

REORGANIZING ROMANIA'S MILITARY TREAD WATER FIRST, THEN SWIM

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My first question to the reader is what is Romania's Grand Strategy? By Grand Strategy I mean the employment of all instruments of power (e.g. diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) available for the furtherance of its security and national interests. Security and national interests include both foreign and domestic. I contend that the designers of a nation's grand strategy ought to include representatives of the major political parties, civilian leaders in the areas of the Foreign Service, public affairs, and economic matters, as well as the Ministry of Defense. Without a unified grand strategy how does a nation develop a comprehensive National Security Strategy and then how does the Ministry of Defense construct a National Military Strategy?

Key words: reorganization, Grand Strategy, security, national interest, power

When I was asked to write a piece for this Journal I thought that it would be a good idea to conduct a little research to determine how I could best be of assistance to both civil and military authorities in Romania, who are my primary audience. My secondary audience includes those who will be the civil and military leaders of Romania during the next decade or so. This secondary audience is very important because it is this group that will have to live with the decisions concerning the reorganization of Romania's military that are being made today.

I do not intend to present myself as the all knowing authority in such matters for to do so would be quite presumptuous on my part. Rather I hope to be viewed as an independent consultant who asks those questions few others would care or dare to make. I ask my students at the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) these same

types of questions; for they, one day, will be the leaders of my country's military establishment, primarily the Air Force. After graduation from their year-long studies, many will become staff officers and they will have to wrestle with the same type of decisions as does my secondary audience here. I trust this essay will be beneficial to everyone who reads it regardless of their status.

I tried to not write this essay as an academic paper although I do provide "academic type" citations. These serve two purposes. First they demonstrate to the audience that the sources of my ideas are a result of over eleven years' teaching at ACSC, conducting research, reading, and personal experience. Second the citations provide the reader with some source material to consult and study for their own enrichment.

In 2004 Romania joined NATO and since that time has made great

strides in meeting NATO criteria such as standards of interoperability, commonality, interchangeability, etc. NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) is designed to "increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO, as well as among Partner countries." [1] At the same time member countries are given the leeway to determine its particular needs and the pace at which it implements the six basic elements of the program. [2]

My first question to the reader is what is Romania's Grand Strategy? By Grand Strategy I mean the employment of all instruments of power (e.g. diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) available for the furtherance of its security and national interests. [3] Security and national interests include both foreign and domestic. I contend that the designers of a nation's grand strategy ought to include representatives of the major political parties, civilian leaders in the areas of the Foreign Service, public affairs, and economic matters, as well as the Ministry of Defense. Without a unified grand strategy how does a nation develop a comprehensive National Security Strategy and then how does the Ministry of Defense construct a National Military Strategy?

Before Romania's civilian and military leaders progress too far into the next phase of NATOization, I suggest they address a series of questions that are difficult to answer, but profound nonetheless. Interestingly over the past several

years I have frequently asked the students in my Leadership and Warfare seminars Americanized versions of these same questions.

This year my students read British General Rupert Smith's book, *The Utility of Force*. The author contends that today's warfare paradigm has changed from one of state-on-state industrial warfare to one of 'war amongst the people'. Smith suggests that war no longer exists as it has historically, but has been replaced by a type of conflict in which the battlefield is anywhere and everywhere, and that the primary targets are civilians. In this new paradigm civilians, he notes, are as much of a military objective as the enemy combatant. [4] We need to ask ourselves if Smith is right in his analysis of warfare based on his almost 40 years of military service.

If Smith is correct in his assessment, the implications are indeed significant in organizing, training, and equipping one's military forces. Should Romania's civilian and military leadership believe that Smith is more right than wrong then the approach to organizing, training, and equipping its military forces would be quite different than that for 'traditional war'. Countries such as Romania whose military budget and available military age man power are significantly less than larger countries such as the United States, China, Russia, and others cannot afford the luxury of organizing, training and equipping for all eventualities. Thus it is an even more important issue that needs to be addressed.

Another question worth asking is who are Romania's most likely

enemies and why? This is not an easy question to answer either, but it does have significant implications with regard to the organizing, training, and equipping of its military forces. Although this question cannot be answered with 100% certainty, senior leadership can perform a risk analysis considering a wide range of possibilities and opponents.

Sometimes such an analysis can be very accurate. Let me give two examples.

