

# EXTROPIANISM<sup>1</sup>

In this essay, additional to “La Semántica del Caos”<sup>2</sup>, there is a methodological division of the levels of war, a related set of linked ideas simple to analyze, convenient for planning and practical in executing operations.

By **Evergisto de Vergara**

Levels of war, referred to as levels of conflict in Argentina to include peace, crisis and war situations, is a way of organize linked and related ideas to understand the chaos, fog and friction of wars as a social phenomenon in which human nature is deeply rooted.

Worldwide, it is commonly accepted three or four levels of war. The category considered for this systematization is a relationship ends to means. In Argentina, four levels are taken: General or National Strategic level; Military Strategic level; Operational level and Tactical level. In some other countries the names may vary, i.e. Brasil names the National or General Strategic level as Political level, and the Military Strategic Level plainly as Strategic level. In other countries, only three levels of war are considered: strategic, operational and tactical as the general strategic level and the military strategic level are melted<sup>3</sup>.

Levels of war are related to their own strategy: general strategy; military strategy; operational strategy and tactics, meaning by the latter the strategy of means to engage each other. The way to understand this systemic concept is simple: the strategic level directs/drives and prepares the use of the armed component of national power while the operational and tactical levels implement/ operationalize that direction by planning and executing actions.

At the operational level, Campaign Plans, Operational Plans and Contingency plans are prepared; at the tactical level, Tactical Plans and Alternative Plans are prepared.

## ENDS AND MEANS AT EACH LEVEL

Thus, for the systematization of thought, we can identify<sup>4</sup>:

From another point of view, note that ends at a lower level are means/effects at the immediate superior level.

As Clausewitz said “The activities characteristic of war

LEVEL	ENDS	MEANS
General Strategic	Obtain political ends	All components of National Power
Military Strategic	Obtain the desired military end state to contribute to political purposes	All military means of the nation
Operational	Obtain the desired operational end state within an Operational Area/Theater of Operations to contribute/support the desired military end state	Military means of the nation allocated to the Operational Areas/Theater of Operations
Tactical	To achieve victory (Clausewitz); to achieve results tending to obtain the operational desired end state.	Engagements

may be split into two main categories: those that are merely preparations for war, and war proper.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Military Strategy deals with the use of military means of the national power, thus, it necessarily derives from a political direction. The working body of the Military Strategy is the Joint Staff responsible to provide the strategic direction, including:

- › A *military strategic concept* defining the nature of the estimated eventual future nature of conflicts to face, and the structure of forces required to achieve success. This derives into an Equipment Plan, a Peace Deployment Plan, a Mobilization Plan and a Support Plan for the short, medium and far term.
- › An employment concept, this is to say the contingencies – events that may or may not occur – which may require the use of the armed component of the national power. These are only assumptions for planning purposes at the operational level to start a planning process. Assumptions may include the Desired End State, expressed as



maximum or minimum conditions to be achieved, the tentative allocation of means; the estimated duration of war efforts, and the estimated political restrictions.

In addition to these concepts, the military strategy performs the following tasks: drafting of joint doctrine, carrying out joint training, implementing standardization among armed the armed forces for their joint action (compatibility, interoperability, interchangeability and commonality), deploy and withdraw troops from the Operational Areas or Theatre of Operations, and support the deployed troops during the war effort.

The Military Strategic level allocates means to the Operational level. Some units or elements coming from the Military Strategic under a Component Commander authority (Army/Navy/Air Force) are granted to the Theater of Operations Commander. There are some opinions which argues that the Army/Navy/Air Force Components do not belong to the Operational level, but to a “Superior tactical Level”. However, a logical sense indicates that a level of war cannot be a vacuum of means. It would be inconsistent for the operational level to have ends but no means. The purpose of the Operational level is maneuvering and applying resources to prepare successfully fighting/engagements.

At this level, maneuvers and logistics must get ready to establish fighting forces in the best conditions to achieve

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victory. In order to do this, the operational end state to be achieved and the decisive points to get there must be established. There are ways to get the desired end state and are related to the decisive points. These ways link means and ends. Those links are called Lines of Operations. The key is to get means to be stronger at the decisive point when the fighting/ engagements are to take place. “The best strategy is always to be very strong; first in general, and then at the decisive point. . . . There is no higher and simpler law of strategy than that of keeping one’s forces concentrated.”<sup>6</sup> This is shown in the Campaign Plan, throughout simultaneous or sucesive decisive points.

