has a more timeless quality to it. Where Jomini's work was prescriptive, Clausewitz was very descriptive in his conception of war in which he elevates it to an art only loosely conforming to principles. The document was influenced by the German idealistic philosophy of Immanuel Kant, a Prussian contemporary of Clausewitz, in its rejection of absolutist – a priorii – knowledge and its emphasis on the testing of competing theories through criticism as a vehicle to determine their worth. This led to a very dialectical construct where Clausewitz continuously presents declarations followed by arguments that in most cases serve to strengthen the principle presented but in some cases serves as a negative. Because Clausewitz presents war as a political act and places the emphasis on the totality of war as a political, economic and psychological contest, his book has far more strategic relevance than Jomini's document. Clausewitz argues for the superiority of the defense and his document explores the use of partisans and popular opinion, bringing an asymmetrical viewpoint to the presentation of his understanding of war.

Many modern critiques of Clausewitz, particularly Martin Van Crevald and John Keegan focuses their criticism on the paradoxical trinity of Clausewitz, finding his interplay of the government, the people and the army as a relic that has little relevance in this age of non-state actors. The critique loses its power because the modern understanding of the paradoxical trinity really is a reinterpretation of Clausewitz's ideas found in COL Summer's excellent work, 'On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War'. Clausewitz's original language portrayed the paradoxical trinity as 'reason, chance and violence', more general concepts that are applicable across the entire range of war. Also lending to the utility of the document was the admiration of Clausewitz that both Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedong professed. Lenin and Mao both were effusive in their praise and incorporated Clausewitz into their instruction. The most telling testament of the utility of Clausewitz's ideas beyond conventional warfare, melding politics and warfare, can be seen in the successful revolutions that these leaders oversaw.

Having presented a brief comparison of Jomini and Clausewitz, I will endeavor to contrast the two theorists. Jomini's work was very much about the science of one particular war-fighting function, maneuver, as practiced on an 19th Century battlefield while Clausewitz's work was primarily focused on the art of war and was very strategic in its outlook. The principles of Jomini were extremely useful during OIF-1 because of the conventional nature of the conflict and its emphasis on maneuver conjoined with the application of firepower. Once that operation was complete, the war ceased to be a war of maneuver and became a war of position along the

physical and logical lines of operation. A similar situation arose in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban as the organized government of Afghanistan.

If one requires further explanation, I would ask where were Jomini's interior lines, front of operations and decisive points during the counterinsurgency in OIF/OEF? Where was the hostile mass that one must maneuver against? On the other hand, is Clausewitz's trinity of reason, chance and violence a more apt description of the war we actually fought? Was there not tension between the political and military objectives of the respective campaigns?

Can one now understand why our Doctrine and the understanding of warfare that was developed failed us? We were an Army that was intellectually and culturally adapted to the idea of the Offensive. In fact it was enshrined in our doctrine as the desired operation with defense merely being the pause prior to the offensive. In the Jominian offensive, maneuver and the application of firepower at particular points and time were the ideal. Corresponding with this ideal, aggressiveness and audaciousness became desirable character traits while those character traits that limited the tempo of the offensive, introspection and pauses for reflection were not desirable. Jominian principles were seductive because of the utilitarian and accessible nature; one did not have to be a Napoleon or a Grant to effectively use strategy as long as the basic principles were correctly applied. Combine this with the disdain for stability operations in the wake of the arrival of a new political administration ('America does not do peacekeeping'), the seeds for our initial failure became readily apparent.

The American application of warfare became direct and reductionist with the battlefield reduced to objectives, boundaries, limits of advance and task and purpose. This directness in methodology would have been admired by Jomini. But the flaw in this was that it was sequential and often treated the operational environment with the exception of geographical factors as almost irrelevant to the argument.

Clausewitz was very concerned with the idea of entropy, or friction and that the operational environment was almost always uncertain. Decisions were constantly being made within this uncertain environment. The only way that those decisions became relevant was if the consideration of the operational environment became the central concern. In other words, Clausewitz put a premium on the notion of genius in Commanders; the powers of Commander to analyze discern and synthesize courses of action that were appropriate within the uncertainty of the operational environment.   Clausewitzian principles are hard to operationalize because how does one categorize uncertainty? How does one put a process to genius?

