
Chapter 2

Planning Theory

“ . . . [A] good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan next week.”¹

—George S. Patton, Jr.

“The Senior Commander of a force plans the battle in its broader sense and is responsible for ultimate success or failure. However, once a subordinate unit has been committed to action, he must, for the time being, limit his activities to providing the necessary support and insuring the coordination of all components. Regardless of how well conceived the Senior Commander’s plan may be, it can be nullified if his front line platoons are incapable of carrying out the mission assigned.”²

—3d Marine Division during World War II

Having reached a common understanding of the nature of planning, we turn to developing a theory about plans and the planning process that will serve as the basis for an effective approach to military planning.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Our study of the theory of planning starts with a generic description of the planning process.³ This is not meant to prescribe a sequence for staff action but rather to describe in general terms what transpires during planning regardless of the echelon at which the planning occurs, the specific circumstances, or the procedures used. In other words, this is generally what planning involves. (See figure 1, page 31.)

Planning generally starts with *assessing the situation*. We gather information and orient ourselves to the conditions. We identify the various elements and dynamics of the situation, centers of gravity, and critical vulnerabilities. We make projections about likely future developments. In short, we identify the problem or problems to be solved.

Based on our assessment of the situation, we *establish the goals and objectives* we expect to pursue, including the underlying intent. These goals and objectives describe the desired future that we expect to realize. They also establish the

standards by which we will judge success. Depending on the circumstances, goals and objectives may be assigned by higher authority, or we may establish our own goals and objectives based on our situation assessment. During this phase we also resolve conflicts between competing goals—not at all uncommon in a complex undertaking like war—and may have to decide what to do when furthering one goal requires compromising or even sacrificing another.⁴ While commanders play an integral part in all aspects of the planning process, they make their greatest contribution during the establishment of goals and objectives. The formulation of goals and objectives along with their underlying intent is central to the conduct of effective planning.

Having envisioned the desired future, we next *conceptualize a course of action* by which we expect to realize that future. We describe the salient features of the plan and the interactions among them. Next, having developed the plan in broad outline, we *detail the course of action*. This phase includes *execution* planning—developing practical measures for carrying out the concept. The detailing phase may not always be needed; sometimes only a broad plan is required. Frequently, detailed planning may be left until later or may be passed to another, lower-level organization.

An important part of the planning process is *evaluating the course of action*, in which we try to identify likely difficulties or coordination problems as well as the probable consequences of the planned action. We think through the tentative plan to

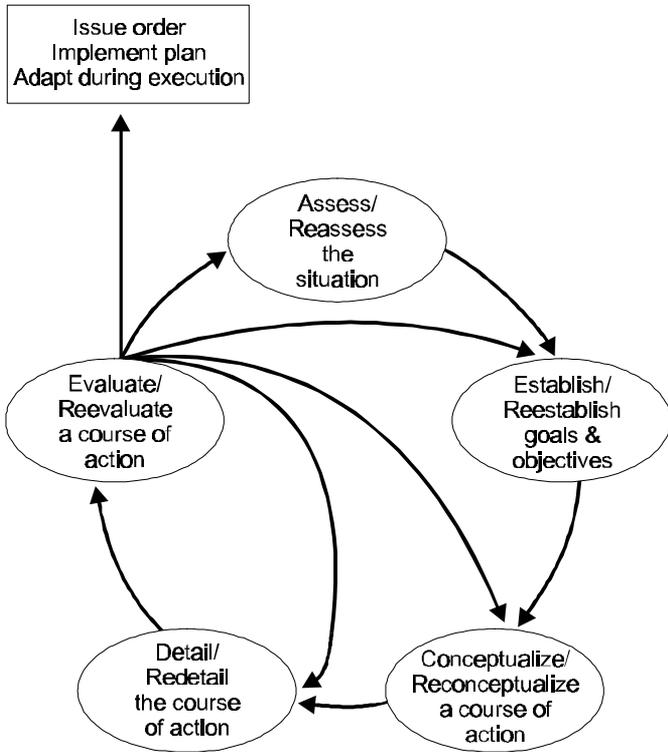


Figure 1. The planning process.