Shortly after WWI the American General Billy Mitchell visited with Britain's Air Marshall Hugh Trenchard and soon afterwards the Italian air power theorist General Giulio Douhet. The three came to the conclusion that another war in Europe against Germany was inevitable, primarily because of the humiliating Versailles Treaty.[5] In less than two decades their fears became reality.

Between December 1923 and July 1924 General Mitchell visited Hawaii, the Philippines, India, China, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan while on his honeymoon. Upon returning to the US he submitted a 325 page report to the War Department stating that war with Japan was inevitable and gave his reasons why.[6] Again, less than two decades later his assessment was validated in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

These examples are intended only to illustrate that it is possible to predict with some degree of confidence future enemies and conflicts. However, one must continually assess the international climate and make the necessary adjustments to those assumptions.

Here we encounter a human frailty that can be a curse to both civilian and military leaders. Unfortunately all too often we see the things we expect to see them and not as things really are in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. One way to mitigate this is to encourage openness about basic assumptions and practice from subordinate civilian and military personnel. Maverick officers are not bad people to have around provided they are "professional" when they disagree or put forth different or innovative ideas.

A week before this year's Fall semester ended at ACSC I asked my two Leadership and Warfare seminars what type of war the United States would fight next - conventional or unconventional (meaning "war amongst the people"). Each of the students thought about what I had asked before responding. Then we entered into a deep discussion of the possibilities and likelihood of each. In the end my students were 80% confident that the next fight would be a "war amongst the people" because that seems to be our greatest vulnerability, and perhaps NATO's as well. Their thoughts centered on peacekeeping, nation building, unconventional warfare, and similar types of conflicts and confrontations. But they also mentioned that although they thought there was only a 20% chance that the next fight would be a more traditional type of war they simply could not neglect that possibility. As a result they needed to prepare for the most likely while being able to quickly transition to the latter. In other words, to use an

American cliché, they wanted to hedge their bets.

This leads me to my next two questions. What type of “war” do Romania’s civilian and military leaders expect to fight next? How does Romania organize, train, and equip its military force while at the same time “hedging its bets”?

Perhaps NATO’s PfP program is useful here – how can Romania best contribute to the NATO Alliance? In light of the recent past and pondering potential future conflict it would be reasonable for Romania to consider finding a niche area within the NATO construct. Romania could then focus its military capabilities, for example “war amongst the people”. Such an approach would address a NATO need and the Romanian military could become quite proficient in this area. This type of expertise, I suggest, is sorely needed. Reliance by Romania on NATO for safety in a conventional confrontation would not really be a negative construct because of the nature of the alliance itself.

An approach like this would be of great value to Romania because its defense dollars would not have to be based on a strategy that covers both conventional and irregular contingencies. The cost of procuring and maintaining weapons systems would probably be less costly in terms of money, material, and maintenance. Many of the skills necessary for irregular contingencies are also applicable to conventional military operations although the reverse might not be the case.

This suggestion of a NATO niche really is not that radical. Take Canada, for example. What does the reader think when it comes to Canada’s military expertise? When I think about Canada’s military, I think about peace making, peacekeeping, and expertise in the key areas of “war amongst the people”. Admittedly, Canada has a conventional capability; however, its true value lies elsewhere - unconventional warfare.

In light of what I have written, how should Romania’s civilian and military leadership organize, train, and equip its military forces? Smith informs us that it is not so much that militaries organize, train, and equip to fight the last war rather they tend to prepare for the wrong one.[7] In light of this remark I will discuss some considerations for each of Romania’s armed services.

With regard to Romania’s Naval Forces, there seems to already be in place a naval modernization plan designed to satisfy its security needs and defend its national interests at sea. Romania’s mine warfare ships and river patrol fleet may well be excellent vessels for use in unconventional conflict and confrontation situations, especially when protected by the much larger naval vessels and aircraft of blue water navies.

Romania’s Land Forces, as currently constituted, appears to be well balanced for any future type of conflict. As Kitson notes, ‘war amongst the people’ relies primarily on infantry units with strong junior leaders. Leaders at all levels need to be flexible, innovative, and possess

good situational awareness. Yet, these are the very same leadership traits required in inter-state warfare as well.