The operational environment consists of all the various elements and their relationships create a cascading series of changes when any single factor is changed. Therefore we get at the difficulty of operationalizing Jomini versus Clauswitz, prescriptive versus descriptive. In the past several years, the Army has attempted to reconcile this dissonance between doctrine and reality by reductionist techniques of assigning objectives married with logical lines of operations in attempting to shape the environment. Instead of dealing with the environment as a system with all of its inherent complexity, we have paid lip-service to the complex while gaining only a surface understanding and thus we have often achieved at best mixed results. Instead of embracing the uncertainty and the vagrancies of fate by managing variables, we often ignored or minimized them in the face of whatever objective we were pursuing. Through this rationale, the Army has frequently been guilty of regarding war in its totality as a series of tactical engagements with straight line cause and effect and thus the understanding and strategy of war

and the effects achieved through the constant interplay of systemic relationships in an uncertain environment has suffered.

As a military intelligence officer, I freely admit to something of an intellectual bias towards Clauswitz. His theory is descriptive and erudite and lends itself very well to the notion of understanding the operational environment. In FM3-0, Mission Command is broken up into four phases: Understand, Visualize, Describe and Direct. Given that the Intelligence Officer is primarily concerned with Mission Analysis during the MDMP, Clausewitz's fixation on understanding and visualizing the problem prior to coming up with a course of action appeals to my sensibilities. I have always stated that it is better to have an idea rather than a plan.

At this point of the argument, one would suspect that I would argue for a resetting of the doctrine strictly on Clausewitzian principles but that is not my intent because surely there is some value in the principles of Jomini or else it would not have had the enduring effect on our doctrine that it has. Clausewitz as a theorist begins to fail as one moves to the Describe and Direct function in that the descriptive dialectic basis of his theory does not lend itself very well to the clear concise military orders that sub-units require in order to execute the Commander's Intent and synchronize operations in both time and space. It is here that the prescriptive nature of Jomini becomes useful because it offers a tested methodology suited to organizing the battlefield in such a manner that effective tasks and purposes can be written and disseminated. In other words, Jominian principles and the precise terminology especially lend itself to the Describe and Direct functions of mission command.

How would I meld the two theories to provide a better intellectual framework for Doctrine? Going back to the definition of Mission Command, I would repeat that Clausewitz principles are intrinsically linked to understanding and visualizing the battlefield while Jominian principles lend itself to the Describe and Direct functions. To further understand this relationship, I would contend that the various Mission Command functions nest within each other both sequentially and in totality (see figure below). The orders and directives that are constructed in the Describe and Direct functions (Jominian) need to constantly exist within a framework of understanding and visualization (Clausewitizian). I contend that all military operations occur within the operational environment and that properly understanding complementary variables and their inter-relationships is critical for the functions that exist within the constructed figure below.

Important is the notion that A) everything that exists and happens within the operational environment, including your military force and the operations it conducts, changes the operational environment, and B) because the environment changes, the operations that are conducted need to shift along with the environment. It is really about tactics (describe and direct) existing within strategy (understanding and visualization). One of the problems that we suffer as an Army is that due to the nature of detailed planning we often treat understanding and visualization superficially and then describe and direct our operations accordingly.

Referring to the graphic below, if you treat the operational environment as a static/near static, than you run the risk of a descriptive – prescriptive mismatch where the understanding/visualization of your environment is no longer valid or the constructed operation no longer fits within the rational understanding/visualization of the operational environment. A feedback mechanism is required to both constantly update the understanding and visualization of the environment and to ensure that the operations exist within that understanding.