estimate whether it will help us reach the desired future state. Evaluation is not a rote procedure; each plan should be

scrutinized on its own merits. Evaluation may force us to re-visit any of the other phases if discrepancies arise. Not only does evaluation appraise the quality of the plan, but it should also uncover potential execution problems, decisions, and contingencies. In addition, evaluation influences the way we look at the problem and so may renew the cycle. In some instances, evaluation may be a distinct phase after a plan is developed—such as when a senior headquarters formally analyzes a deliberate plan—but more often evaluation is an embedded activity occurring concurrently with the plans being developed.⁵ For this reason, figure 1 shows evaluation both as a distinct phase in sequence and as a broader activity touching all the other phases.

Having gone through one or more iterations of the process, we issue a plan in some form of directive or instruction— anything from a brief warning order, to an oral fragmentary order, to a written operation plan or order complete with annexes. However, a plan does not emerge fully formed and articulated after one iteration, to be executed as is by subordinate echelons. A plan evolves over time, and so we continue to cycle through the process as time permits, refining the plan until the time for execution, at which point the latest version of the plan becomes the basis for action. (However, it is important to point out that continuing to revise a plan as time permits does not necessarily mean adding ever-increasing detail or complexity.) In fact, planning continues even after execution has begun, as we continue to revise later phases of action as the situation

unfolds. An important aspect of this model of the planning process is that much of planning is actually replanning.

Figure 1 is a simple schematic to aid understanding of the planning process. The phases roughly follow this sequence. However, it is important to remember that planning is not, in reality, a simple sequence of steps. It is a complex process of interacting activities. Any one phase in this model may actually involve various planning activities. The phases often occur in parallel rather than in series, and the distinctions between them are rarely clean. Furthermore, any phase in the process may feed back to a previous one. For example, conceptualizing a course of action generally follows establishing goals and objectives; but it is difficult to establish feasible and meaningful goals without some idea of how we might accomplish them. Likewise, it is difficult to conceptualize a good course of action without some idea of the details of execution.

Finally, this model is not meant to suggest that a single planner or planning group necessarily performs the entire process from beginning to end. It is likely that different echelons may contribute to the same planning process, with higher echelons establishing objectives and broad concepts and lower echelons detailing the course of action. We should keep in mind that planning is going on in other organizations— above, below, and adjacent—at the same time and that all this planning is interrelated. This complex interaction is one of the reasons that effective planning cannot be reduced to a linear sequence of steps.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Effective planning requires two vastly different types of mental activity: analysis and synthesis.⁶ Analysis generally corresponds to the science of planning. Analysis is the systematic process of studying a subject by successively decomposing the subject into parts and dealing with each of the parts in turn. Analysis can support decisionmaking at the beginning of the planning process by processing information for the decisionmaker and by studying issues that impact on the decision. It can be used to evaluate potential courses of action by studying feasibility and requirements. It can be used to turn a broad concept of operations into a practicable plan by decomposing the concept into individual tasks. What analysis cannot do is make the creative decisions that are central to the planning process.

The other fundamental type of planning activity is synthesis. Synthesis generally receives less attention than analysis, but it is just as important—if not more so. While analysis involves systematically decomposing a whole into parts, synthesis is the creative process of integrating elements into a cohesive whole. It is a function of creativity and judgment. It is not systematic. Synthesis cannot be reduced to a set of procedures; in fact, to try to do so is counterproductive because it restricts the creativity that is essential to the process. The key judgments essential to effective planning—establishing aims and objectives, formulating the intent behind assigned missions, and devising a course of action—simply cannot be made by analysis, no matter how thorough or efficient. Such aspects of planning cannot

be grasped by decomposing the subject into parts. Instead, such judgments can be made effectively only through synthesis.

Planning requires both the judgment of synthesis and the systematic study of analysis in some combination. The two are complementary. Analysis may precede synthesis by identifying and structuring the elements that can be combined. Analysis may follow synthesis by scrutinizing and adding details to its product. Nonetheless, analysis cannot replace synthesis, nor is synthesis possible without analysis. The required combination of analysis and synthesis in any particular case depends on the situation, especially the stage in the planning process and the nature of the activity being planned.

