Breaking Barriers to Deeper Understanding: How Post-Modern Concepts Are ?Value-Added? to Military Conceptual Planning Considerations

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Author's Note: this article attempts to stimulate further discourse on what the military requires in terms of Design concepts, vocabulary, doctrine, and education- but there is no expectation that adding Design concepts will subsequently eliminate traditional military planning concepts. Design provides dissimilar and often unique perspectives for military applications. Critical and creative discourse is a cornerstone in Army Design methodology; yet to think with Design requires one to let go of the preferred and traditional planning processes and embrace uncertainty. Military leaders should not seek an 'end-all be-all' definition or 'paint-by-numbers' set of Design procedures, but use some of the suggested concepts offered in this article to help enhance their repertoire of thinking skills. What do post-modern philosophical concepts bring to military conceptual planning? If we do not at least consider their value, we have already closed ourselves off from learning, and learning how to learn...

This article contains some highly abstract concepts that have little use in any future military doctrine, and likely are not very useful to the greater force in terms of planning participation outside of conceptual planning efforts. This probably is not a very convincing way to begin an article that promotes the utility of Design concepts in military planning, but Design is best addressed both critically and creatively. Military readers may wonder, *'why even bother with any post-modern philosophical concept at all?'* Design does not provide any quick or simplistic solutions, and unfortunately, our military culture struggles to see much long-term benefit when traditional processes seem to shuffle our organization along, albeit at a cost. Perhaps, if we at a minimum explore some of these post-modern abstract concepts, they might offer a prospect for evoking greater *understanding* of a complex military problem so that traditional planning efforts might better be applied. That is only if we can even start that discourse within our military institution beyond the limited trappings of 'Design Doctrine' such as FM 5-0 *The Operations Process* and FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency.*[1]

'Design Theory' is different from 'Design Doctrine' in that it is not nearly as well received by the military institution. [2] Design Theory continues to face significant adversity in any discussion about conceptual planning- there are enough institutional hurdles already in place that any meaningful dialogue is often disrupted right out of the gate. Why does Design theory receive such a livid reception in military planning dialogues? Does Design offer anything useful to our military institution, and can we apply to practical scenarios any of the highly abstract and often intellectually distant processes to real military applications? This article offers up several highly abstract Design concepts in an effort to cross the bridge between conceptual planning and detailed planning; while these abstract concepts do not replace detailed planning,

they might enhance our understanding and self-awareness as we trod along familiar paths to potentially unknown destinations.

Army Design methodology draws from across the wide and often eclectic range of scientific and philosophical fields that support holistic approaches to complexity for military planning concepts.[3] What the U.S. Army chose to include in recent Design doctrine, lexicon, and practice reflects specific organizational values, preferred logical processes, and institutional identity. Although Design Theory reflects an immense and expanding field of new knowledge and unique logics, what the U.S. Army *chose to omit* from Design doctrine is also relevant to consider when thinking upon why the military now struggles with integrating conceptual with detailed planning in modern conflicts. This article addresses the post-modern philosophical assemblage concepts of 'interiority' and 'exteriority' and how they contribute to Design synthesis in ways that military leaders might find useful. [4] These new philosophies present different processes on synthesizing social complexity where reductionism and analysis lack utility in understanding something like a dynamic conflict environment. [5] To the critics that scoff at the thought of applying philosophy or 'pseudo-scientific theories' to military conceptual planning, one might only reply- *what if there is some usefulness here?* In order to even consider their expediency in military conceptual planning processes, one must temporarily let go of cherished reductionist and linear planning logic that comprises virtually all military doctrine and professional education.[6]

Interiority and exteriority concepts are most closely associated with the post-modern works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. [7] In their second series of essays on Critical Theory collectively titled '*A Thousand Plateaus',* these philosophers weave a complex web of metaphors upon metaphors to explain how societies produce assemblages of knowledge. They present many fascinating and somewhat intellectually challenging concepts on understanding social complexity in non-reductionist logic. This article will attempt to summarize several elements of Deleuze and Guattari's seminal work and relate them to practical military applications in conceptual planning processes. Before jumping into definitions of interiority/exteriority and assemblages, the overarching topic concerning organizational tension between traditional detailed planning logics and the new 'Design' conceptual planning approach requires additional explanation. Without acknowledging why the military resists alternate planning logics first, one cannot expect much success in discussing particular benefits of these alternate logic concepts specifically.

