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On Reflective Enemy Control in a Military Conflict

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In order to achieve success in an operation (combat) it is necessary to keep the entire process of warfare under control, with control being extended not only to own troops but also, to a certain extent, to enemy troops. The kind of control which is primarily targeted at the morale of the opposing decision-making commander and which is of a reflective character is called reflective control. Its basic objective is to place the enemy under difficult conditions if it chooses to continue fighting, or to force it into making decisions objectively leading to its defeat.

Reflective enemy control in warfare is not a new phenomenon. The history of various nations abounds in numerous examples of the successful employment of such methods and techniques as pretense, posturing, threats, action from ambush, concealment, false negotiations, and so forth. Thus, in 1503 B.C. the troops of Pharaoh Tutmos III undertook a forced march across Karmil Range to the fortress of Megiddo, with three roads leading to it. Rejecting the proposals by his military council, Tutmos chose the shortest but the most dangerous route along a narrow mountain path, rightly supposing that here enemy resistance would be the least. And in fact the Egyptians passed the range fairly easily, and suddenly found themselves before the fortress. Having achieved a victory, the pharaoh, contrary to contemporary customs, pardoned 330 military leaders and sent them home.

The pharaoh preferred a difficult and dangerous route and a rapid head-on attack to an easy turning movement. He left the enemy no time for consideration or for maneuvering with forces, and produced psychological pressure with a decisive, surprise action. The existence of three possible ways cramped the enemy's operational thinking and forced it to disperse its forces. The magnanimity shown by the pharaoh prevented, at least for some time, the formation of a new hostile opposition.

Descriptions of such instances of reflective control can be found in ancient legends in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon; in the history of the Trojan War; in ancient Chinese military treatises Sun-tse, U-tse and in commentaries on them; in ancient Indian Manu Laws and Arthashastra -- a kind of manual on control for the kings; in works by ancient Greek philosophers and authors Xenophon, Phukidis, and Plutarch, and the Byzantine emperors. A major condition for such control is the energetic and effective conduct of combat operations. Back 25 centuries ago Chinese military leader Sun-tse wrote: "He who fights well, controls the enemy and does not allow it to control himself." Therefore courage, initiative, and the ability to subjugate the enemy's will to one's own will must be the commander's inalienable quality.

Enemy control consists in undertaking a complex of measures -- interrelated in their goal, place, and time -- aimed, on one hand, at forcing it to abandon its original design (plan), and to make obviously disadvantageous decisions, and on the other, at countering analogous enemy actions, or using them to its disadvantage (counteroffensive).

Reflective control has a probabilistic character: The enemy can uncover the aim and design of the measure being taken; react to this measure proceeding from its own assessment of the situation and the value of the results of the impact, thus demonstrating an exaggerated or, quite the contrary, a diminished power; ignore the action, try to use it in its own interests, or take response moves to ensure counter control. It is therefore clear how important uncovering the design of enemy actions is in ensuring reflective enemy control.

The enemy can be forced into making decisions desirable for the "controlling" side by "being intimidated with the threat of damage" (real or imagined) or by "being lured with advantage" (real or imagined). In this respect disinformation, concealment, and deception per se are merely particular methods to this end. "Coercion" is all the more effective, the more it is complex and elaborate, i.e., the enemy should make the conclusion about the reality of the

threat of damage or the prospects of advantage based on the entire information received (obtained).

It is very important to make sure that the enemy has a shortage of time for making and executing decisions. An element of surprise produces a strong psychological impact; it not only disturbs the chosen algorithm of decision-making and reduces the effectiveness of the control system, but also forces untimely, insufficiently prepared actions and upsets its plans.

Enemy control is based on the transfer of information to the enemy which would stimulate it to make decisions objectively beneficial (desirable) to the "controlling" side. The following methods can be used to this end: power pressure; presentation of information about the situation for decision-making; presentation of information for the enemy to define a new target of action whose accomplishment requires additional preparation, assets, and time; transfer of information with the aim to upset the algorithms of addressing control tasks accepted by the enemy; and impacting on the moment of its decision-making.

The power pressure methods can be as follows: the employment of superior force; the demonstration of force (force blackmail); "psychological attack;" the demonstration of an actual grouping, installation, or weapons; the ultimatum; the threat of use of force (sanctions); the threat of risk (focussing attention on irrational conduct, on delegating powers to an irresponsible person); reconnaissance in combat; provocative maneuvers and weapon tests; denying the enemy access to a certain area or isolating it; putting troops on a higher alert status; forming military unions; the official declaration of war; support of internal forces destabilizing the situation in the enemy rear area; a limited strike in order to put part of its forces out of action; playing up on and exploiting the victory; demonstration of express ruthlessness in action, a show of mercy toward an enemy ally which has stopped fighting, and so forth.