THE PLANNING HIERARCHY

Planning activities occupy a hierarchical continuum that includes conceptual, functional, and detailed planning. (See figure 2, page 36.) At the highest level is what we can call *conceptual* planning. It establishes aims, objectives, and intentions and involves developing broad concepts for action. In general, conceptual planning is a process of creative synthesis supported by analysis. It generally corresponds to the *art* of war. Developing tactical, operational, or strategic concepts for the overall conduct of military actions is conceptual planning.

What to do & why

Concept planning establishes goals & objectives as well as broad schemes for achieving them.

Functional planning designs supporting plans for discrete functional activities.

Detailed planning works out the particulars of execution based on goal & objectives already provided.

How to do it

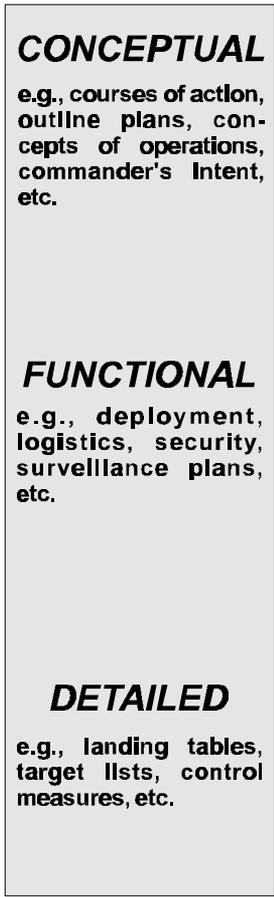


Figure 2. The planning hierarchy.

At the lowest level is what we can call *detailed* planning that is concerned with translating the broad concept into a complete and practicable plan. Detailed planning generally corresponds to the *science* of war and encompasses the specifics of implementation. It is generally an analytical process of decomposing the concept into executable tasks, although it likely involves some elements of synthesis as well. Detailed planning works out the scheduling, coordination, or technical issues involved with moving, sustaining, administering, and directing military forces. Unlike conceptual planning, detailed planning does not involve the establishment of objectives; detailed planning works out actions to accomplish objectives assigned by higher authority.

Between the highest and lowest levels of planning is what we can call *functional* planning that involves elements of both conceptual and detailed planning in different degrees. Functional planning is concerned with designing supporting plans for discrete functional activities like maneuver, fires, logistics, intelligence, and force protection.⁷

Due to the importance of conceptual planning, the commander will normally personally direct the formulation of plans at this level. While the commander is also engaged in both functional and detailed planning, the specific aspects of these are often left to the staff.

In general, conceptual planning should provide the basis for all subsequent planning. As our model of the planning process shows, planning should generally progress from the general to the specific. For example, the overall intent and concept of operations lead to subordinate intents and concepts of operations as well as to supporting functional concepts. These in turn lead eventually to the specifics of execution. However, the dynamic does not operate in only one direction. Conceptual design must be responsive to functional constraints. For example, the realities of deployment schedules (a functional concern) can dictate employment schemes (a conceptual concern). Functional design in turn must be responsive to more detailed requirements of execution. In this way, the different levels of planning mutually influence one another.

MODES OF PLANNING

Planning activities also fall into one of three modes which we can think of as occupying a horizontal continuum based on the level of uncertainty. These modes are commitment, contingency, and orientation planning.⁸ (See figure 3.) When we are reasonably confident in our forecasts about the future, we perform *commitment planning*—we commit to a particular plan, and we commit resources to that plan. Some aspects of military actions and some aspects of the future are more predictable

than others, and for these we can plan in commitment mode. This commitment allows us to undertake the physical preparations necessary for action such as staging supplies or task-organizing and deploying forces. Commitment planning does not mean that plans are unalterable, but it may mean that changes we wish to make in this mode may not be easy or immediate. We should always remember that there is no such thing as absolute certainty in war, and even during commitment planning we should continue to assess the situation and be prepared to adapt as necessary. Of the three modes, commitment planning allows the highest level of preparation but has the least flexibility.