CLAUSEWITZ - DESCRIPTIVE
JOMINI - PRESCRIPTIVE
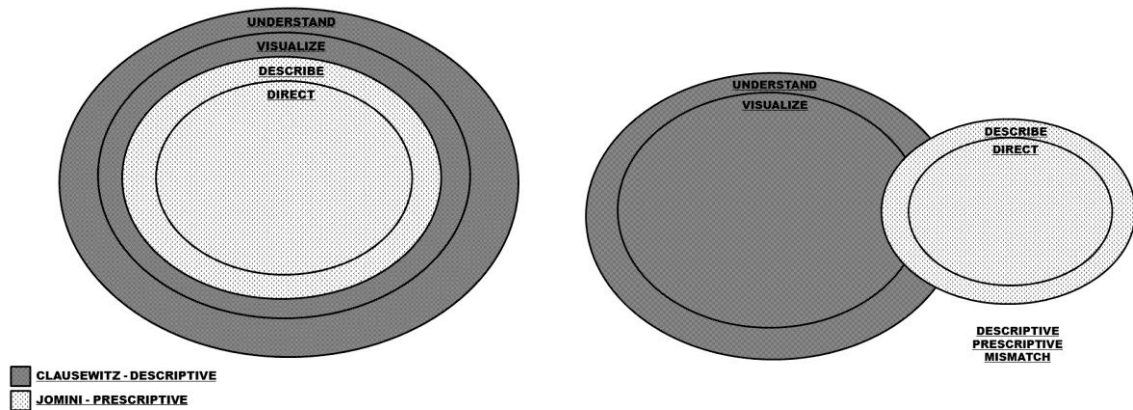
The question then becomes how one translates this framework into military decision making and planning. Mission Command nests well with the military decision making process (MDMP) with the Understand function corresponding to mission analysis, Visualization to course of action development, Describe to COA analysis – comparison – approval, and Direct to orders production (see figure below). While MDMP lends itself to the Describe and Direct functions, MDMP is reductionist and is not a particularly agile process when done in a deliberate manner or when handling undefined problem sets.

The Army has moved to Design as a new planning methodology to deal with unstructured problem sets. When reviewing the *Art of Design v2.0* (part of the School of Advanced Military Studies curriculum), it is apparent that the design methodology is very well suited to increasing the validity of the understand and visualization functions of Mission Command in a way that MDMP does not and recognizes and accounts for the variables of thinking, the dialectical nature of problem solving that Clausewitz espoused in his work that I am advocating now.

The problem is that Design is not very well understood within the United States Army. As a planning tool, I had no understanding of what it was prior to coming to the Army Command and General Staff College. The CGSC curriculum for Design was short, simplistic, and totally inadequate in explaining what Design is and how it applies. I encountered a reluctance to learn among some students and a disdain for teaching it among some instructors. Why is that so? I think it is because the Army has not shown a clear linkage or bridging strategy between its chosen planning paradigm, MDMP, and the newer concept of Design. According to the v2.0 SAMs Student Text, Design is normally used by a formed planning team that tackles the problem outside the confines of normal MDMP and presents solutions and contextual constructs to the Commander as a way to frame the argument prior to embarking or coinciding with MDMP. If this is in fact the answer, then Design will never gain wider acceptance into the Army because it has not been institutionalized beyond the very small segment of Officers that receive focused Design instruction in SAMS.
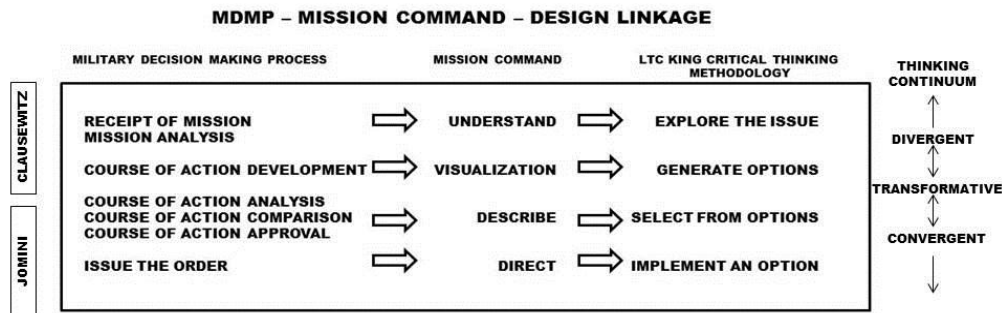
Reading through the Chapter 4.7 Feedback testimonials from the v 2.0 SAMS Student Text, this point seems especially relevant and points to lack of acceptance of Design across the wider Army. Design, with its emphasis on collaborative and intellectual dissection of a problem, is what Mission Analysis and COA Development should be rather than the current practice of MDMP of breaking up into your respective tribes and generating data and COAs independent of the Commander and of each other.