The Operational level is mainly a joint level because means of all armed forces [services] (Army/Navy/Air Force) are mixed in single joint organizations namely Subordinate Joint Commands, Task Forces Joint Command, Functional

1. “Extropy”: as coined by Tom Bell (TO Morrow) in January, 1988, defines the extent of a living or organizational system’s intelligence, the functional order, vitality, energy, life, experience and capacity and drive for improvement and growth.  
 2. de Vergara, Evergisto; “La semántica del caos”, revista *Visión Conjunta*, Nro. 6; Escuela Superior de Guerra Conjunta; Buenos Aires; Argentina; 2012.  
 3. Only for the United States, the strategic level includes Theater Strategy. This is so because this country divides the world into Unified Commands and the eventual Theaters of War and

Theaters of Operations are within these geography- based Strategic Theaters.  
 4. There is no methodological inconvenience if General Strategic and Strategic levels are joined.  
 5. Clausewitz Carl, *De la Guerra*, con prólogo de Howard Michael, Peter Paret, Edición de la Universidad de Princeton, Ed 1984, P. 127 a 147.  
 6. Clausewitz Carl, *De la Guerra*, con prólogo de Howard Michael, Peter Paret, Edición de la Universidad de Princeton, Ed 1984, P. 177 a 204.

Joint Commands or even some Specific Commands might be organized.

To understand in depth a Campaign Plan, it must be understood that during a Campaign, planning and execution run simultaneously, therefore the Campaign Plan ends when the execution has been finalized.

### THE PASSAGE OF MEANS FROM THE OPERATIONAL TO THE TACTICAL LEVEL

Nobody knows what may occur after two main forces engage each other at a decisive point. Therefore, it is required to complete the first Operational Plan up to the decisive point, and keep in mind the initial scheme of the full Campaign Plan until facts confirm or deny previous assumptions. The Theater Commander prepares or delegates the preparation of the first Operations Plan to a Subordinate Joint Commander/Commander of Joint Task Force – on geographic or functional basis – and according to the results of the fighting/engagements at the decisive point, joint elements are organized in Battle Order.

Thus, there is a grouping of means based on the tactical target- decisive point as it will require a confrontation or effect to be achieved<sup>7</sup>. This grouping of means – joint means – are subordinated to the Commander of the Theater of Operations. The full organization is called Structure of Command of the Theater of Operations.

The structure of the command of a Theater of Operations may use a series of options of Subordinate Joint Commands<sup>8</sup>. Some authors make a difference between a Subordinate Joint Command of a Joint Task Force depending on the duration of the operation. The Subordinate Joint Command is for long missions and the Command of a Joint Task Force is for shorter missions. They also differ in the logistic support:

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long missions may require a centralized logistic system, and shorter missions may maintain a single service support.

The structure of the Theater of Operations is prepared after having decided how the mission is to be carried out.

According to the situation, it may be structured as follows:

1. Component Command of each one of the Armed Forces [services]. These are the Army, Navy and Air Force Components. As they are part of the structure of the Command of the Theater of Operations, they belong to the Operational level, including the allocated service elements. A Component Command may be appointed as Joint Task Force adding means of other armed forces. This has the advantage that the command systems and communications already established and practiced are used, but this requires the communication and computing means to be standardized to operate jointly.
2. Subordinate Joint Commands, designed for extended periods, may require centralized logistics, or Joint Task Force Commands, for shorter periods, may require single service support. These Joint Commands might be based on geography or function, i.e. a Special or Amphibious Forces. Every Joint Command at the Operational level has Components Commands, coming from the Specific Theater Component Commands. Since these Components Commands subordinated at a Joint Command might mix forces of diverse services acting in the same geographical or functional area, they are not called anymore Army, Navy or Air Force Component, but Land, Maritime and Air Components. These Land, Maritime and Air Components subordinated at a Joint Command act are the tactical level.

Be aware that The Air and Maritime Component may not deliver elements or hardware to Joint Subordinate Commands, but effects in air tasks or maritime tasks.