Since the Industrial Revolution and the Age of Scientific Reasoning, military planning and execution has relied almost exclusively upon the reductionist and linear logic where uniformity, repetition, and hierarchical decision-making dominate the field. [8] Recently, western militaries began adapting non-traditional logics several loosely related fields that this article groups as 'Design Theory.'[9] Design pulls from an extremely wide and often eclectic range of theoretical constructs. [10] Whether drawing inspiration from General Systems Theory, post-modern philosophy, or social science's Organizational Theory, this adaptive and expanding field emphasizes a non-hierarchical, anti-procedural methodology that promotes critical and creative thinking. To illustrate this, consider the following two scenarios:

> *Each musician sits down in specific locations in the orchestra pit with precise sheet music. The conductor coordinates everything, and the orchestra rehearses many times until they perform together in unison, a repeatable and exact performance, exactly as the composer designed the performance to sound. Deviation is prohibited, as individuality and non-conformity will destroy the cohesion of the orchestra.*

The jazz players assemble at a local restaurant patio without any sheet music and begin playing around with their instruments and some melody ideas that each musician created and brought to the group. As one beat or riff catches the group, they begin to experiment with it, deviating from it and improvising new melodies while still holding to a loosely recognizable beat that wanders around the diverse landscape of musical sound.

In other words, Design Theory prefers musicians to exercise improvisational jazz and create in unscripted manners instead of lock-step performances of rehearsed sheet-music orchestra. [11] Whether one draws Design tools from the system-centric or post-modern philosophical fields or another dissimilar field entirely, the vast majority of Design concepts are unlike traditional military planning logic that drives the preponderance of professional military education and practices. [12] It appears that the more abstract or conceptual a Design concept, the greater an up-hill battle one faces with introducing terms such as interiority/exteriority into the military organization.

Making a Case for Post-Modern Abstraction in Conceptual Planning:

If Army 'Design' doctrine does not recognize the concepts of interiority/exteriority, why does it matter? To follow Design Theory's emphasis on critical and creative thinking, any concepts, lexicon, or practices that stimulate innovation, creativity, and adaptation hold merit regardless if they are included in official doctrine or not. [13] Interiority/exteriority concepts for military Design applications draw inspiration from post-modern social science and philosophy theory where a high level of abstraction is required to grasp the concepts. This article employs several metaphors to attempt to convey to the reader these abstract concepts, as humans essentially learn through metaphor. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work on linguistics postulated that, "primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphoric in nature…we act according to the way we conceive of things." [14] No metaphor survives literal application, and more often than not, a cloud of diverse metaphors potentially builds a superior abstract concept for readers to understand. This article will employ several dissimilar metaphors ranging from the horse carriage industry's collapse in the early 20th century to basic atmospheric models of tornados. If you find it unusual that a military article on conceptual planning would purposefully employ non-military metaphors, there is a good reason for it. Drawing from non-military fields helps marginalize any military reader's pre-filtering of data and bias. For instance, if we applied World War II operations on the German Eastern Front, many readers would lose sight of the abstract concepts and fixate instead on the minute details of the example- namely whether the Russians or Germans did this or that. "We are not very good at discovering the unexpected as we tend to see what we expect to see and find what we are looking for." [15] Potentially, using any military metaphors or historic vignettes for the purposes of this article risk this deviation; selecting dissimilar metaphors from other fields puts the abstract concepts back into primary analysis. Furthermore, please take care to not take individual metaphors pedantically and instead consider how multiple and dissimilar metaphors synergize to help clarify highly abstract concepts. In other words, metaphors aid in explaining abstractions, but do not replace them. To introduce the concepts of interiority and exteriority, first consider the collapse of the horse carriage industry in the first decade of the 20th century.

