



SMALL WARS

JOURNAL

From 9/11 to London: The Need for Virtual Battle Space Maneuver Doctrine

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Journal Article | Jun 11 2017 - 9:16pm

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The New Normal

The ability to generate global influence by maneuvering one civilian population against another, along Virtual Battle Space Avenues of Approach, to produce catastrophic physical effects is a significant transformational change for warfare. This phenomenon first occurred in the 21st Century on 9/11, when 19 foreign civilian terrorist fighters from the Middle East, attacked the United States. The buildup to the strike on 9/11 was conducted largely in virtual space to set the conditions for the terrorists' success in physical space. This new form of global Virtual Battle Space Maneuver (VBSM), created significant detrimental physical space effects and was demonstrated a second time during the Arab Spring in 2011 and with similar success as exhibited by ISIL. The myriad terrorist attacks since 9/11 to the June 2017 murderous acts in London, underscore the point that this virtual scheme of maneuver is no longer an anomaly; rather it is the norm in the world today.

What we see as apparent problems, are often merely symptoms of deeper issues. These problems possess their own dynamics and relationships in both virtual and physical space. The sources of novelty and complexity that the U.S. military experiences everyday are derivatives of technological revolutions and ideological influences that have driven adaptation for millennia. The U.S. military is now confronted with a mounting number of strategic and operational negative externalities, given the growing cognitive dissonance relative to VBSM and Physical Battle Space Maneuver (PBSM), in an unprecedented 21st Century global conflict space. The velocity and viral nature of these evolving dynamic factors often overwhelm existing industrial-age cognitive processes and leadership approaches, which are proving to be inappropriate for contemporary complex problem-solving.

The most notable global system propensity challenge is the viral growth in trans-regional terrorism, in both virtual and physical maneuver space. This activity is sponsored by nation-state actors and is also carried out by transnational criminal organizations and radicalized Islamic individuals. These situations require unprecedented coordination, synchronization, and continuous planning within the U.S. military, the private sector and with countries and actors with our shared interests. These emerging realities require new transformational leadership solutions, anticipatory authorities, novel systemic mental models and a new Virtual Battle Space Maneuver doctrine that provides a whole of government solution. To achieve transformational change, the west must divorce itself from the notion of "Lone Wolves", which is a political "cop out" strategy. Many terrorist actors are in fact "Known Wolves", who are not apprehended

as they reside in western Islamic Sharia Law enclaves and are enabled daily by the veil of political correctness.

The Strategic Imperative

The U.S. military has made significant progress in cyber awareness over the past five years. Those advancements are the foundation for a reframe that is required to produce a new synthesized VBSM strategy and doctrine. The requirement for the U.S. Armed Forces is to design a new integrated VBSM strategy and doctrine for 21st Century warfare that will ensure successful PBSM on modern battlefields. These actions are necessary to position the United States in an anticipatory stance relative to its global System of Opposition.

The current System of Opposition is defined as everything that is working against the attainment of U.S. policies and objectives. The System of Opposition is a complex global entity that is at war with the United States every day in Virtual Battle Space and, at times, in Physical Battle Space. The System of Opposition to the United States is growing in power and now includes nation-state actors, global companies, radical organizations and technically capable individuals who are all “virtual combatants” that collectively outgun the U.S. military in Virtual Battle Space. The U.S. government must mobilize the industrial base of the country to combat the VBSM threats that are emerging across the world today by a growing carte du jour of actors. If the aforementioned national mobilization does not occur, a “Virtual 9/11” will indeed follow.

The System of Opposition to the United States is using asymmetric approaches to leverage the seam between traditional warfare and the law enforcement activities of the United States and her allies. These threats to the United States will soon achieve VBSM dominance, as the decisive effort in war, which will portend success in Physical Battle Space Maneuver, as a supporting effort, on modern battlefields. Many of the empowered threats engaged in combat and illicit activities today employ complex combinations of physical and virtual space maneuver activities that produce unprecedented horrific psychological and moral challenges in disproportionate ways that are not often understood by the monolithic western archetypes – at least not initially.

