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THE INTRODUCTION OF THE 1976 AND 1982 VERSIONS OF FM 100-5 AND THE MANAGEMENT OF INNOVATION IN THE ARMY¹

1. The first draft of this paper draws extensively from two studies of these field manuals: "From Active Defense to Airland Battle: The development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982," by Mr. John Romjue; "Deciding What Has To Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 edition of FM 100-5, Operations," by Major Paul H. Herbert.

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Introduction

The perspective of this paper is that instituting innovations in large institutions--whether the Army, General Motors, a University, etc.--is a difficult and time consuming task. Major changes take years to implement, and their correctness or incorrectness are by no means a guarantee that they will be accepted or rejected. Moreover, innovations are not launched fully implemented at a point in time, like a ship from a dry dock. They may begin and then immediately fail; they may develop some ailments in mid-life, or may be fully installed and then terminated.

The execution of an innovation (including bad innovations) is a function of a variety of factors: the organization's situation at the time; the role of top managers; the impact of advocates and critics; organizational procedures and structure; the correlation of the innovation to past skills, talents and roles of the institution; money; and serendipitous events. This paper presents the results of how these and other factors were present in a major doctrinal innovation in the Army.

Background

In 1976 the Army introduced FM 100-5, a radically changed basic manual on overall Army combat doctrine. Six years later the Army reissued the manual, now largely rewritten, to change concepts and refocus the content of the 1976 edition. Indeed, within three years of publication, the 1976 Field Manual had provoked dissent on Army doctrinal thinking both inside and outside the military service.

Considering that FM 100-5 is a capstone document, a top level expression of the Army's view of how to fight, and a view that should hold sway for a decade or more, the quick demise of the 1976 field manual raises a number of questions. For example:

-Were the problems of the 1976 manual based on substantive issues involving international affairs, the threat, or the nature of warfare? If so, what occurred in the few years following 1976 to change the definition of these? Should these have been predictable? Does this suggest a fundamental lack of analytic ability to predict or evaluate?

-Should the 1976 doctrine have been more robust, so that a major rewrite would not have been needed so quickly? If doctrine is coupled to decisions on weapons and unit organizations, some expenditures on Army programs based on the 1976 field manual had already been made by the time the new version was published in 1982. Does this situation reflect an incompatibility between the nature of doctrine and the nature of force development or system design?

-Since doctrine is the statement of Army policy on warfighting, it presumably reflects the consensus of the highest ranks of the Army based upon analysis, experience and judgment. What happened in the assembling, screening and analyzing of all these inputs that led to a 1976 manual that then had to be set aside? Or, since

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the 1976 field manual was such a major departure from its predecessors, did the very situation which gave rise to the innovation and created the opportunity for it, also lay the ground work for its failure?

The answer to these and similar questions--to get ahead of this paper--is that the 1976 manual was more flawed than shortsighted about future events. The question then is why a flawed concept, as innovative as it was, managed to make its way through the Army's organizational structure. Indeed, in the study of managing innovation and change, the 1976 FM may be one of those examples not frequently studied--a flawed innovation successfully introduced (and partially implemented.) A study of the 1976 FM, therefore, may identify techniques of innovation can be used to bring about change, even if the change itself is not for the best.

What was innovative about the 1976 FM?

Following on the heels of the Army's experience in Vietnam, facing a decline in the budget, and recognizing that the Soviets had improved while the U.S. was focused on SEA, the Army in the 1976 field manual introduced a number of presentational and conceptual innovations to focus the military service back to its primary post World War II opponent.

These ideas, concepts, etc. of the 1976 field manual included:

- Winning the first battles of a conflict before the war spread, and focusing on fighting and winning outnumbered.
- Providing very specific instructions to troops on how to fight, including setting aside the focus on principles of war in order to provide a manual that officers and enlisted men would use daily.
- Emphasizing weapons systems and force ratios, reflecting an attempt (a) to integrate doctrine and system acquisition; (b) to capture the mechanization of warfare; and (c) to give tactical unit leaders benchmarks to estimate their unit's capabilities against an enemy.
- Putting emphasis on tank and armor/anti-armor war.
- Discussing Soviet weapons and tactics specifically and in some detail for the first time, in order to focus soldiers on a specific opponent.
- Introducing the concept of active defense to include smaller reserves, more mobility, and concentration of force to blunt Soviet attacks.

What was wrong with the 1976 FM?

A number of criticisms were levied at the 1976 FM after its publication.

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multiple threats

-The FM overlooked the threat posed by follow-on Soviet forces (the second echelon.) It presumed the Soviets would mass to attack, when their attack would be more fluid, probing widely for weaknesses, committing follow-on forces to penetrations, and striking at the U.S. (NATO) rear.

