

## Conclusions of the Empirical Example

**Abstract** The discussion above demonstrates that it is possible to acquire useful knowledge for military purposes by studying the prelude to the conflict in Bosnia from a field theory perspective. As seen the method here is more the historian's than one which one would need on a contemporary example. But the case here was to present the use of the theory, not of the methods. As has been said earlier, one can use almost any kind of method when one works with field theory.

**Keywords** Bosnia · Field theory · PSYOPS

The course of events was described from the strategic down to the operational level as appropriate to the discussion. If the international community had made serious efforts to consider the effects they wanted to achieve, apart from those for a very short term, they would possibly have acted differently. It involves consequence analysis, but also looking at the overall political situation. It was a question of not fully understanding the logic of the field. If one does not understand how the field works then neither will one be able to progress to the next stage and possibly use field theory as a tool. What do the actors want to achieve and how can they be persuaded to change strategy? These questions should serve to direct the handling of this type of situation. An analysis of events

was conducted using field theory, with the theoretical terms sometimes clearly shown and sometimes indicated through the use of synonyms. Even though the actors did not always think in field theory terms, it is still possible to apply that perspective. To that should be added that much indicates that Milošević and Tudjman, without any actual theoretical knowledge, could think and act in a manner reminiscent of the field theory approach. That is something you can and also probably actually do if you are an actor on the field. The opposite can be said about many of the other actors who really did not try to understand the social field and thus really did not take the duel-situation between them and their counterparts seriously.

One can also see that it was possible to extrapolate the coming events by studying the actors and that their rationality also could be perceived. This is exactly the information one needs if one wants to affect actors by changing the social structure on a field. PSYOPS could be applied right through the whole event chain, not only during the phase when open war was played out. Even a bombing or an assassination of other actors than those you want to affect can be part of a PSYOPS operation. Exactly what could have been done is speculative and beyond the point of this text. The important thing is that it was possible to operate in this setting with a social field perspective as guidance.

The aim has been to show that field theory can fulfil the criteria necessary for a theory to qualify as a valuable instrument for military planning. The discussion has demonstrated that social theory can be employed as an operational tool. The theory can serve to encourage reflection and therefore refine one's thoughts, provided that it is first understood and assimilated as a way of thinking. This provision was fulfilled when the theory was shown to be able to be linked, for example, to the questions and issues that a military intervention might have to face. The theory was also shown to be applicable to the empirical example given. One counter to this claim is of course that it is a *theoretical* examination of empirical data that has been conducted. The next step is to apply the theory in an actual empirical study. But for this to be possible the theory must first be further developed and then practical measures taken to enable theoretical ambitions to be realised—in other words a task outside this study. One question that is inherent and needs to be answered following this type of study is: what resources are required to enable the creation of a field theory image of military area of operations?

As shown above, it might seem an easy thing to identify how the enemy is structured and what his possibilities are on the social field, and by that outmanoeuvre him. But as Carl von Clausewitz stated “Everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is difficult”.<sup>1</sup> What is the catch then? There are certainly many, but now when we have this perspective laid out in front of us, then we can go one step further. We have already discussed that people are structured to value certain things on a social field and that they are also structured to most likely not do certain things according to their habitus. But these limitations apply to the other side as well, to our forces or our allies. We are structured by our culture, upbringing, regulations, rules and schooling in general to do certain things and not do others. On top of that we are not only becoming an actor on the local political field, we are at the same time acting on a multitude of other social fields. Our forces are, for example, acting on a military social field, with its own rules, values and limitations. These limitations from our own culture leave us severely limited when it comes to fitting our actions towards a local social field, and against the habitus of the local actors (collective or individual ones), or just trying to act together with allies can actually provide a daunting task as collective habitus varies between nations and organisations. Things which might make sense for us might be counterproductive seen from the local perspective. For example, forbidding all Baath party members to be employed by the US administration in Iraq might have been a good idea if it was not almost equal to forbidding anyone having knowledge of administration to have a job within the Iraqi state. Or the initial idea to leave out the high priests of Iraq from the political process was clearly a misunderstanding of the political role Islam had and still has in Iraq.

By way of a start it is suggested that the approach would be interesting to apply to a staff exercise. A number of practical questions need to be examined, which would be best addressed by conducting an exercise in the form of an experiment. There will certainly be some need for the staff to have read up on Pierre Bourdieu, at least one or two of the more solid works he has written, like *Logic of Practice*, *The Rules of Art*, *The Field of Cultural Production*, or why not his earliest field study on the Kabyle *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. As an example of this, an

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<sup>1</sup>Carl von Clausewitz (1991). Book 1, Chap. 7.

important type of issue is where the borderline between the operational and the two strategic levels goes when conducting an analysis of the field. In an operational assessment of the field, one might consider setting priority on a particular process to examine the structure of the field, so that certain actors, who for political reasons should not be engaged, are affected in a negative way. This will of course generate frictions. These frictions, however, lie embedded in the different levels of the structure, rather than as a result of the application of field theory. The latter is more directed towards illuminating problems and provides an overall picture to which the various levels of command can refer. However, exactly how this will happen is an empirical issue best examined through experiment. What the study does bring to light is that field theory will be most effective if the intervention force is in the operations area for a protracted period, when comprehensive information gathering can be conducted and be fruitful in the long run.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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