MDMP – MISSION COMMAND RELATIONSHIP

RECEIPT OF MISSION MISSION ANALYSIS	⟹	UNDERSTAND
COURSE OF ACTION DEVELOPMENT	⟹	VISUALIZATION
COURSE OF ACTION ANALYSIS COURSE OF ACTION COMPARISON COURSE OF ACTION APPROVAL	⟹	DESCRIBE
ISSUE THE ORDER	⟹	DIRECT

There has been previous work towards outlining the difference between MDMP and Design. LTC Ketti Davidson's (US Army) monograph, 'Systemic Operational Design: Gaining and Maintaining the Cognitive Initiative' maintains that while MDMP serves well at the tactical level, it is lacking at the operational/strategic level. LTC Davidson recommends the fusing of Systemic Operational Design and MDMP in order to make a better planning process. LTC Davidson's analysis is cogent, insightful, and serves a valuable purpose in outlining the advantages of Design at the operational level. My criticism with LTC Davidson's approach is that it is sequential with the Planners conducting Design prior to the beginning of MDMP and the result of Design leading into Mission Analysis in MDMP with the larger Staff. This solution strikes against the strength of Design which is gaining understanding through constant framing and re-framing of problems, something that the entirety of the Staff requires not just the Planning team.

I would propose that the Design be formally adopted into MDMP as the methodology for critical thinking and to combat the reductionist tendencies inherent in MDMP as currently practiced. In the v2.0 SAMS Student Text Appendix B: Design Methodologies, LTC Richard King (Australian Defense Force) developed a methodology for critical thinking that is broken up into 4 steps: Explore the Issue, Generate Options, Select from Options, Implement the Options. MDMP is the planning tool and base process with the principles of Design dictating how each step of the MDMP is conducted.

I contend that LTC King's four steps correspond with the four steps of Mission Command as well and fit into a broad categorization of MDMP as shown in the figure below. The power of LTC King's model is in the Divergent-Transformative-Convergent thinking continuum with its 29 primary critical thinking techniques when it is lined up against all three constructs. Divergent thinking techniques are specifically valued in Mission Analysis and COA Development (Understanding & Visualization for Mission Command). As understanding is achieved and refined and COA Development proceeds into COA Analysis, Transformative thinking techniques become the valued norm. Finally, as the COA Development/Analysis process works towards resolution for Comparison, Approval and Orders Production, there is a need to move to convergent thinking in order to synchronize and direct operations.

MDMP – MISSION COMMAND – DESIGN LINKAGE

	MILITARY DECISION MAKING PROCESS		MISSION COMMAND		LTC KING CRITICAL THINKING METHODOLOGY		THINKING CONTINUUM
CLAUSEWITZ	RECEIPT OF MISSION MISSION ANALYSIS	⇒	UNDERSTAND	⇒	EXPLORE THE ISSUE		DIVERGENT
	COURSE OF ACTION DEVELOPMENT	⇒	VISUALIZATION	⇒	GENERATE OPTIONS		TRANSFORMATIVE
JOMINI	COURSE OF ACTION ANALYSIS COURSE OF ACTION COMPARISON COURSE OF ACTION APPROVAL	⇒	DESCRIBE	⇒	SELECT FROM OPTIONS		CONVERGENT
	ISSUE THE ORDER	⇒	DIRECT	⇒	IMPLEMENT AN OPTION		

In order to move to the model that I am proposing above, some fundamental changes will need to occur to MDMP in order to encourage the more free-form intellectual dialogue that Design requires. The first assumption challenged is that as much as possible, Mission Analysis and COA Development need to be open collaborative processes where the maximum amount of participants allowable and practical are invited to attend with a strong leader managing the process to keep it on track. The tendency now is to work individually or in small sections based off the Commander's Initial Planning Guidance and only come together for rehearsals and slide reviews.

