

War Studies Working Group (WSWG) 2017 Annual Conference Report

John Young, Royal Military College of Canada

For those among the ISMS membership with extensive institutional memories, the 2017 Annual Conference stands out as a particularly notable and successful assembly of Military Science professionals and scholars. Notable for the centrality of the thematic focus on military education and its curricula and programs within our Society's academies, universities and colleges. Successful for the organizational acumen and flair of the NDUC Presidency and Conference Committee that, together with Dean Offerdal's encouragement and support, offered participants an unequalled opportunity to learn from international colleagues and to cooperate in the essential process of interpreting and refining existing knowledge clusters within the Military Sciences and, perhaps even more importantly, developing new paradigmatic syntheses of that rapidly expanding empirical and conceptual universe of War and Peace Studies that unites our efforts and gives structure and coherence to our individual research priorities.

If further inspiration were needed to begin our WSWG's deliberations from a running start, it was skillfully provided by the Conference Keynote Address by Dr Matlary, who very effectively provided an insightful intellectual framework that revealed itself to be extraordinarily prescient as our discussions and exchanges progressed from Panel to Panel throughout the Conference duration. If I may summarize this thematic carry-over or progression from the Keynote, it would highlight the ideational dyads of models and practices, of deductive and inductive reasoning, and more specifically in the WSWG's case of *intel* and *praxis*.

And thus, with the benefit of the hindsight that after-action reports impart, the WSWG's initial panel provided our group's exemplar of the intel-praxis interconnection with two engaging presentations by Adam Svendsen and Beatka Gostomczyk, entitled respectively *Intelligence Engineering: Operating Beyond the Conventional* and *The Evolution of Operational Causal Intelligence by Russian Special Services on the Territory of the Republic of Poland*. The notion that intelligence planning and operations can be subsumed within an engineering matrix derives from Adam's conceptualization of Engineering as a toolbox - one that in this instance would serve as an instrumentality for complex multidimensional intelligence. I would like to note here that Adam also chaired our group's third panel and has been a regular contributor to the WSWG, ISMS's Working Group 1, over many years. His work within ISMS has formed part of his scholarly and technical/professional output of, among other products, no less than four books in recent years. Adam Svendsen is to my mind consistently ahead of the curve and it was a privilege for our participants to have access to his insights into the scientific arts, if I may use that term, of the Intelligence and Futures Communities. Beatka Gostomczyk's presentation

drew attention to Russian intel ops on Polish territory via a comparative perspective and analysis of Soviet-era and post-Soviet practices. Follow-on discussions within the Working Group centered on methodological issues and data collection techniques in support of Beatka's research design.

Segueing to our second panel session, the unifying term here would most naturally be *topicality*. Beginning with a meticulous and brilliantly formulated analysis of *Mediation in Modern Armed Conflicts*, Marzena Zakowska informed our participants that mediation is appealed to in approximately 70% of international conflicts, with some degree of success registered in mitigating conflict effects or promoting conflict management/resolution in 34% of the cases studied. The sobering core message is that tough times lie ahead for mediation mechanisms and practices, due to the evolution in the nature of conflict away from state-centered contention to non-state-actor large-scale violence instigated and prosecuted by a range of organized and identifiable groups from private armies to criminal syndicates and terrorist networks. This preliminary conclusion then led Marzena to formulate her informing research question : *Given these challenges, how can mediation contribute to resolving modern armed conflicts?* Promising avenues of inquiry in this regard were identified as being the motives of the parties in conflict, the roles of mediators, the mediation strategies implemented, and a comparative analysis of traditional and modern approaches to mediation. In other words, the normative objective of Marzena's research could be characterized as a search for a best-practices guide to effective mediation in the problematic context of modern conflict dynamics. Here again, the WSWG's recourse to modeling and praxis as touchstones for accomplished research in Military Sciences came to the fore. Following this thoughtful treatment of the conditionality and prospects for mediation as a functional technique in conflict management/resolution, Cyprian Kozera and Piotr Sosnowski doubled down on the *topicality* thematic of our second panel. In Cyprian's case, we were treated to an outstanding presentations on DIY (do-it-yourself) or lone-wolf terrorism together with a survey of possible preventive measures and counter-operations against this increasingly frequent and almost endemic phenomenon. Based on extensive and ongoing fieldwork, the research objective here is to identify practices that prevent (in some instances), counter or minimize the threat. Piotr, for his part, offered an original and fascinating analysis, supported by copious empirical data, of the intricate patterns of proxy and direct-participant ties and relations in Iraqi Kurdistan. These latter two presentations were entitled, respectively, *With Car and Kitchen Knife: How to Respond when Homegrown Violent Extremism Goes Low-Tech* and *Like Cain and Abel: Internal Political Tensions in Iraqi Kurdistan (KRG) in the Context of the Interests of External Actors*.

