

TACWAR # 165

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THEATER LEVEL VALUES¹

"Intervention in another country's affairs is a delicate matter at best. Whatever happens, the intervening agent is apt to reap the lion's share of the blame if things go wrong and none of the resultant credit if they go right. Primarily for this reason, the objective of the intervening party must be sufficiently important to warrant the risk to prestige. Its importance can be defined only by a careful spelling out of one or more specific aims, as opposed to a conglomerate ambition made the more meaningless by the frippery of legalistic and moralistic window dressing. As an operating rule of thumb; the more vague the stated objective, the less the validity and, in natural corollary, the less the chance of attainment.

But that is only the beginning. Assuming the specific objective is judged sufficiently important, it must be realistically attainable; that is, if disaster is to be avoided. First-rate minds using first-rate intelligence must weigh the effect of the intervening agent on the balance of the struggle. If the amount of available force is clearly insufficient for the task, either at the inception or as it develops, then the importance of the objective must be reassessed in view of the obvious disadvantages including potential catastrophe.²

The allied intervention (in Russia) in the spring of 1918 failed on each count. No single inter-allied objective existed, but, rather, a nebulous ambition to re-create an eastern front against the Germans, either by persuading the Bolshevik government to this action or by replacing this government with another that would embrace allied interests. A lack of specific objectives prevented allied powers from determining a combined course of action, a deficiency the more glaring in view of the pinch penny forces committed."

¹ Ref.: Asprey, Robert B.: WAR IN THE SHADOWS - The Guerrilla History. Vol. 1. Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, NY. 1975. pp. 308-309.

² In rare instance, the action will still be approved, a handy example being the British sacrificial commitment to Greece in 1940.