VBSM, as practiced during the past 16 years by the United States’ System of Opposition, has led to maneuvering elements of one civilian population against another along Virtual Space Avenues of Approach to achieve alarming physical space terrorizing effects. The attacks on 9/11, London, Manchester, Paris, Brussels, San Bernardino, Orlando, the Ohio State University, Fort Hood, and the 2011 Arab Spring are VBSM examples that support this rationale; and accentuate the emergence of a new form of unprecedented indirect maneuver and power in our global system. VBSM heuristics began to emerge in 1989. *The security imperative for the full spectrum of conflict now is complete control of every aspect of VBSM as the decisive operation to achieve desired shaping effects while conducting PBSM.*

Defining Virtual Battle Space Maneuver

Virtual Space is a man-made parallel ecosphere that now dominates all meaningful activity in Physical Space. Virtual Space, via the World-Wide Web (WWW), has been weaponized since its inception in 1989. The Internet is the primary virtual weapon system that is employed by the System of Opposition against the United States and its allies.

VBSM is an asymmetric systems approach that employs offensive and defensive cyber capabilities, social media, information operations, artificial intelligence and stealth technologies. These five pillars of VBSM are often viewed and exercised in isolation. When synthesized, these means will create a powerful new capability to achieve decisive global virtual influence. VBSM is much broader than merely offensive and

defensive cyber operations.

Operational Advancements

VBSM provides the ability to generate pervasive indirect global influence at a fraction of the investment and also reduces risk to the mission and “assaulting forces”. VBSM eliminates traditional tyranny of distance challenges relative to strategic and operational reach as well as theater-level access and early entry conundrums that are associated with traditional PBSM. VBSM is an indirect global capability that has surfaced by way of the Internet that delivers virtual munitions on demand and helps to achieve desired affective, cognitive and physical dislocation effects against a rival. Protected VBSM avenues of approach should be a top national security priority. VBSM has tremendous power and potential to achieve national policy objectives that are perceived to be untenable in China, North Korea, Russian and Iranian security scenarios via PBSM strategies. VBSM has and will continue to change international law, vis-à-vis what constitutes an act of war.

The Singularity is Near

Ray Kurzweil’s book, “The Singularity is Near”, comes the closest to describing what the U.S. military must achieve as it moves forward in virtual battle space. In 2005, Kurzweil wrote about the fusion or “Singularity” of biological intelligence and artificial intelligence in global societies. He opined, “The Singularity will represent the culmination of the merger of our biological thinking and the existence with our technology, resulting in a world that is still human but that transcends our biological roots. There will be no distinction, post-Singularity, between physical and virtual reality.”

Finding the leaders who are capable of operationalizing “Kurzweil’s Singularity” concept using both VBSM and PBSM to produce a new unifying non-standard doctrine will be paramount to directing U.S. warfighting efforts for the foreseeable future. The U.S. military’s future prowess hinges on how well and fast it interprets emerging technological and VBSM patterns of threat activity. The leaders, teams, organizations and countries that are most capable of swiftly reframing in these areas will win all future virtual and physical battle space engagements and wars.

Revolutions in Military Affairs

The U.S. military has framed and named four Revolutions in Military Affairs (RMAs) in the past 118 years. These RMAs included the Root Reforms circa 1899-1904, the 1919-1939 Interwar Period Reforms, the Post-Vietnam Reforms and the Post-Desert Storm/Desert Shield precision strike advancements. There is now an evolving 5th RMA that has been thrust upon the U.S. government and its military establishment, and it has yet to be framed and named.

The newest RMA emerged over the past 28 years. The 5th RMA’s asymmetric and technological advancements are exponentially more powerful than any of the previous paradigms that have changed the schema for waging war over the past century. This new development in capability and global reach will likely prove to be more powerful than the four previous RMAs combined. None of the four previous RMAs produced amorphous global groups of civilian terrorist hackers and attackers in both virtual and physical space. The previous RMAs were not driven by a radical ideological impetus that is perpetually conveyed at an increasing speed by individuals and groups over the Internet. The System of Opposition against the United States is using the Internet to propagate and perfect an unprecedented steady cadence of tragic international physical terror effects that are made possible along VBSM avenues of approach.

The Nature of War

The nature of warfare has remained the same since its inception in 2700 BCE in Mesopotamia. How war

is conducted has dramatically changed and the U.S. military's doctrine must keep pace. The U.S. military should reframe its enterprise-wide warfighting approach from its current Industrial Age model to a new paradigm that will win wars now and in the future. The capacity to win wars will be achieved by gaining and maintaining continuous global indirect effects, against the System of Opposition to the United States, through the design, integration and deployment of a new VBSM strategy and doctrine.