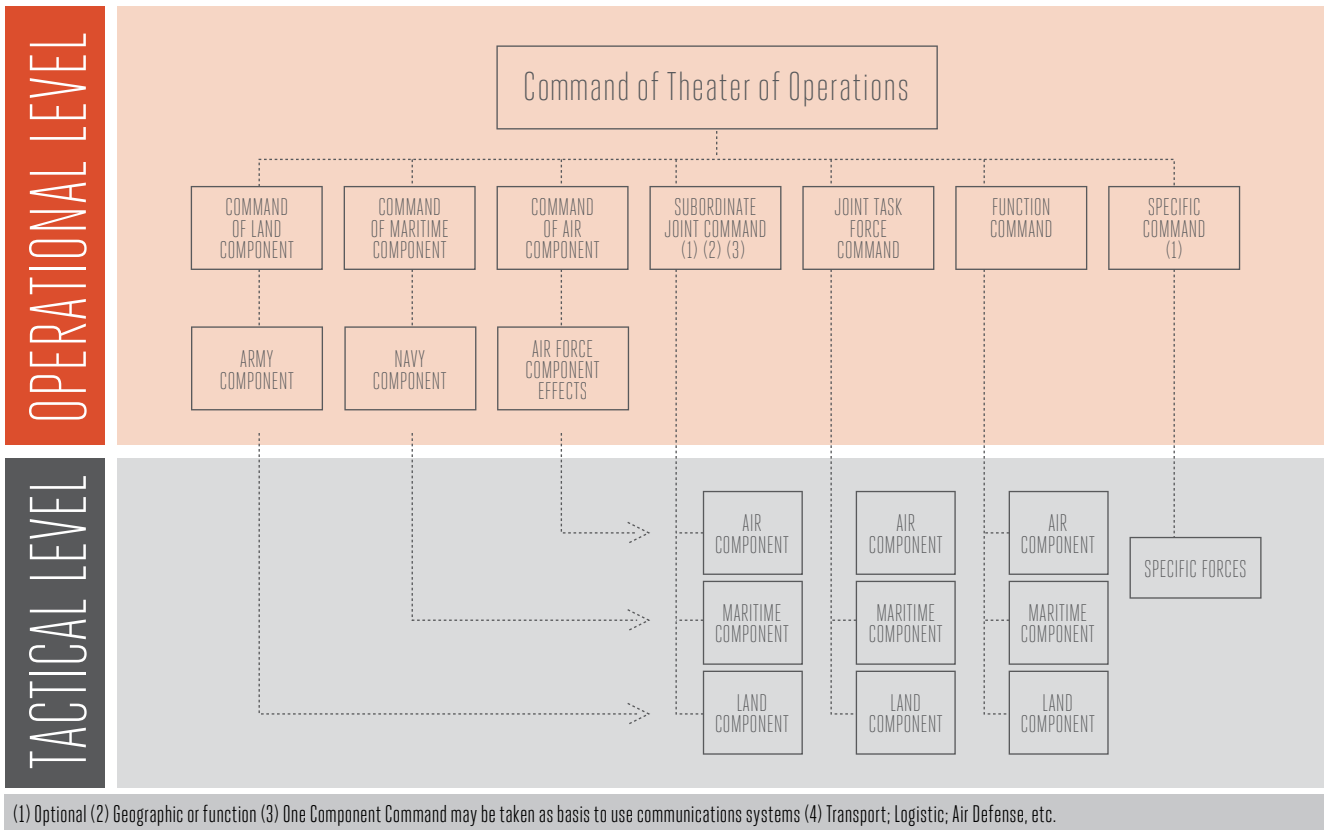
3. Function Command: It deals with Transport or Logistics in case a Centralized Logistics Command of the Theater is decided. It is necessary not to create centralized logistic superstructures that are not necessary and that can be replaced by a Logistic Control Center that assigns priorities.
4. Specific Force Command: This is when elements of only one of the armed forces take part in obtaining a target. This may occur in the maritime area.

The Component Commanders assigned to a Theater of Operations at the Operational level perform the following duties:

7. Confrontation: Means are not required to be symmetric, for example, troops against troops, ships against ships, planes against planes. Although they represent effects, conquering or defending a decisive point means a confrontation of wills.