The strength of Design comes from the dialogue in the collaboration process where team members are educating themselves and gaining awareness in the act of framing the problem. The value is that the increased awareness across the Staff will result in a broader understanding and a better applicable product generated rather than surface understanding achieved now through attendance of briefings. The second assumption challenged will be that the Commander needs to be an active participant in the COA Development rather than issuing guidance and then turning the planning process over to a Deputy. COA Development is where divergent thinking becomes transformative and it is absolutely vital that the Commander arrive at their visualization through a mutual understanding gained while exploring the issue. Mission Command espouses the central role of the Commander and active participation at this stage will ultimately save time and effort and arrive at a more solid product. The Commander can excuse himself during the next phases. The Deputy (XO) and the S3 still have a critical role in building the planning framework IAW the Commander's initial directives and thus retain their key roles in this process.

In an operational environment, I envision that MDMP utilizing Design as a critical thinking baseline would follow the steps below:

1.   After receipt of the mission and the initial Commander's planning guidance, Mission Analysis would begin with a collaborative session involving the primary staff members attempting to frame the problem based off the CPG and the higher order mission and Situation paragraphs. The critical thinking methodology used would likely be a combination of mind-mapping (graphical representation outlining the problem and related variables – see Buzan, Tony, and Barry's work 'The Mindmap Book) and challenging assumptions/boundaries. After the initial problem is framed and accepted by the group, individual staff sections would then complete assigned mission analysis products in an analytical fashion to fill in details on individual components of the mind-map. The Staff Lead would monitor progress of Mission Analysis and coach individual sections, possibly through additional collaborative sessions to refine products. The results of the Mission Analysis would then be briefed to the Commander in order to refine his knowledge of the situation and act as an additional knowledge check.

2.   Upon completion of the Mission Analysis Brief, the Staff and the Commander would move into Course of Action Development. COA Development under these conditions would feature the Commander involved in a collaborative planning session meant to assist the Visualization function. The critical thinking required enters into a transformative stage as Brainstorming becomes the critical thinking methodology of choice. The Staff Lead would still serve as moderator/facilitator with the Commander actively involved in communicating with his Staff to build the initial vision. The key products generated during this collaborative session would be the Commander's Intent as well as the initial Concept of Operations framework from which multiple COAs could be developed. This particular method obeys the tenants of Mission Command by putting the Commander in a central mission as well as helping the Staff achieve a deeper understanding of the intent at a point in the process from which they can develop a more suitable plan.

3.   At this point, the Staff breaks down into its individual components in order to build the Concept of Operations/Concept of Support. Morphological Analysis (breaking each problem down into component processes and variables and identifying potential solutions through careful analysis of those components) is the preferred critical thinking methodology with each primary staff member leading a collaborative session within their section to conduct the analysis prior to developing written products. The Staff Lead continues to monitor the progress and serves to initiate sub-collaborations in order to break impasses as well as interfacing with the Commander to achieve greater fidelity on emergent issues.

4. After the initial Concepts have been developed and accepted by the Staff Lead, a collaborative session is initiated with the Commander again in order to begin the war-game. Typically, the war-game has been conducted by the Staff with the results presented to the Commander during the Decision Brief during the Course of Action approval. The danger in this is that the bad assumptions, group-think, and divergence from the Commander's Intent can occur and the error is not caught till the Decision Brief. Additionally, this also prevents the Commander from gaining a deeper understanding of the logic behind the plan and the Staff does not benefit from a Commander's genius under this configuration. The Commander centric war-game allows for refinement and error correction at a much earlier point in the process as well as creating a greater linkage between the Describe and Visualization functions of Mission Command. The critical thinking methodologies of choice during this stage would be Comparison Matrix and Decision Tree analysis. Both of these methodologies correspond closely

to the COA products COA Comparison Matrix and Decision Support Templates (DST) and the notes taken during the war-game will build the DST.