The methods of presenting information about the situation include concealment of installations and groupings (a show of weakness in a strong place), creating mock installations and groupings (a show of force in a weak place), positional victims (abandoning one position in order to reinforce defenses on another, luring the enemy under a prepared strike: the "fire pocket"), the show of one installation under the guise of another (camouflage, disguise), the "Trojan horse" technique (leaving dangerous objects on positions), a demonstration of nonexistent relationships between installations or the concealment of a true relationship, keeping new weapons in secrecy or "armament bluffing" (a demonstration of mockup models of nonexistent combat hardware, with corresponding reports in the press), changing the operating mode, deliberate loss of critical documents or transfer of information in a code known to the enemy, and so forth.

There are several measures for forcing the enemy to assume a new target of action. These are conflict escalation or de-escalation (gradual control of its intensity); deliberate demonstration of a particular chain of actions, based on surprise; strike on the enemy base when the enemy is outside it; acts of subversion and provocations; leaving a route for the enemy to withdraw from encirclement; and measures forcing the enemy to take retaliatory actions involving a substantial expenditure of forces, assets, and time.

The enemy decisionmaking algorithm can be influenced, for instance, by a systematic conduct of games according to what it perceives as standard plans; by publishing a deliberately distorted doctrine; by delivering strikes against control system elements, including the "hunting" for key figures; by transferring false background data; by operating in a standby mode; and by taking actions to neutralize the enemy's operational thinking (working out such plans of action whose aim and concept cannot be uncovered, at least until the final stage of the operation; and creating a situation when a large number of equally possible options can be expected in actions by the "controlling" side, with each of them being critical in terms of expected damage, and calling for effective efforts to counteract it).

The enemy can be forced to change the moment of decision-making in the following manner: by unexpectedly starting combat actions; by transferring to it information about the background to an analogous conflict so that the enemy, having worked out what it regards as a feasible forecast of the situation, should make a hasty decision, sharply changing the mode and character of its operation.

Actions to control the enemy are aimed at a concrete personality or group of persons with a particular psychology, way of thinking, and professional preparation level. Two approaches

can be used in this process: universal and role-based.

With the universal approach, impact on the enemy consciousness is produced via a number of universal human psychological motives, in correspondence with the hierarchy of their force. These motives can be as follows: the need to avoid danger, the unwillingness to "enter a fight" or to "do the dirty work for somebody else," orientation toward confrontation no matter what ("this may be bad for me but then you will not get away easily either," "after me, a deluge"), and so forth. With the role-based approach, it is not the possible motives of action that are analyzed but the role which is played by a particular person or a group of persons (claims to an exceptional role in history, leadership or, quite the contrary, the position of a subordinate coalition partner, and so forth).

The variety of approaches affects the choice of means and methods of impact as well as the style and order of information transfer. Measures can also include those which evoke a chain reaction of dissemination (false rumors, panicky appeals, and so forth). This makes it important to analyze not only the veracity and the reliability of the information source but also the possible motives for its disclosure, especially in using unconventional channels (indirect or neutral) and forms of information transfer. Noteworthy in this respect is "silent bargaining," when the conflicting sides express their consent through their conduct. For instance, at the start of WWII there was a period known as the "phony war." At the time both sides -- Britain and France against Germany -- were not conducting active combat actions, confining themselves to dropping leaflets. The French command, owing to the weakness of its air defense system, was decisively against any steps which could provoke retaliatory strikes by the Hitler Air Forces on the country's territory. The French not only did not bomb installations in Germany themselves but did not even allow the British strike air group located in the north of France to do that.

The reasons why the state of "silent bargaining" suits the opposing sides can vary depending on the internal assessment of the situation by each side. Thus, in 1940, the Nazi, while having the possibility to wipe out the remnants of a British expeditionary corps, stopped the offense by their tank units on Dunkirk. This allowed the British to evacuate in an organized manner approximately 340,000 military servicemen (their losses constituted a mere nine transport vessels out of 45 and nine destroyers). Hitler, having ordered a halt in the offensive, "invited" the British to negotiations. Because the latter pretended not to understand his intentions, he sought direct contacts by sending his deputy Hess to Britain, presenting his visit as a "flight."