When we are not certain enough about the future to commit ourselves to one plan of action, but we have a reasonably good idea of the possibilities, we perform *contingency planning*—we plan for several different contingencies to the extent that circumstances permit without committing to any one contingency. Contingency planning is important in allowing us

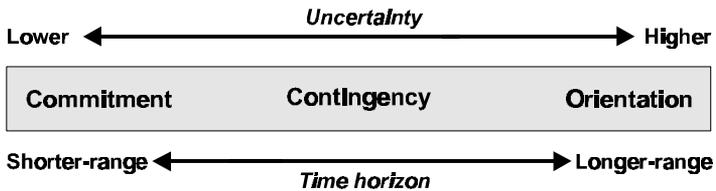


Figure 3. Planning modes.

to respond quickly when situations requiring action arise. In contingency planning, we normally do not plan in the same detail as in commitment planning, but we lay the groundwork for exploiting likely developments. The contingency mode balances level of preparation with flexibility.

When the uncertainty level is so high that it is not worthwhile to commit to a plan or even to develop particular contingencies, we perform *orientation planning*. Here the object is not to settle on any particular line of action but instead to focus on assessing the situation and to design a flexible preliminary plan that allows us to respond to a broad variety of circumstances. In orientation planning, we normally do not have a specified, purposeful objective other than to learn about the situation and identify feasible objectives. We develop plans which shape the action in broad terms in an effort to cultivate the conditions which may allow more decisive action later. For example, orientation planning may commit only limited forces while maintaining the bulk of the force in reserve, ready to respond to the situation as it evolves. Orientation planning thus consists of designing responsiveness and flexibility into the organization. Of the three modes, orientation planning provides the most flexibility but the least preparation for a specific mission.

The planning modes also generally reflect the planning sequence. Finding ourselves in a new situation, we first undertake orientation planning to familiarize ourselves with the environment and make basic provisions. Having become more familiar

with the situation, we begin to develop different contingencies and to plan for each as the situation permits. As the time for execution nears, we commit to one course of action and make the necessary preparations. Because uncertainty is usually related to how far into the future we consider, the planning modes also correlate to planning horizons. For long-term planning, we are more likely to plan in orientation mode, while for short-term planning, we are more likely to plan in commitment mode. However, the level of uncertainty is more important than the horizon; for example, if a near-term situation is highly uncertain, orientation planning may be our only option.

The critical lesson of this discussion is that different situations require different planning modes and that we must be able to recognize the mode appropriate for a given situation.

PLANNING PARAMETERS: DETAIL AND HORIZON

Effective planning depends on an appreciation for the appropriate level of detail and the appropriate planning horizon. The planner must continuously keep these considerations in mind; there is no established level of detail or planning horizon that can be determined by set rules. These parameters are situation-dependent, and they require judgment, although, in general, the higher the echelon of command, the less should be the level of detail and the more distant should be the planning horizon.

The planner must continuously deal with the issue of detail or specificity. Some types of activities require greater detail than others. Some types of situations permit greater detail than others. For example, we can and should generally plan in greater detail for a deliberate attack than for a hasty attack. In some respects, the distinction between conceptual and detailed planning is a matter of degree—what constitutes detail at one echelon is broad concept at a lower echelon. In general, the more uncertain and changeable the situation, the less the detail in which we can plan.

As with the level of detail, the appropriate planning horizon—how far into the future we plan—is a constant concern for every planner. If we plan using an unnecessarily close horizon, we are likely to reach a point at which we are unprepared for future action. If we plan using too distant a horizon, we risk developing a plan that turns out to have little relation to actual developments. The critical concern is to identify appropriate planning horizons for each mode of planning. We will often find ourselves working with several different planning horizons at once, as we simultaneously plan in different modes for several different phases of upcoming evolutions. For example, we may be performing commitment planning for an imminent operation, developing contingencies for later phases, and performing broad orientation planning for still later phases. In general, the more uncertain the situation, the closer must be our commitment and contingency planning horizons.

DECISION AND EXECUTION PLANNING

Another way to categorize planning is by its relationship to decisionmaking. Planning that occurs before the decision we can call *decision* planning. Decision planning supports the actual command decisionmaking process by helping to develop an estimate of the situation and by generating, evaluating, and modifying possible courses of action. It studies the feasibility and supportability of the various courses under consideration. Decision planning is generally conceptual planning. It involves synthesizing various elements of information into a course of action. This process is often supported by some analysis such as developing estimates of feasibility, supportability, and requirements.

