

TACWAR # 23
13 Apr. 71

MILITARY OBJECTIVES

HCBrown

Wars arise when two political entities, or two groups of political entities, resort to violence for the resolution of conflicting political objectives. Wars end, and peace is restored (normally after some alteration of the military situation), when the conflicting political objectives are reconciled sufficiently that violence is no longer the most promising method of solution for either side.

A war would be completely successful, from a unilateral viewpoint, if one side succeeded, by the application of violence, in arriving at a status vis-a-vis the enemy where its political objectives were no longer opposed. Such an accomplishment might be termed a "military victory". However, in most practical instances, the military achievements will have been accompanied by modification and accommodation of political objectives, so that the victory is a joint product of political and military strategy. Unconditional surrender or unacceptable attrition of the enemy forces has seldom been the actual outcome of warfare; under the shadow of massive nuclear deterrents, such a military objective is less realistic than ever before. Planning should be for "limited" conventional wars; and analysis should be directed toward optimizing systems, organizational structures, and doctrines for the attainment of military objectives other than indiscriminate attrition of the enemy forces.

Valid military objectives can be stated for some political objectives, but not all. The expel the enemy's military forces from a certain area, e.g., South Vietnam, is a valid military objective. To "win the hearts and minds of the people," though a praiseworthy aim, is definitely *not* a military objective, but a political objective. The concurrent military objective can only be to establish a level of security which protects non-violent agencies for the duration of their task. To cause the enemy to desist from attacking from some sanctuary is in fact a political objective. Possibly, there is some level of violence (a military objective) which will accomplish this end; it has obviously not yet been reached in Vietnam.

It is suggested that, for proper formulation of national policy decisions relating to limited or "tactical" war, as well as for analysis of military operations, military objectives and military success must always be defined in relation to "terrain" (including sea and air space). The military can be

charged with occupation or control of terrain in opposition to the enemy; the advantages of such occupation or control must be realized in the political sphere,