-It was too specific on how to fight. It read more like a recipe book to be given to NCOs and unit commanders. It lacked broader concepts of war to guide their thinking and failed to emphasize the independence of thinking at the unit level on which the Army had prided itself as providing an advantage over other, rigid military forces.

-The 1976 FM overlooked some of the broader dimensions of doctrine. It lacked:

--A discussion of the principles of war.

--A broader view of combat ("friction").

--An appreciation of the psychological dimension of war.

--Analysis of the role of leadership (one page vs. a chapter on weapons.)

-It focused too much on Europe and the Soviet threat, even though the principal source of lessons was the Middle East War. Yet, in considering Europe, it gave too little attention to combined and allied operations.

-It was overly defensive in its coverage, yet provided not enough reserves. It also relied heavily on firepower over maneuver, implying more attention to a war of attrition.

A story of strong leaders

The development and implementation of both the 1976 and 1982 versions of the FM 100-5 reflect very much the styles of the two commanding generals of TRADOC. The two detailed studies of the FM give great attention to DePuy and Starry as instrumental forces. Indeed, their roles are graphic illustrations of the viewpoint that individuals are a critical factor in major innovations, and that top level managers in an organization must be involved in innovations that have broad policy level impact. The obstacles to innovation in an institution can be substantial, if only because the weight of current work also leaves little room for the added work of missionary change. Three things can happen to innovations in an institution, one of which is difficult (succeeding) and two of which are bad (active resistance, doing nothing). The drive of lower ranking members are not enough. Leadership and advocacy, therefore, are essential.

DePuy and Starry were similar in many ways.

-Both were strong personalities (as expected in leaders.)

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-Both were system analysts.

-Both shared similar concepts of war (as reflected by the fact that Starry was one of the three officers hand-picked by DePuy to write chapters of the 1976 FM.)

Their tactics, however, were markedly different.

-Starry tried to make the institution of TRADOC work; DePuy tended to test it, and to bypass the institution and create special activities to obtain the results he wanted.

-Starry sought participation for ideas; DePuy appeared to seek ideas in order to neutralize those that were at significant variance with his own.

Certainly their styles reflect strong individual characteristics, but it also reflects the different situations they were in and their perceptions of the challenges they faced.

-DePuy created TRADOC and was its first commander. The immediacy of the post Vietnam problems gave him a deep sense of urgency and he had less time than Starry for the time consuming demands of training and obtaining the support of the various commands under him. He also wanted to produce a manual that was dramatically innovative (something the 1982 FM did not have to do, because the 1976 FM had already set the precedence.)

-Starry had much for which to thank DePuy, for DePuy began pushing the Army back in the right direction--out of Vietnam doctrine. Starry could sharpen the move. DePuy set up TRADOC, and established the beginnings of roles and functions which Starry could adjust or employ.

-Starry brought European experience that DePuy did not. Indeed, while DePuy was concerned about the infection of Vietnam, he suffered from another infection--systems analysis. Starry suffered from the same affliction (he helped write the 1976 FM), but that was moderated by his experiences as a Corps commander.

So much as to say, the two field manuals are not a story of a good guy and a bad guy competing on a level playing field, but of two professionals with sincere concerns for their Army, driven by different perceptions about how to cure those concerns, and working in different environments.

Lessons about instituting change

In subsequent paragraphs are factors that appear to have been important to the acceptance and publication of one or both field manuals. Since the 1976 manual was less than successful, some of these tactics or techniques seem to be useful in moving an innovation through a large organization, regardless of the appropriateness of the innovation.

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1. The belief in the need for change was shared widely in the top levels of the Army.

DePuy shared sentiments with Abrams on the need for revitalization after Vietnam, and on the need to defend the Army budget. Starry had received written criticisms from Meyers on the 1976 FM (albeit written by Richardson) to show that the 1982 FM was necessary.

One of the troublesome issues is that top level leadership supported the 1976 field manual but did not detect its weaknesses. Probably this is a result of three factors. First, the Army's leaders in 1975 supported the need for change, but did not carefully review the impending result. Second, DePuy was very skillful at organizing support for his viewpoint. Third, as a four star general and one of the Army's senior officials, there was probably little reason for DePuy's compatriots to believe his effort would not capture accurately the broader issues and doctrinal needs of the Army. These other officers were busy enough with the myriad tasks associated with their jobs; should they not assume instinctively that a career officer of similar years of experience would capture the policy issues appropriately?

Perhaps the lesson is that the top level must not only support the idea of change, but also participate closely in its formulation and implementation.

2. The need for change was also supported within other levels of the Army.

Particularly for the 1982 FM, criticisms of its predecessor manual came from all ranks and organizations.

