

Read Ahead

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The “Local Dynamics of War” (LDW) Approach to PME

A Way to Improve Instruction on Strategy and Planning within PME Institutions
and among Army, Joint, Multinational, and Interagency Organizations

COL Celestino Perez, Jr., Ph.D.
celestino.perez.mil@mail.mil

What is the Role of Military Professionals?

Are military professionals “managers of violence” who only understand ordnance delivery? Or are military professionals “experts in violence” who also understand how ambient violence (in all its forms) arises, subsists, changes, and dissipates in relation to military power and political order?

This understanding is requisite across the range of military operations...not just stability operations.

The Strategic Shortfall: A Lack of Political Literacy

Military Professionals Do Not Understand War's Sociopolitical Landscape

- The U.S. military's number-one shortcoming: a "failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment," to include "information about ethnic and tribal identities, religion, culture, politics, and economics" (J7, Joint Staff, *Decade of War, Volume 1*, 2012).
- The military professional fails to give due weight to "the sociocultural and historical knowledge needed to inform understanding of the conflict, formulation of strategy, and timely assessment" (Linda Robinson et al., *Improving Strategic Competence*, RAND, 2014).
- "Time and again, the U.S. has undertaken to engage in conflict without fully considering the physical, cultural, and social environments...One only has to examine our military interventions over the last 50 years in Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan to see the evidence and costs of this oversight" (*Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills*, 2013).

Commanders and Staff Require Political Literacy

- General Lloyd Austin: We must understand the “political, economic, and socio-cultural currents” that drive attitudes and behaviors
- We must study (in General Austin’s words) fracturing institutions, a growing ethno-sectarian divide, a struggle between moderates and extremists, corruption and oppressive governments, and the youth bulge
- General Austin: “To be effective, our approach in dealing with the challenges that exist in the region must address these complex root causes”
- General Austin is not the only geographic combatant commander who confronts a tangled combination of sociopolitical and lethal dynamics – Each combatant commander’s posture statement reflects a similar struggle!

“The thing I learned most—and I always use Iraq as an example. When we went into Iraq in 2003, we did everything we wanted to do. We very quickly removed the regime. We gained control of the population. We had no idea or clue of the societal devastation that had gone on inside of Iraq and what would push back on us. We didn’t even think about it until we got in there. **So we can’t allow that to happen again**” (General Odierno, Council of Foreign Relations, 2014).

The *Army Operating Concept* and Political Literacy

- “Army forces are prepared to do more than fight and defeat enemies; they must possess the capability to translate military objectives into enduring political outcomes” (*2014 Army Operating Concept*).
- “Army commanders [must] understand cognitive, informational, social, cultural, political, and physical influences affecting human behavior and the mission” (*2014 Army Operating Concept*).
- “We need to educate our soldiers about the nature of the microconflicts they are a part of and ensure that they understand the social, cultural, and political dynamics at work within the populations where these wars are fought” (LTG H.R. McMaster, McKinsey & Co., April 2013).

We Must Become “Experts in Violence”

A group of political scientists is doing exciting research on the very question that has proved to be the military professional’s intellectual shortcoming:

How to understand the ground-level interplay between ambient and applied violence on the one hand and “political, economic, and socio-cultural currents” and “political outcomes” on the other?

The military classroom should expose students to these scholars’ work.

PME Must Be Improved...Today

Students in Army mid- and senior-level education have no requirement to analyze collaboratively—in an informed, sustained, and rigorous manner—a single unfamiliar, real-world population and potential adversary with the degree of detail necessary for doing adequate intelligence analysis, military planning, or strategy formulation.

- Fictional scenarios and “scenario reference books” short-circuit research skills
- “Seminar discussion” over a few articles on world or regional politics is insufficient
- Wave-top “regional electives” too are inadequate

Sustained research, whiteboard work, and debate are necessary.