The WSWG's third panel sessions heavily emphasized theoretical and conceptual frameworks in addressing central issues of contemporary Military Sciences. Our lead presenter was Therese

Heltberg, whose paper (co-authored with Kåre Dahl) *How Innovation Theory Can Contribute to the Military Operations Planning Process* considered operational models of analysis as constructive aides to military staff work in such contexts as NATO's Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD) and the Danish Field Manual III. It is well worth noting that the recognition of increasing complexity and hybridity in the operational environment was once more emphasized in this panel session. The informing rationale and practical objective of Therese's research contribution was "the need to increase agility and creativity of military planning" when confronted with the metaphorical 'moving targets' of 21st-century multidimensional and rapidly evolving operational environments. Even though this presentation was based on very substantial fact-finding, interviews and other empirics, emphasis was placed on the heuristics of sustained dialogue with researchers and military professionals with a "view to improve military education and organization". Following this thorough investigation of the probable and potential payoffs of innovation theory for operational planning, Ryszard Szpyra presented a highly original and carefully documented study of Soviet- and post-Soviet Russian Military Science concepts. Anytime Ryszard Szpyra speaks in seminar, one listens – such are the insights to be garnered from this keenly observant and deeply experienced military professional and scholar. Ryszard is, needless to say at this point, ISMS's new President for 2018 after having served this Society previously in that capacity in 2016 as well. In addition, the WSWG has been privileged to have benefited from his many contributions over several years. In this year's iteration of our Annual Conference, Ryszard put his linguistic capabilities in the Russian language to excellent use in providing a textual analysis of original-source doctrinal literature. Entitled *Soviet and Russian Military Science Concept*, the presentation placed particular emphasis on the importance of military culture for decoding the principal elements of Russian (and Soviet) Military Science. After tracing the main features and evolutionary trajectories of this especially significant example of conceptual and doctrinal thinking, Ryszard emphasized the constants of Soviet- and post-Soviet Russian concepts, particularly their emphasis on information dynamics in situations of rivalry and confrontation. More germane to current contexts, the presentation emphasized the increased importance being paid in Russian Military Science concepts to information warfare and real-world practices to hone and improve its application. The third presentation to this session was entitled *Deterrence and Escalation Control as Components of Conflict Management: The Theory-Analysis Nexus as Prior Requirement for Effective Operational Decisions in the Euro-Atlantic Theatre 2014-2017*. In this contribution, I sought to link the theoretical and conceptual nuclear-deterrence literature with analytical models as they relate to escalation dominance, especially in intra-crisis interactions that threaten a breach of non-conventional thresholds. I argued that, in many critical ways, the present crisis can be seen most instructively as a tiered or layered conflict that adheres to the *nested model* that has been outlined in the conflict-management/resolution literature. The presentation concluded in making reference to the Conference Theme by underlining the

merits of pre-deployment instruction and training for effective decision-making at key inflection points of crisis situations.

The overarching objective of my presentation was to explain why a key operational imperative in the present Euro-Atlantic context is to raise the nuclear threshold.