Also during the seminar discussions I mentioned previously we addressed the issue of training an army for both type of contingencies. My students pointed out that one approach was to conduct an analysis of the skill sets that land force personnel need to possess to fight a conventional war. Then they said an army should do likewise for the skill sets that must be mastered for the unconventional fight. They contended that it was important for leaders to know what these various skill sets are so one could determine which ones overlapped both types of conflicts. The resulting delta between the two could then be prioritized to round out the training programs at each level.

Then there are training needs that all too often get overlooked, but are required in both categories of warfare. The development of information and intelligence is one of these. Brigadier Frank Kitson notes that the integration of intelligence and operations is the most important factor in warfare and the least appreciated one by the conventional soldier.[8] There are several issues at play here. First, operational leaders tend to rely on intelligence organizations and higher headquarters to develop information and intelligence for them. What they forget is where those organizations focus their attention. It is not the same as that of the lower echelon units. Second, when those organizations do provide intelligence to lower units its

value has usually diminished because of the long turn-around time. Thus, units at all levels need to gather their own information and transform it into actionable intelligence.

I think it is important for me to admit one of my prejudices. I am convinced that if a leader can master the skills and intricacies of ‘war amongst the people’ the transition to conventional warfare is not that difficult provided you have an open mind and are continually learning, Colonel John Boyd’s OODA Loop comes to mind.[9] Success in warfare has a lot to do with learning and adapting, and adapting and learning. It is for these reasons that mission type orders and understanding of ‘commander’s intent’ are vital – meaning decentralized control as well as execution.[10]

Carl Builder in his work *The Masks of War* states that the US Air Force is mesmerized by technology and the latest ‘toy’.[11] It is for these reasons that it seeks the latest and greatest fighters, specifically the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Does Builder’s observation apply to Romania’s Air Force as well? Although, at least at the time of this writing, neither is being considered by Romania’s leadership is this perhaps the reason that refurbished F-16 Fighting Falcons are being considered to replace the MiG-21 LanceR?

Is the F-16 really the aircraft best suited for the needs of Romania’s Air Force? In conflicts such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. the F-16 might not be the best aircraft simply because of its speed. The British learned this lesson

during the Aden conflict (1955-1967).[12] Pilots had but seconds to distinguish the right ridge line, identify the correct target, and make shoot-no shoot decision.[13] The minimum speed of jet aircraft in the mountainous areas of South Arabia was a major disadvantage as it has been in Afghanistan as well.

Would a variant of the Harrier II possibly be more versatile? The US Marine Corps has been quite innovative with the employment of their Harriers especially with regard to air-ground support missions. In addition, the Harrier can be utilized as a reconnaissance platform as well as in a fighter role. The total cost, however, may make this aircraft much less attractive than the refurbished F-16.

Perhaps there are other aircraft available that are better suited to satisfy Romania's airpower needs than either of those? Since the Air Force is already familiar with Russian aircraft should Romania consider an aircraft from Russia? Retraining of pilots and maintenance crews might make for an easier transition. But one also needs to consider the possibility of a spare and repair parts embargo should the Russians want to show their dissatisfaction with the government in some manner.

Maybe the Air Force would find an aircraft similar to the Super Tucano a better fit to its needs than a jet aircraft. Many of the South American nations have found this aircraft to be well suited to unconventional operations. I do not know which of the many aircraft available is best suited to the needs of the Romanian Air Force. The

ultimate decision ought to be based on Romania's overall national security strategy and the role it decides to play in the NATO Alliance.

There are a large number of variables to consider that are definitely beyond the scope of this article and expertise of this author. The implications for the nation as well as the Romanian Air Force are indeed significant. Treading water before swimming might be a good idea, at least until some of the questions raised in this article are addressed.

I want to end this article with some comments about Professional Military Education and joint forces training. Scharnhorst, the great German military educator, developed a superb professional military education curriculum as head of the Prussian War Academy in Berlin. In addition to extensive reading on military subjects, he incorporated staff rides to old battlefields and required his students to analyze the events and the decision-making of the various leaders.[14] He then made his students explain what they would have done differently and why. The student's peers then critiqued his presentation.