A Proven Approach: LDW Explained, Part 1

- From Nov 2011 to Jun 2014, “Local Dynamics of War” (LDW) was a six-month “scholars seminar” for select students attending mid-career military education at Fort Leavenworth
- The LDW approach combines cutting-edge scholarship on conflict and war with PME instruction on strategy formulation and military decision making
- Students study how politics, economics, civil society, culture, and ethics combine with violence to form tough problems for policymakers, commanders, staffs, and troopers across the range of military operations
- Students focus on cultivating “causal literacy,” or making and assessing causal arguments about ongoing events and potential interventions; this skill is critical for strategists, commanders, and planners
- Students study only real-world contemporary and historical conflicts in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas

A Proven Approach: LDW Explained, Part 2

- Students cultivate the skills necessary to collaboratively and quickly gain an in-depth appreciation of any geographic region or institutional problem
- Students excel at producing multiple, creative approaches to intervention consistent with the ethos of Mission Command and Unified Action
- All 45 graduates of the program enthusiastically endorse the program's professional value and comparative advantage to other military-education curricula. So do their leaders!
- The seminar ended when its founder, the 2012 TRADOC Educator of the Year, was selected to attend the U.S. Army War College, Class of 2015
- The Army and Joint communities risk losing a proven approach to military education that constitutes an in-house, cost-effective approach to many problems for which DoD, Joint, and Army organizations now pay scarce dollars to external organizations

LDW Erases the Trade-Off between Training and Education

LDW students combine study of the very best, historically attuned political science on real-world conflicts with military approaches to strategy formulation, design, and planning.

What does the LDW classroom look like?

Students—informed by expert scholarly and stakeholder perspectives on a problem—working together as a true learning organization.

Students—markers in hand—standing around white boards, mapping causal claims, and engaged in a “competition of ideas” about a conflict’s dynamics and potential interventions.

Students—infused with the ethos of Unified Action and Mission Command—expertly trained in strategy formulation, military planning, and military ethics.

What Do LDW Graduates Say?

- “Nothing I have studied or experienced, to include combat, has transformed me the way my six months with Local Dynamics of War did” (Major Sean Morrow, Infantry, ASP3 student, U of Chicago).
- “I have attended four exceptional Army educational programs (SAMS, BSAP, LDW, and Red Team) and would rank the LDW program at the top” (Major David Oakley, FA59/Strategist).
- “The Local Dynamics of War (LDW) curriculum, which I completed as a part of Intermediate Level Education (ILE) at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, developed my capacity to understand and analyze operational environments to a greater degree than any other program in which I have taken part. Programs of comparison include the ILE common core curriculum, the University of Kansas master’s degree program in Globalization and International Studies, and the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS)” (Major Stephan Bolton, Special Forces).
- “The Local Dynamics of War (LDW) program was hands down the best Professional Military Education that I ever received. As a recently deployed Brigade Executive Officer in CENTCOM for the fight against ISIS, I can say that I utilized myriad works and concepts from the class” (Major Christopher Ellis, Field Artillery).

A Way Forward for our Army, Part 1

- TRADOC leadership establishes a program for 16 to 32 select mid-career officers to attend an innovative PME experience— unparalleled in rigor and relevance—at Fort Belvoir, Fort McNair, or Crystal City under the auspices of Army University. The DC venue allows students to engage routinely with U.S. and global military leaders, policymakers, and scholars
- The program, called the Local Dynamics of War Workshop, applies advanced classroom methods while:
 - satisfying Joint and Army requirements with expert, hand-picked professors leading a dynamic learning experience
 - inspiring students to integrate the very best scholarship on contentious politics, war, and conflict termination
 - immersing students in the same multifaceted crises described in combatant commanders' posture statements
- The program's lead professor cultivates a small, world-class PME faculty with expertise in (i) the latest scholarship on violence and war, (ii) the operational environment's "human aspects," (iii) military planning, and (iv) strategy formulation. This faculty will:
 - ensure the program's continuity
 - lead the Joint Force's premier PME innovation laboratory, with spin-off benefits to other PME institutions
 - develop and share state-of-the-art classroom techniques, staff-planning exercises, and knowledge