5. COA approval is organic to the Commander-centric war-game and an independent review of the DST by the Staff Lead to ensure that it accurately reflects the Commander's visualization and description serves the same function as the Decision Brief. At this point, orders production is initiated with convergent thinking techniques being the norm. A graphical representation of the order is generated in briefing format and in lieu of the Decision Brief, the Staff Lead coordinates with the Commander for a presentation of the OPORD brief and possibly conducts a formal rehearsal prior to briefing subordinate Commanders.

The major changes in this technique versus MDMP as traditionally conducted is that the Commander is a more active participant and is brought in at earlier points in the process to facilitate visualization, description and approval than what is typically seen. Time efficiencies are gained by eliminating the need to conduct frequent sub-briefings and product generation in order to catch the Commander up and re-work parts of the process due to prescriptive/descriptive mismatches. More important is that Design is incorporated with collaboration and open critical analysis being the norms rather than the current emphasis on individual staff section product generation and briefing requirements. The end-result is the same with a briefing to subordinate Commanders accompanied with a written order but the process in getting there is more open and recognizes that while MDMP is the process, Design is the methodology.

The Army is at an extraordinarily interesting time in its history that in many ways shares similarity to where we were upon the completion of the Vietnam War. As at that previous time, we are coming out a period of prolonged conflict where an Army trained for conventional warfare learned hard lessons in counter-insurgency and stability operations. Like then, there is now a perception that the core war-fighting competencies of the Army have eroded and the new mantra being spoken is 'getting back to the basics'. While I will agree that our core war-fighting competencies have eroded and hard work needs to be done to gain those skills back, I would caution against taking the Vietnam analogy too far because we are entering into an utterly unique time in Army history. We are coming out of a period of prolonged conflict with an large all-volunteer professional Army, something that has never occurred before. The Officers and NCOs in this Army are battle-tested and contrary to supposition, are largely staying in the Army. We also have enduring operations in Afghanistan and other locations while we undergo this period of reset. Intellectually, the Army has never been stronger and more knowledgeable than it is now, a fact that sometimes is lost on us as we rightly criticize our short-comings. Our doctrine and planning paradigm, MDMP, is serviceable but I would challenge us to make it better and now is exactly the time to commit to that effort. Clausewitz offers us a road that has already been traveled to look back upon (reference Chapter 17 of Book 3, substitute the United States for France, Iraq and Afghanistan for Russia and Spain and I challenge one to not see the relevancy to our time) while Design unified with MDMP offers a road to look ahead. It is time to update our planning paradigm by adopting Design-drive MDMP.

Bibliography

Art of Design, Student Text Version 2.0. (n.d.). Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College.

Clausewitz, C. V. (1976). *On War.* (M. H. Paret, Ed.) Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton
    University Press.

Crevald, M. V. (1991). *The Transformation of War: The Most Radical Reinterpretation of Armed
    Conflict Since Clauswitz.* New York, New York: Free Press.

Davison, K. (2006). Operational Design; Standard Operating Procedure. Fort Leavenworth,
    Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College.

Herberg-Rothe, H. S. (2007). *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century.* Oxford: Oxford University
    Press.

Jomini, A. H. (2008). *Art of War: Restored Edition.* (G. Mendall, Trans.) Kingston, Ontario:
    Legacy Books Press.

King, R. (2009). Thinking Skills Resources (Unpublished Draft).

Summers, H. (1995). *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War.* New York: Presidio
    Press.

*MAJ Christopher Otero, USA, is an active duty military intelligence officer who has served
multiple tours in Afghanistan and Iraq at the Battalion, Brigade Combat Team, and Division
level. MAJ Otero is currently attending the Command and General Staff College at Fort
Leavenworth, Kansas. The views expressed in this article are his own and do not reflect the
position of the United States Army or the Department of Defense.*