I suggest that this sort of education be part of the professional military education of not only commissioned officers, but warrant and non-commissioned officers as well. I also recommend that all services be represented during these staff rides. Air Force personnel could explain how best to use airpower. Special Forces and Naval officers could do the same. The outcome, I believe,

would be a core of personnel not only well versed in their own service's capabilities, but an awareness of how best to incorporate each of the other services into battle plans. This would be especially helpful in urban operations and operations with large numbers of non-combatant personnel are present.

Further, I urge Romania to pursue Professional Military Education exchanges with other nations. Do not limit these educational exchanges to NATO countries or American institutions. The purpose of these types of educational exchanges is more that intellectual. The friendships developed in such exchanges may well pay dividends later especially when trying to defuse tensions.

My second suggestion is to conduct extensive exercises in which Romanian Land and Air Forces work closely together. During his second interview with WWII US Army Air Forces General Pete Quesada Hughes reported that General Quesada said the Allies took the wrong lessons from Operation Corkscrew (Pantelleria). The real lessons had to do with inadequate communications between air and land forces.[15] The Allies not only paid a price later on in the war, but this same issue persists in the US military today although it is getting better. Interestingly, during WWII both the Germans and Soviet Air Forces developed good air and land force cooperation.

Lastly, I urge the Romanian military services to not only participate in NATO exercises, but joint exercises with neighboring and other countries as well. Such participation will improve the

military expertise of Romania's military forces. It will also expose the men and women of the military to other ways of doing things and broaden their experiences.

In conclusion, I hope that everyone who has read this essay has benefited from it. It has been my intention to provide some thought provoking questions that if answered will help Romania's civilian and military leaders make better informed decisions about reorganizing, training and equipping its military forces be they Air, Land, or Sea. Admittedly, NATOization is important. The question is what path will Romania pursue in fulfilling its PfP obligations? The future will always be uncertain, but we can reduce the level of uncertainty by a thorough analysis of our environment. One will never be 100% correct, but it is possible to be 100% wrong. I have always told my students as well as my children to be aware of what is going on around them. You might not be able to control the situation, but you can mitigate the situation's controlling of you. Remember a conscious decision based on a thorough analysis is far better than one that is not. Perhaps Romania should tread water to determine the direction to head and then swim for it.

ENDNOTES

- [1]North Atlantic Treaty Organization, The Partnership for Peace Programme, located at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm and downloaded on 23 December 2010.

- [2] For further information on the six basic elements of the program the reader is referred to the URL noted above.
- [3] I wish to direct the reader to two different web sites that discuss this issue. The first asks the question "Can the United States Do Grand Strategy?" <http://www.fpri.org/telegram/201004.mcdougall.usgrandstrategy.html>. The second is an essay discussing among other things the start of the Grand Strategy seminar at Yale University. <http://www.duke.edu/web/agsp/grandstrategypaper.pdf>
- [4] Smith, Rupert (2005). *The Utility of Force*. New York: Random House. pp. 3-6.
- [5] Hurley, Alfred F. (2006). *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Airpower*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. p. 77.
- [6] *Ibid.*, pp. 86-88.
- [7] Smith, p. x
- [8] Kitson, Frank (1962). *Low Intensity Conflict*. Dehra Dun, India: Natraj Publishers., p. xi.
- [9] In a future volume I will discuss this concept in detail, but for now suffice it to say this is a model for continually learning and adapting faster than your opponent. I have a PowerPoint presentation that provides a good overview of Boyd's OODA Loop. If the reader would like a copy of this briefing please feel free to email me at donald.maccuish@maxwell.af.mil if you would like a copy.
- [10] According to the Air Force Doctrine Document 1 the USAF believes in Centralized Control and Decentralized Execution (p. 23). I believe that although this idea may have been necessary for the Combined Bomber Offensive in WWII, it is a recipe for disaster in today's environment.
- [11] Builder, Carl H. (1989). *Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 23.
- [12] see <http://www.britains-smallwars.com/Aden/index.html>
- [13] Hoffman, Bruce (2007). *British Airpower in Peripheral Conflict, 1919-1976*. Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation. See also Corum, James S. and W.R. Johnson (2003). *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press. pp. 197.
- [14] For an in-depth discussion of Scharnhorst's educational system the reader is referred to Charles Edward White's book *The Enlightened Soldier*. In my opinion this book should be required reading in every Professional Military Education Program.
- [15] Hughes, Thomas A. (2002). *Overlord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II*. New York: Free Press Publishing. p. 328.