A Way Forward for our Army, Part 2

- Over time, the LDW Workshop's faculty sends teams to Army, Joint, and multinational PME and training venues. These teams offer short modules of instruction—perfected in the LDW Workshop—on military planning and strategy formulation for:
 - service component staffs (in 2014, Army North purchased, at \$140k, contractor-provided design instruction)
 - combatant command staffs (in 2015, SOCOM convened a workshop to produce curricula on design)
 - multinational partners (in 2015, Canadian Forces College requested on-site help with teaching design)
 - PME institutions (in 2015, the Marines, Army, and SOCOM sponsored a workshop at the Army War College on the human aspects of war)
- The LDW Workshop's faculty would serve as a "leader development advise and assist team" for TRADOC and Army University leadership
- The LDW Workshop's faculty would also:
 - produce and distribute top-quality video instruction on strategy formulation and planning for Joint and Army PME institutions and operational units
 - produce and distribute recorded interviews with top military leaders, policymakers, and scholars to inform strategic education and practice
- This work could begin as early as July 2016, but we must set the conditions now

The LDW Approach: Low Cost, Extraordinary Payoff

The bureaucratic and financial costs of implementing this program are minimal, while the payoff is great:

- For the purposes of accreditation, the LDW Workshop is simply a DC-based Army University “scholars program”
- Fort Belvoir already has the necessary PME infrastructure and faculty positions; we simply need to ensure the LDW Workshop has the very best professors
- Officers selected to attend mid-career PME would receive the option to apply for the LDW Workshop experience in Washington, DC
- Over time, the Army will need to discern how to track these officers’ unique skill set
- The LDW Workshop is enthusiastically transparent, inviting military leaders, civilian partners, and educators to visit, inquire, and assess any LDW session or exercise
- The LDW Workshop faculty also volunteers—for the entire joint PME community—to host an annual, week-long “planning competition” that assesses two items: (i) Which group provides a richer and more comprehensive description of the operational environment? and (ii) Which group provides a broader array of creative, feasible interventions?

LDW and the Human Dimension

Let's support the LDW Workshop and put into practice key ideas from the U.S. Army's "The Human Dimension White Paper," including:

- optimizing performance through innovation and investment in education and leader development
- attaining the cognitive edge against potential adversaries with "a renewed investment in education, training, ethics, leader development, talent acquisition, and talent management"
- producing leaders "who think broadly about the nature of the conflict in which they are engaged"
- practicing "institutional agility" by reviving and expanding the LDW approach, which makes direct contributions to cognitive dominance and realistic training
- practicing "precision talent management"

Backup Slides

LDW and the 2015 National Military Strategy

Let's support the LDW Workshop and put into practice key ideas from the Chairman's National Military Strategy by:

- prioritizing leader development
- stressing innovation in leader development
- updating how the military selects and incentivizes faculty, rewards critical thought, and promotes our most innovative minds
- pursuing continuous, demanding education that inspires new ideas and identifies better ways to accomplish our missions

LDW and the Warfighting Challenges

Let's support the LDW Workshop and set the conditions to make continual contributions to the Warfighting Challenges, with special emphasis on the following:

- Develop situational understanding
- Shape the security environment
- Provide security force assistance
- Enhance realistic training
- Improve soldier, leader, and team performance
- Develop agile and adaptive leaders
- Conduct wide area security
- Exercise mission command

Scholars Can Help – Examples Specific to Civil Wars

Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge 2006)

Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge 2012)

Lars-Erik Cederman, *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War* (Cambridge 2013)

Zachariah Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* (Cornell 2011)

Ana Arjona, “Civil Resistance to Rebel Governance,” Households in Conflict Working Papers, 2014

Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Cornell 2014)

Peter Krause, “The Structure of Success: How the Internal Distribution of Power Drives Armed Group Behavior and National Movement Effectiveness,” *International Security*, Winter 2013/2014

Barbara F. Walter, “Why Bad Governance Leads to Repeat Civil War?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Forthcoming

S  verine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge 2014)

Thomas Hegghammer, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists’ Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting,” *American Political Science Review*, February 2013

PME teachers and students do not know this literature exists, or they fail to exploit its potential!