As the internal combustion engine, Industrial Revolution, steel and rubber industries, and assembly-line production methods merged into a paradigm shift in human transportation at the dawn of the 20th century, the vast majority of horse carriage companies failed to adapt and instead collapsed as automobiles replaced horses. [16] Companies went out of business because they remained fixated on a horse-centric future, and continued to plan accordingly while customers migrated towards automobile transportation. You might recognize that in hindsight, this paradigm shift in human transformation appears obvious; yet that does not explain why the majority of the horse carriage industry ignored the emerging trends until too

late. Before the automobile became the evident and logical replacement for inexpensive and reliable human conveyance, many horse carriage businesses ignored or completely missed the indicators of a revolutionary change (paradigm) in transportation. [17] Why did an organization that was highly successful in the previous transportation logic of horse locomotion find itself unable or un—to anticipate a world where consumers no longer wanted their product? Relating back to our military institution, does the U.S. Army face a similar paradigm shift concerning 21st century military conflict, or will everything continue to revolve around traditional high-intensity (including hybrid) conventional warfare for strategic planning purposes? [18] This is where the concepts of interiority and exteriority work with emergence to demonstrate useful abstract theoretical concepts.

Interiority and Exteriority: What Do They Bring in Value to Planning?

Suppose you lived in 1900, and owned one of the larger horse carriage companies in America. You stood at the height of American carriage market production and contemplated the next four years of growth and investment. Without knowing about the future of the automobile industry, how would you guide your company's business strategy for the next decade? Of the companies that eventually went out of business by 1910, they overwhelmingly anticipated horse carriage transportation to remain what it was in 1900- the dominant method for human conveyance. People will buy carriages, the automobile will remain a "rich man's toy", and skilled laborers would hand-assemble carriages while integrating proven technological advances as they emerge. In other words, their narrative about the future reflected only known information. This bounds the *interiority* of their organization's knowledge and reinforces a linear causality in logic where the future looks much like the present. Interiority reflects the familiar and known.

Ever notice that most books or movies about 'the future' strongly reflect everything in the period the science fiction originated from, to include contextual symbols and ideas on what the future would look like? We project the future in the forms we must intimately understand- we use our interiority to construct an imagined future that remains quite devoted to the present minus the laser rays, shiny space suits, and robots and aliens that look like humans covered in make-up and prosthetics.[19] If we struggle to imagine the future without abandoning the symbols and concepts that structure our present reality, how hard is it for a horse-centric transportation company to envision a future without horses?

Returning to the horse company metaphor, consider how the carriage industry reflects some patterns in military organizations where planning and preparations often appear to be oriented towards winning the previous war instead of anticipating the next conflict.[20] Historian Brian Linn criticizes the military in *Echo of Battle* of resisting change, maintaining "intellectual rigidity, a propensity to mistake slogans for strategic thinking, and the dogmatic belief in itself as the 'best trained, best armed, best led force' that has ever existed."[21] Recent British Ministry of Defence conceptual planning doctrine expands upon this with, "as closed and ritual-bound organisations, militaries have strong cultures that can be fiercely resistant to change and which shape how they develop and how they act."[22] Chinese military theorists Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui's criticize American interiority and 'in-house assumption' barriers from an Eastern perspective in *Unrestricted Warfare.* They charge Westerners with "observing, considering, and resolving problems from the point of view of technology" as typical American thinking.[23] Organizational theory uses the term 'in-house' assumption to describe the institutional barriers that help protect an organization's interiority from change even when reality exposes any fallacies in logic.[24] Military innovation is difficult because innovation "questions the routines and systems that underpin core competencies… [it also] threatens existing capabilities in which militaries have made heavy investment and around which sub-community interests and cultures have developed." [25] Does the military as an institution share some of the 'in-house assumptions' that are setting up organizations in similar manners where horse carriages are in the future instead of automobiles? Does detailed planning such as MDMP,

JOPP, and MCPP reflect an emphasis on *interiority thinking* instead of critical and creative thinking about what exists outside these institutional boundaries? [26] Does the military overemphasis on hierarchical decision-making foster a 'group-think' approach to the world that drives an organization to prefer seeking information relevant to the interiority and self-relevance of the institution?[27] These meta-questions quickly lead outside the boundaries of the interiority into the depths of the unknown- the exteriority of a system.

