

1972

The Barometer

Henry E. Eccles

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

Recommended Citation

Eccles, Henry E. (1972) "The Barometer," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 25 : No. 6 , Article 9.
Available at: <http://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol25/iss6/9>

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 daniel.desilets@usnwc.edu.



THE BAROMETER

(Writer's comments on Captain Fiske's "The Challenge of Logistics: An Open Letter" which appeared in the April issue.)

"The Challenge of Logistics" by Capt. C.O. Fiske, U.S. Navy, is an excellent comment on a vitally important subject. Since the paper does not pretend to be a complete discussion but only an introductory challenge, further amplification may help the cause he espouses and further additional thought on the subject.

The key to such amplification is found in the JCS Pub. 1 definition of logistics:

The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces. In its most comprehensive sense, those aspects of military operations which deal with: a. design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposition of materiel; b. movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel; c. acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; and d. acquisition or furnishing of services.

The first sentence is simple and clear—"The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces."

It should be obvious that "the movement and maintenance of forces" is fundamental to their tactical operations. In fact, forces must be maintained and moved before they can be employed or operated. In other words, logistics is just

as inherent a part of operations as is tactics.

In spite of this, we still all too frequently speak of operations as being separate from logistics. Our basic thinking and planning would be greatly improved if our officers had an intuitive understanding of the fact that operations are an intimate blend of logistical and tactical action to accomplish a strategic purpose.

This raises the important question of a *definitive meaning* for command control of logistics—a complex and controversial issue with no single simple answer. A clue to it lies in the assertion that the commander should have the same control over his logistical resources as he has over his tactical resources.

The second sentence is not simple nor have its implications been adequately understood by more than a tiny minority of the officers of the Armed Forces, military intellectuals, or civilian officials of the Department of Defense. In its most comprehensive sense, logistics is the creation and sustained support of combat forces.

This very important and fundamental concept was first adequately expressed in American military literature in Col. Cyrus Thorpe's splendid little book, *Pure Logistics—Land and Sea—the Science of War Preparation*, published in 1917.

It was restated by Duncan Ballantine in the introduction to his brilliant analysis, *U.S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War*, where he wrote:

Broadly conceived, the logistic process is thus the means whereby

the raw warmaking capacity of the nation is translated into instruments of force ready to be employed in pursuit of strategical or tactical objectives. As such it is both an economic and a military undertaking. . . .

...

On the basis of this distinction logistics may be divided into two main parts, the first being the logistics of production and the second the logistics of consumption. The former is that phase of logistic effort which is carried on under civilian auspices as a predominantly economic function and within a set of conditions imposed by the nature of the nation's economy. The latter is the phase of logistics more intimately involved in military operations in which the determining conditions are those of the military situation. . . .

...

It is, therefore, the function of logistics to bridge the gap between two normally alien spheres of activity, to make intelligible to the producer, for example, the needs of the military commander and conversely to infuse into the calculations of the strategist an appreciation of the limits of the materially possible. As the link between the war front and the home front the logistic process is at once the military element in the nation's economy and the economic element in its military operations. And upon the coherence that exists within the process itself depends the successful articulation of the productive and military efforts of a nation at war.¹

In effect Ballantine said that the logistics process is the bridge between

the economy of the nation and the tactical operations of the combat forces. This has several important corollaries:

- The logistics system must be in harmony both with the economic system and with the tactical concepts and tactical environment of the combat forces. This gives it inherent duality.

- Thus, as it moves from its base in the national economy to its payoff in combat operations, *logistics changes* both its nature and the criteria of judgment.

- This change and inherent duality creates continuing controversy as to organization, particularly at the middle of the bridge.

When we ponder these ideas, several points are clear. Logistics can be considered as Military Economics. Logistics in its comprehensive sense is too vast and too complex to be adequately handled in all its phases by any single organization within the Department of Defense. Logistics is, in fact, a huge major system composed of a variety of functional systems and subsystems.

These functional systems have very real physical properties of mass, inertia, momentum, and resonance. The physical properties of these systems create the element of lead-time which, in turn, is one of the major factors which dominate strategy because only when the forces are ready can the strategy become operational and tactical feasible. Thus the understanding of logistics in its comprehensive sense is essential to the effective planning and control of logistics in its narrow sense of being the movement and maintenance of forces. I believe that the failure to understand this critical concept is the most important reason for the undesirable situations and attitudes that Captain Fiske discusses in his article.

¹Duncan S. Ballantine, *U.S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 1-3.

When we examine these logistics systems, we see that many of their component parts are included in what is known as Military Management. But if we go further into these matters, it is evident that some of the most important elements are never studied in management literature or discussed in management symposia.

From the foregoing we can draw some important conclusions:

- Logistics and management overlap, but are not synonymous.

- There is no such thing as a military management system in the same sense that there is a military logistics system.

While good management must permeate the entire military system, management enters into the military system primarily as it operates in and throughout the logistic system. Military management, therefore, can best be defined or considered as the techniques which are used to control the operation of the logistics systems of the armed forces.

The study of military management should therefore be intertwined with the study of logistics because neither can be understood without the other.

One final comment on Captain Fiske's article. On p. 59, speaking of

Vietnam logistics, he states: "Fortunately for the Navy, the general lack of interest by line officers to seek challenging jobs in logistics, per se, has not seriously jeopardized overall Navy logistical support. In fact, naval support of combat operations in Southeast Asia has been quite excellent. . . ." This excellent overall logistic support has been carried out in an environment free from enemy attack.

The tactical operations of our major forces were such that their location and general nature were known in advance and scheduled with good accuracy. These facts had enormous logistical implications.

There is little resemblance between this type of large-scale but routine operational logistics and requirements of widely dispersed combat operations against a competent aggressive enemy navy. Should such combat operations ever become necessary, the resulting challenge to the logistic system will come as a devastating shock to any line officers who may be satisfied that our logistic performance in Vietnam justifies a continuation of the general lack of interest mentioned by Captain Fiske.

Henry E. Eccles
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

— ψ —

But in its relation to strategy, logistics assumes the character of a dynamic force, without which the strategic conception is simply a paper plan.

C. Theo Vogelgesang, Logistics: Its Bearing Upon the Art of War, Lecture delivered at NWC