The informing descriptive term that can be most accurately applied to the WSWG's fourth and final session is clearly *operational know-how*. Our working group had the privilege of integrating three clearly articulated, well-structured, and immediately policy-relevant presentations. First, Jaana Kuula set out an "operating concept for detecting CBRNE threats in all domains and at all stages of a potential CBRNE strike". Her well-advanced research project has demonstrated significant progress in aligning European Commission funding with no less than eight national partners – the UK as lead, with Finland, Germany, Norway, Greece, Spain, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands as partner stakeholders. Entitled *An Integrated Multiplatform Approach To Joint Operations For Fighting Terrorism And Other International Threats*, this research project is designed to counter large-scale, "multi-source and escalating threats with highly developed multiplatform detection systems" and draws attention to the fact that the scenarios envisioned are far from theoretical, but real-world possibilities - indeed probabilities under certain sets of conditions. Our second presenter was Eystein Meyer, who as Head of the Conference Committee, had become a familiar figure to all Conference participants.

We were again privileged to have a military professional and scholar of Eystein's caliber integrating the War Studies sessions and thereby bringing his seasoned analyses to bear in our discussion periods as well in this concluding session as author of an excellent presentation entitled *Rapid British Amphibious Response as a Force Multiplier in the Nordic-Baltic Theatre*. With clearly stated policy recommendations and finely tuned politico-strategic explanatory sections to set the likely operational scenarios, Eystein made the case for the rapid deployment of the combined British-Dutch amphibious force, the most relevant component of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), to the most northern area of Norway to create uncertainty in the potential adversary's thinking and to draw its Nordic-Baltic Theatre Forces to that area of operations. Our concluding presentation took the form of a well-reasoned analysis by Karsten Marrup setting out, on the basis of a thorough literature review, the virtual absence of reporting or assessments as to "how strategic effects from strategic air attacks are measured." In his presentation entitled *Assessing the strategic effect of offensive air operations*, Karsten first clarifies definitional issues germane to the strategic airpower debates and discusses these concepts in the context of contending claims in the existing literature as to the strategic effects of airpower both as a stand-alone instrument and as a component of multiple combat

elements. He concludes by observing: “There is a gap in current literature on assessment of strategic effect obtained by offensive air operations. A gap that if filled could help qualify the debate on the possibility of obtaining strategic effect through offensive air operations.”

Throughout the presentation Karsten illustrated his arguments by highly pertinent observations and analyses on air ops in the Kosovo, Libya, and Iraq campaigns.

Having summarized some of the highlights of our working group’s panel sessions, which enjoyed very good attendance and active follow-up discussions on the topics under review, I would be remiss not to thank the creators of two very well designed and produced Poster Presentations within the scope of the WSWG’s Conference activities, Thomas Halvorsen, who explained the extensive 2017-18 program of work of the Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MSDC), and Magdalena Monet, who very effectively demonstrated an under-discussed aspect of our spheres of professional concern – the use of psychotronic weapons for military purposes, which includes only seemingly exotic mind-control techniques and Electromagnetic Radiation Weapons.

In concluding these reportorial remarks and summary overview, let me telescope the War Studies Working Group’s deliberations during these remarkable and productive days at the ISMS Annual Conference 2017 under the superbly competent and inspired guidance of our NDUC hosts and Presidency, by aligning a few key terms in chronological order as expressions of our focus and progression through our panel sessions. These summary terms, linked closely to our Conference theme, are: Intel – models and practices – praxis – topicality – theory and concepts – operational know-how and expertise – and ultimately, *Praxis 2.0*. In other words, the War Studies Working Group experience throughout this very fine gathering of the Military Science community, was characterized by a nice balance of plentiful empirical data leavened by theoretical insights to help structure our thinking. I’ll draw these observations to a close now by extending a sincere thank-you to all WG1 participants and paper-givers and especially to those who contributed to our discussions by asking so many useful questions and offering their considered views on the subjects under review. The table is set, as it were, for the War Studies Working Group’s next Conference participation at the aptly named War Studies University in Warsaw.

John D. Young, PhD, Chair, War Studies Working Group, ISMS
Thursday 8 February 2018
Department of Political Science, Royal Military College of Canada