Returning to 1900 and sitting behind the desk as head of a horse carriage company, what are the unknown elements that either already exist outside your interiority (known and accepted information) or will emerge as the system adapts and transforms through time? What are the emergent properties that exist outside a carriage company's interiority? Or, what do they not know, and what do they know that is no longer accurate? New production and mass-assembly processes paired with a growing urban population of unskilled workers combine with the combustion engine, steel and rubber resources, and a rapidly adaptive physical landscape of cities and towns connected by roads all escape the 'known-knowns' of a carriage company's interiority in 1900. Horse carriage companies grasped some of these concepts, but failed to assemble them together and anticipate a future without a horse-centric transportation need. [28] More importantly, the core American values of independence, prosperity, and interaction readily accepted the automobile as a new symbol that accomplished everything the horse carriage did more effectively.

This massive transformation in core American values that manifest in symbols demonstrates the innovation and patterns of adaptation inherent in the exteriority of the carriage company's system of knowledge production. [29] The 'unknown-unknowns' that would quickly dismantle the entire horse carriage industry already existed in 1900, except the majority of carriage company owners just failed to recognize them *holistically*. One can fill volumes describing each part of a pile of bicycle parts, but you need to assemble it to gain the ability to ride. [30] While it is easy for those that already have the concept of a bicycle within their interior knowledge, what about when bike parts litter one's interiority but they have yet to be assembled by the pioneer to invent the first bicycle?

By combining Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of complementary yet antithetical forces with the historic metaphor of the American carriage industry's collapse in the early 20th century, this article offers one perspective on depicting the concepts of interiority and exteriority in figure 1 below. [31] While interiority and exteriority remain highly abstract concepts that defy traditional description, figure 1 provides explanation within the familiar doctrinal and reductionist framework generally preferred by military organizations. [32]

Interiority	Exteriority
conceptual territory of accepted/known information; finite and limited	beyond the conceptual boundaries of accep... infinite
emphasis on description and increased control of known information	creativity and innovation usher in new know...
values and tenets create barriers to protect information from destruction/change	previous information within interiority ofte... by exteriority developments
organizations categorize and apply procedures to bring order, balance, and control to the interiority of a system	due to infinite depth and constant transform... cannot be categorized or structured

Figure 1: an incomplete contrast between 'interiority' and 'exteriority'

Figure 1 addresses the concepts of interiority and exteriority; however, how these two forces interact within a society or organization such as the military or a horse carriage company requires the use of another dissimilar metaphor. Consider for a moment how tornados form in the atmosphere. Without going into more detail than necessary for this metaphor, they draw significant energy from a large low-pressure system and often focus that destructive force to a finite point on the ground. The swirling airflow and interaction of interior energy in the condensation funnel in relation to the exterior atmosphere and surface provide a useful conceptual structure for pairing up these highly abstract post-modern philosophical concepts. They also provide one way to potentially visualize the concept in a process that readers might find familiar by using tornado movement. Figure 2 merges the aforementioned concepts of Deleuze and Guattari's interiority/exteriority and applies military levels of war (tactical, operational, and strategic) up into the clouds of abstraction to form the basis for an overarching military planning 'assemblage.'

Figure 5: Understanding the Assemblage Holistically

exte

"we are a transpor

"we are an organiz
centric."

"we are an organization that
builds and sells carriages"

Strategic

Emergence
Adaptation   Territorialization
innovation

De-territo

Operational

Field
Assumptions

Organizationa
Values and
Tenets

Tactical

Future   Present
(auto-centric)   interiority

"we so
we exp
based

interiority

Relying upon the past (interiority based); we
expect a future that does not surprise us.

Future

Uncertainty   Present

interiority