3. The TRADOC commanders set the intellectual and substantive dimensions of the change; they did not just manage others.

DePuy envisioned an Army of weapons with crews vs. people; he felt strongly about the need for simple, straightforward descriptions. And he personally wrote portions of the 1976 field manual, and selected the writers for specific chapters. Starry developed the conceptual starting point for the 1982 FM, and led from his experiences in Europe. He personally articulated the second echelon problem. He did not, however, write the FM in the same sense as did DePuy. Both men, despite their stylistic differences, had a "hands on" involvement with their respective field manuals. Considering the demands on their time for other tasks, this reflects their individual commitment and view of the importance of FM 100-5.

4. TRADOC commander sought new ideas in developing the manuals, although far more so in the case of 1982.

DePuy was very selective about the viewpoints he sought, and it influenced his picking specifically who would write the FM. Starry encouraged a broader search for ideas and viewpoints, leading, for example, to the psychological dimension of war based upon Cavazos' views and the operational level of war from Otis.

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5. Before formal writing began, substantive difficulties were identified in basic concepts and work was begun to solve these, so that the overall concept would not bog down for want of feasible technical or force solutions.

Starry's concern about the second echelon, for example, led to studies that resulted in proposals by the Artillery School to use nuclear weapons. Had Depuy subjected the 1976 FM to a search for its errors, both the manual and its future might have been different. The history of the 1976 FM suggests that this did not occur because of the sense of urgency for a new doctrine, the desire to break new ground by finally linking doctrine to system design and acquisition, and Depuy's conviction in the appropriateness of his concepts. Perhaps the contrast here is between the objectives implicitly set for the two field manuals. The 1976 manual would be successful if it shocked the Army back to focusing on the Soviets, if it created the first link to acquisition, and if it was read by sergeants and captains (not generals). Some tactical frailties could be tolerated. The 1982 manual would be successful if it fixed the doctrinal errors of the 1976.

6. TRADOC leaders organized and allocated work in TRADOC to develop the analytic capability and support of organizations internal to the command.

Both leaders instituted precursor studies, across the board doctrinal rewrites, (i.e., made the FM part of a larger set of changes), and tested and acculturated their subordinate organizations. Depuy, for example, used ARTEP, Training Bulletins, the creation of scenarios, and visits and clinics to bring the new TRADOC around to his viewpoint. Starry initiated the BDP, Div 86, Corps 86, and Army 86.

Depuy, however, bypassed the TRADOC structure when it could not respond to him. For example, he transferred writing from CACDA to TRADOC HQ; picked the Armor over Infantry School to write portions (even picked Armor over CAC for broad doctrine); and neutralized Cushman and Leavenworth. Starry created ODCSDOC; assigned to the schools and instructors the task to generate doctrine; and assigned writing back to Leavenworth.

Depuy's effort seemed more to neutralize rather than engage the organization, probably driven by his sense of urgency, having a new command to reshape, and a strong belief in his personal vision. Starry had the advantage of dealing with a vision more in the mainstream of TRADOC's thinking. Depuy's actions, therefore, are not inappropriate: he had a revolution to pull off; Starry did not. To Depuy's credit, he saw the need to do this and (since the manual was published) he picked ways to bypass resistance that worked. Studying his techniques is (to some extent) a lesson on how to handle a recalcitrant organization.

7. Depuy and Starry personally led efforts to obtain the support of other Army leaders and organizations that were not part of TRADOC.

Depuy used the 1974 Octoberfest meeting, FORSCOM conferences, and USAREUR briefs to cement support. When Tac Nukes and chemicals were raised as stumbling points, he invited inputs. Starry sent draft of the FM to the field in February 1981, sought and obtained FORSCOM approval, and obtained COS approval.

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8. TRADOC leadership neutralized, recruited or co-opted resistance external to the Army.

Starry got the USAF to accept deep attack roles and briefed outsiders who could be opinion leaders. DePuy used FRG support to create a disincentive within the Army to disagree with the draft 1976 field manual.

9. TRADOC leaders exploited or created opportunities to develop support for the innovations.

DePuy, in particular, was energized by the 1973 Middle East War to seek data and concepts useful to the field manual. But the war also created a powerful incentive to move forward on the field manual and DePuy used that to sustain his aggressive schedule for publication.

Closing Comments

The FM was a surface reflection of a deep and challenging problem. The Army was in trouble in fundamental ways. These two documents reflected the commitment that top level people in an organization can make to resolve strategic level problems. If there was politics, it was politics rooted in principles. If this was management of innovation, it was management with substantive purpose.

It should also be appreciated that the leadership in both evolutions of the FM were substantively and actively involved in preparing of the FMs. They did not manipulate or manage the development of these documents from a distance. They became immersed in the basic intellectual debate; sometimes they were the forcing function in the debate--creating the issues, insuring that others reacted to them, etc. Certainly their personalities, their style, their ego, etc. intruded into this. That is to be expected. As in good corporations they were leaders. Leadership does make a difference, especially in matters of strategy.