8. In other countries, this is called "Unified Commands" instead of "Joint Commands".

POSSIBLE STRUCTURE OF A THEATER OF OPERATIONS



- › Assign their means to Subordinate Joint Command/Joint Task Force Command/Function Commands as required.
- › Recommend the proper employment of their elements. If a decentralized logistics is decided, the Operational Component Commanders are responsible for the logistic support of the elements of their force deployed in the Theater of Operations; they also suggest changes in the logistic organization depending on the circumstances.
- › Get data from the Specific Intelligence of their Component. In this way they contribute with the Preparation of the Battlefield.
- › Anticipate all administrative requirements, combat support and services for combat support of their services.

Therefore, Component Commands of a Joint Subordinate Command/Joint Task Force Command/Joint Functional Commands, whether based on geography or function, perform their activity at the Tactical Level.

**ARTICULATION AMONG LEVELS**

The systematization of the levels of war or conflict is not to be considered as a dogma. In reality, boundaries are vague. This classification only pursues to order thoughts in a

situation of chaos and, in this way, facilitate the allocation of tasks and means to achieve them to lower levels.

There are linkers – commonly known as hinges – between one level and the other. At the National Strategic level, this linker is the Ministry of Defense, the working body of which is the Joint Staff. At the Military Strategic level, the linker is the strategic concept addressed to each of the armed forces for the design of its structure in times of peace and the concept of use addressed to the eventual Commanders of the Theater of Operations as an assumption of contingencies to start planning. This is called the Deliberate Planning process.

At the Operational level, the linker is a Subordinate Joint Forces Command/ Joint Task Force Command/Joint Functional Commands. These Joint Commands design the Battle Order of the Joint Force. Their Commanders get a mission (task + purpose) and translate it into objectives (Land Component), and functions or effects (air and maritime components).

**CONCLUSIONS**

Unified action is difficult and in the most developed armed





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forces, it took several years to carry out joint action. Some examples account for this statement:

During the Persian Gulf War, there was not an only commander of land forces. The army fought its own war, the Marines fought theirs and Schwarzkopf has to harmonize all of this. During the invasion to Irak, there was an only land commander that was above all the land forces, including the allied troops and who directly reported to General Frank (CentCom). This was General Mc Kiernan who was head of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC)<sup>9</sup>.

When General Mc Kiernan was appointed Commander of the Land Component, he observed that the plan he was presented with, called “hybrid”, had little combat power at the beginning which could lead to a pause in the land combat and, also, the plan was unnecessarily complex. These remarks led to replace the invasion plan with a plan which was the one that was applied<sup>10</sup>.

General Frank ended by telling his commanders that

he expected to work together; he did not want to encounter the sort of friction and bickering between the Army and Air Force that had cropped up during the unsuccessful Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan, which left the services blaming each other for its failure. *“We are going to fight jointly, I want you and Buzz Moseley to eat with the same fork,” Franks told McKiernan. “The childish behavior we saw in Afghanistan will not be repeated. There is a long road in front of us, but we have the best team in history. Welcome to history. This ain’t no Kosovo. This is a real big deal because of you”.*<sup>11</sup>

This is not dogmatism, but a problem of organization and efficiency. Saying whether something is written in a manual or regulation (or not) cannot be accepted as an excuse for defeat. Needs will indicate the best way to organize the Joint Forces at the Operational level, without attaching to any recipes. A war cannot be lost arguing that the Theater of Operations was organized as it was established in the regulations, commonly and mistakenly known as “the doctrine”.

Operation lines are structured on decisive points, whether physical, functional or psychological, in which the three armed forces take part under a unified command. It is necessary to avoid the tendency of every service carrying out its own war, with the only link of “coordination”. Coordination is not a Command Joint relationship. If so, it is easily deductible that the Theater Commander won’t have any authority to assign missions and tasks. Plainly, this is wrong; Lines of Operations are to be designed throughout decisive points, by employing joint organizations. The Theater Commander task is to synchronize lines of operations, and not single and isolated services.

This is what happens when the operational level of war is disregarded.

9. Gordon, Michael R. and Trainor Bernard E., General; Cobra II, The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq; Pantheon Books; New York; 1st. edition; 2006; p. 93.

10. Gordon, Michael R. and Trainor Bernard E., General; op. cit.; p. 92

11. Gordon, Michael R. and Trainor Bernard E., General; op. cit.; p. 93