Reflection in enemy control, being an objective-subjective reflection of the outside world and the relations between the sides in the consciousness of decision-makers, plays a conflicting role. Its creative side offers a certain measure of freedom in choosing a particular option of action on the basis of an objective assessment of one's own possibilities in the evolving situation. This freedom is realized with a certain correlation of forces by parties to a conflict, a clear perception of the situation, a coherent definition of goals which need to be accomplished at this stage of the conflict, and methods of achieving them. The creative role of reflection manifests itself graphically in the context of a slowly changing situation, when there is quite enough time for decision making.

Reflection can also have destruction consequences, as evidenced by the fate of ancient Greek King Oedipus: The reflective decisions made by him and his father led to a tragic finale. The probability of this aspect of reflection manifesting itself increases especially in a dynamic situation which calls for rapid decisions. Under such conditions they have to be made, as a rule, on the basis of intuition and automatic control skills, in a state of emotional tension and physical fatigue. Considerations on the order of decision-making, substantiation of the expected results and their effects, attempts to imagine the higher levels of reflection and to understand the enemy's intentions can heavily impair the quality of the decision made.

In exercising enemy control, it is very important to observe a strict correlation between measures in terms of their goal, place, time, and methods of implementation, because an unsuccessful accomplishment of even one of them can thwart the whole complex. Thus, in preparing in 1943 the landing of troops in Italy, the British-U.S. command conducted an operation to mislead the Nazi. To this end, an officer corpse was dumped off the Spanish coast from a submarine, which carried documents revealing a plan for a landing in Greece; in daytime barges were towed in the direction of Cyprus, and at night time they returned; and military installations in Greece were subjected to systematic bombing. The Franco people buried the officer and transferred the documents to the Nazi command. The ruse came off. This, however, was a matter of chance. If a postmortem examination had been conducted, it would have been established that the officer did not drown but died of a disease several days

before. Then a more thorough check of the entire information would have followed, which could have reduced the diversion operation to zero. Therefore the "unrealistic" must always be realistic in all respects. A coherent coordination of measures being undertaken, their unconventional and unobtrusive character are all the more important. Any minor trifle here can undo the whole effort.

Regularities of reflective enemy control arise from the basic laws of control, psychology, human thinking, and societal development. It is expedient to single out a number of propositions among them.

First, the content of methods used, and their combinations, is conditioned by the regularities and internal interrelations of the process of thinking and psychology, while the form of their implementation depends on the arsenal of technical means used in the conflict.

Second, the more persistently the "controlling" side seeks to convince the enemy about the reality of its aims and intentions, the more realistic the means employed should be; the more forces, assets, and time will be needed to undertake corresponding activities.

Third, powerful technical systems, after reaching a critical threshold of force, cease to be a means which can be used for controlling the enemy.

Fourth, the technical revolution in the military sphere brings forth new methods and techniques for weakening the enemy, for instance, by forcing it to undertake substantial expenditures of assets and time on analyzing, controlling, and effectively neutralizing the activity by the "controlling" side. Even the mere analysis of such programs as the "Strategic Defense Initiative" calls for considerable expenses on scientific, research and development work, experiments, and tests on the part of the "controlled" side.

Fifth, in choosing options for controlling the enemy, it needs to be taken into account that owing to differences in aims, political and ethical approaches toward choosing methods and ways of achieving them, the internal appraisal by the sides of the possible results of action is done according to various complex criteria, reflecting the relative character of their confrontation.

Sixth, because the interests of particular states and their internal situation assessments do not fully coincide, a coalition enemy constitutes a complex system whose stability changes depending on the character of the situation, the state, and condition of the parties, and their interrelations (internal assessment systems in particular countries can vary).

In a conflict between coalitions, the "controlling" side directs its main efforts toward destroying the enemy coalition. This can be accomplished by: power pressure, with real threats to particular participants in the coalition, in order to urge them to withdraw from it; powerful strikes on the coalition leader, with no action being taken against other coalition members at the time; strikes on a weak ally with the aim to force it to withdraw from the fighting, prevent those vacillating from acting on the coalition side, and also to exert a psychological impact on their allies; political and diplomatic measures aimed to deepen confrontation within the coalition, granting exemptions and privileges to some of its participants; pursuing a flexible policy, showing greater clemency toward a defeated coalition member which has pulled out of it at an earlier stage of the conflict.

So, enemy control is a form of high art which is based on a knowledge of the processes of human thinking and psychology, a knowledge of military history, the prehistory of the conflict in question, and the capabilities of combat assets.

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