The U.S. military's challenge going forward is to win wars using both VBSM and PBSM in a timely, synchronized and anticipatory manner. Wars are increasingly being fought by armies of civilians. How will the U.S. military cause one opposition civilian force to maneuver on another in the future? The U.S. remains engaged in over 15 years of attrition warfare with no end in sight for the ongoing global war. The U.S. military has not innovated and adapted in a timely manner for a number of cultural reasons. U.S. laws and authorities, which were divined in the previous warfighting paradigm, are hindering the U.S. military's ability to win the Nation's wars today. The current process centric and classic predictive planning models are also collapsing under the weight of new non-predictive complex problem situations.

Winning 21st Century Wars

The U.S. military has the best people available in its ranks. There is no other fighting force in the world that trains and equips its combat organizations at a higher level of readiness. There is no other country in the world that has spent more money waging war since the tragic events that occurred on 9/11. There has never been a more competent conventional fighting force in the history of the world. Unfortunately, having the best trained conventional military forces in the world that fights optimally and predominantly in Physical Space with Industrial Age doctrine is no longer sufficient to win America's wars. The clear and undeniable feedback signal, from the global System of Opposition to the United States, is more than 15 years of attrition warfare. This fact demonstrates that the doctrine the U.S. military now employs is not working well enough to decisively win the Nation's wars. ***The U.S. Armed Forces imperative, going forward, is to create a new non-standard VBSM doctrine with revised PBSM tactics, techniques and procedures. The objective is to design a completely new amalgamated doctrine for the successful conduct of war in our time.***

All future wars will be "won" by operating within agreed upon Zones of Acceptability that address precise Limits of Tolerance that must be met and maintained over "the long-war". One of the fundamental imperatives for the U.S. military and our global allies, to achieve this end, is to develop a new doctrine and future fighting force that possesses the individual core competencies, which are resident in U.S. cyber teams. These actions will help prevent U.S. military personnel from being hacked, identified, targeted and killed quickly in future battles.

The development of advanced stealth techniques and technologies will be critical to the survival of U.S. personnel in the future. If a U.S. Service Member can be seen, detected and located on a battlefield, they will die or will be rendered completely combat ineffective, as evidenced today in the Ukraine. U.S. Service Members in the very near future will carry a Virtual Weapon System and a Kinetic Weapon System in order to survive future wars. Similarly, the U.S. government must improve cross boundary agency, private sector and international coordination and decision making to prevent adversarial elements of one civilian population from maneuvering against a U.S. civilian population along Virtual Space Avenues of Approach.

The Way Ahead

The VBSM strategy and doctrinal design effort will take several years to develop. Numerous design evolutions will have to occur with the right teams of corporate, interagency, military, law enforcement, civilian experts from academia and our allies to master the complexity that is before the United States.

This unprecedented design requirement will enhance the U.S. military's ability to win our Nation's wars and will help to prevent a Virtual 9/11, which if left unchecked, is imminent. The U.S. government and its military must design the virtual future it desires before it is overcome by a virtual future that will cripple the United States of America.

About the Author



Stefan J. Banach

Colonel (Retired) Banach, is a Distinguished Member of the 75th Ranger Regiment and served in that organization for nine years, culminating with command of the 3rd Ranger Battalion from 2001-2003. He led U.S. Army Rangers during a historic night combat parachute assault into Afghanistan on October 19, 2001, as the “spearhead” for the Global War on Terror for the United States of America. Steve subsequently led U.S. Army Rangers in a second combat parachute assault into Al Anbar Province in western Iraq in 2003. He also served as a Stryker Brigade Commander from 2005 to 2007 and created the Company Intelligence Support Team (COIST) concept for the U.S. Army. He demonstrated impeccable leadership during his 27 years in the U.S. Army – a period of service that included deployments to six combat zones. He earned a Bronze Star Medal for valor in combat and a Bronze Star Medal for service to the nation. He also earned two Bronze Combat Jumps Stars.

Steve Banach has over 30 years of leadership and strategy development experience. He served with distinction in the United States Army from 1983 to 2010. Since then, he has provided executive consulting services to a diverse range of clients at a number of prestigious institutions. In his consulting services, Steve designs strategies for clients and counsels decision-makers on executive leadership development and change management. His recent speaking engagements include programs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the JFK School of Government at Harvard University, the Fletcher School and Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University, Wheaton College, the University of Iowa, the McCormick Foundation, the Greenleaf Global Servant Leadership Convention, the West Point Military Academy Systems Engineering Department, the United States Special Operations Command – Joint Special Operations University (JSOU); and the Canadian Forces College. He was also an invited guest speaker at the 2016 Virginia State Legislative Leader's Summit.

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