2006

In My View

Dennis B. Wilson

W.J Holland Jr.

David K. Brown

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review

Recommended Citation

This Additional Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.
IN MY VIEW

SMALL ARMS POLICY

Sir:

The central thesis of the article entitled “U.S. Policy on Small Arms and Light Weapons,” by Loretta Bondi, which appeared in the Winter 2006 edition of the Naval War College Review, is that the U.S. system of export controls on small arms is as good as any, and better than most other countries, but that American moral authority in this area is undermined by its permitting widespread civilian ownership of firearms. The U.S. commitment to widespread firearms ownership among civilians represents the clear preference of the American people. After passage of the Brady Act in 1993 and the ban on the future sales of military look-alike firearms in 1994, the next election resulted in control of both the House and the Senate shifting to the Republican party for the first time since the Eisenhower administration. Former president Bill Clinton himself credited the efforts of the National Rifle Association as a significant factor in that historical electoral turnaround. The clear preference of the American electorate for continuing the U.S. tradition of individual armed self-defense has also been expressed in other contexts. Throughout the 1990s and into the early 21st century, increasing numbers of state legislatures passed laws requiring authorities to issue concealed weapons permits to citizens who meet certain objective criteria. State legislatures are also considering “Stand Your Ground” legislation, which recognizes a citizen’s right to remain in any place where he or she may lawfully be and to resist aggression, with deadly force if necessary, without any “duty to retreat” to spare attackers the consequences of their actions. In 2004 Congress let the ban on military look-alike firearms expire, and in 2005 it protected the firearms industry from logic-twisting lawsuits filed by individual plaintiffs and by municipalities that sought to hold firearms manufacturers liable for injuries associated with the use of their products.
If Ms. Bondi wishes to change the clear preference of the American body politic for its tradition of armed self-defense, she is free to do so through the American political system. But Americans who value and wish to retain a tradition of individual armed self-defense need not submit to the emotional blackmail that their tradition is responsible for atrocities in countries with far different political and cultural systems.

DENNIS B. WILSON

SSGN COMMAND AND CONTROL

SIR:

In his article “SSGN: A Transformation Limited by Legacy Command and Control” in the Winter 2006 Review, Captain Charles Sykora makes the case for command of the new SSGNs harder than it need be. There are precedents for the kinds of organizational and operational dilemmas that he creates. When nuclear attack submarines were used in direct support of carrier task groups in the late seventies and when ballistic missile submarines began operating in conjunction with other forces during periods of relaxed readiness in the eighties, the potential and actual conflict of missions outlined by Captain Sykora existed, albeit not in wartime conditions. Rather than creating elaborate hierarchies or mission matrices or formal declarations of priorities, these operations moved the decision points that Captain Sykora assigns to the commanding officer to the next higher level of authority. These operations were conducted under the existing tactical rubrics, with two notable exceptions.

Competent and senior submarine officers were collocated with the tactical and strategic operational commanders. These officers were in tactical command of the assigned submarines or were the principal advisers on submarine matters to the officers who had tactical command. The resulting face-to-face dialogue between these two resolved any conflicts of orders or desired activities in mission and tactical employment of the submarines assigned. More importantly, such assignments created a communications link—one that operated without signals—between the submarine warfare officers at each end in their mutual...
understanding of the nature and limitations of and processes for submarine operations. This not only prevented orders that could not be executed from being formulated in the first place but also obviated any need for the submarine to report routine matters.

The second aspect that at the time was novel to surface forces but routine in submarine matters involved the communications paths for the directions to and reports from the submarines. These paths, regardless of their origin, pass through the submarine Broadcast Control Authority (BCA) en route to delivery to the destination. The BCA is collocated with the command centers of the submarine forces. This allowed oversight by the submarine force commanders who were the operational commanders for the fleet commanders. This overlay could hinder operations, in the sense that tasks from higher authority might infringe on the tactical commander's initiative, but the arrangement kept all the participants in the chain of command aware of the nature and priority of various missions. Conflicts in direction were avoided, and when they arose they could be resolved quickly.

This command-and-control (C2) schema works well and smoothly where there is an adequate doctrinal base (not necessarily technical knowledge) and a mutual respect for the capabilities of the participants. Good communications are essential, but as demonstrated in many exercises with submarines operating as part of a joint force, this does not translate into the need for instantaneous and direct connectivity.

The model outlined herein applies to other forces and situations. Arrangements much like these are used in clandestine operations where communications must be intermittent and sensors remote from the operators. Key is mutual understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the forces involved. Mutual understanding is easier in organizations with few highly professional senior decision makers—that is, the Navy, Air Force, and Special Forces—than for organizations with diverse components and many junior decision partners, such as the Army. Jointness should not be a mandate for attempts to design universal C2 processes.

W. J. HOLLAND, JR.

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
THE NATURE OF WAR

Sir:

I fear that the statement by Rear Admiral Shuford in his recent President’s Forum (Naval War College Review, Winter 2006, pp. 11–15) that the nature of war is changing is not in step with the way other OPMEP [Officer Professional Military Education Policy] courses have approached this issue regarding the “nature, character, and conduct” of war. I believe it will cause much confusion among Naval War College graduates as they meet with peers who have graduated from other senior service colleges or from National Defense University courses, or the major national security studies programs with which I am familiar.

The OPMEP is pretty clear regarding the way the senior service colleges have approached teaching the subject covering the nature, character, and conduct of war. The “gouge” as reflected by Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, Thucydides, Basil Liddell Hart, Colonel John Boyd, etc., has been that the nature of war is unchanging but that its character (who fights and why) and its conduct (how, and where, with what, etc.) are always changing and adapting. War’s nature is what makes the ideas of those “old dead guys” still live.

I realize there have been several recent best-sellers proclaiming the “changing nature of war,” but when a learned reader explores the assertions, one concludes the author did not understand the three “faces” of war (nature, character, and conduct) as laid out by the great writers. Please revisit the idea that the nature of war is changing—against the idea that it is really the character and conduct of war that have changed (and will ever do so).

DAVID K. BROWN

Dynamics Research Corporation,
supporting Commander U.S. Fleet Forces Command
and Navy Warfare Development Command