Planning that occurs after the decision has been made is *execution* planning.⁹ Execution planning translates an approved course of action into an understandable and executable plan through the preparation of plans or orders. Execution planning principally involves functional and detailed planning and analysis, although it can involve some synthesis and conceptual design. Execution planning at one echelon becomes the basis for decision planning at subordinate levels as the subordinate develops a course of action to accomplish the mission assigned from above.

Where planning time is limited, there may be a tradeoff between decision and execution planning because the time given to one must normally be taken from the other. Is the activity of generating and evaluating additional courses of action worth the time and effort when it may occur at the expense of execution planning or other important preparations? If we already have a feasible course of action, are we better served by spending our limited planning time preparing for the practical problems of execution? There are no simple answers to these questions. The appropriate approach depends on the situation. Patton's epigraph at the beginning of this chapter suggests that what matters in the end is aggressive and timely execution rather than perfect design.

DELIBERATE AND RAPID PLANNING

All planning must be based on sensitivity to the time available.¹⁰ When sufficient time is available, and there is no advantage to be gained by acting more quickly, we perform *deliberate* planning. Deliberate planning is performed well in advance of expected execution, often during peacetime or before the initiation of a deliberate operation. Deliberate planning relies heavily on assumptions about circumstances that will exist when the plan is implemented.

When time is short, or there is an incentive to act quickly, we perform *rapid* planning. Whereas deliberate planning relies on significant assumptions about the future, rapid planning is generally based on current conditions and is therefore more responsive to changing events. Rapid planning tends to be less formal than deliberate planning.

While distinct in concept, in practice deliberate and rapid planning form a continuum and complement each other. Early in the planning process, if appropriate, we may perform deliberate planning. As the time for execution approaches, we move into rapid planning as we replan. Deliberate planning thus forms the basis for later rapid planning, while rapid planning often amounts to the revision of earlier deliberate plans.

FORWARD AND REVERSE PLANNING

We can further distinguish between forward and reverse planning.¹¹ (See figure 4, page 46.) Forward planning involves starting with the present conditions and laying out potential decisions and actions forward in time, identifying the next feasible step, the next after that, and so on. Forward planning focuses on what is feasible in the relatively near term. In forward planning, the envisioned end state serves as a distant and general aiming point rather than as a specific objective.

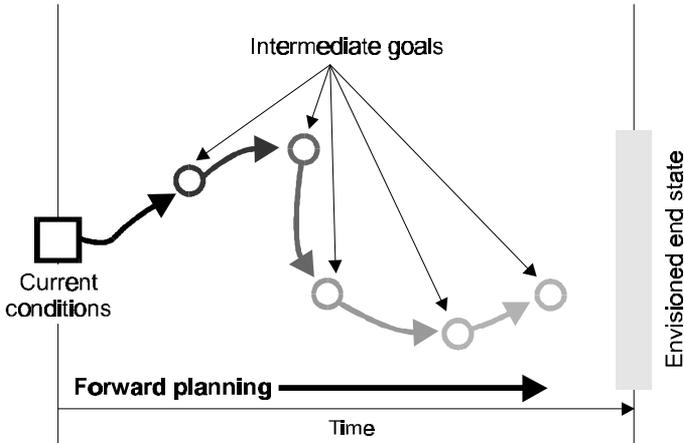


Figure 4. Forward planning.

Forward planning answers the question: *Where can we get to next?*

Reverse planning involves starting with the envisioned end state and working backward in time toward the present, identifying the next-to-last step, the next before that, and so on. (See figure 5.) Reverse planning focuses on the long term goal. It answers the question: *Where do we eventually want to get?* To plan effectively in reverse, we must have a clear and relatively permanent goal in mind, or we must be able to define the goal broadly enough that it will provide a valid point of reference regardless of how the situation may develop. Consequently,

reverse planning is possible only in relatively predictable situations. For example, we often use reverse planning to allocate available preparation time when there is a fixed deadline.

Of the two methods, forward planning is the more natural because it is consistent with the progress of time and the way we act.¹² Reverse planning is more difficult, both because it is opposite to the way we naturally think and act and because goals in war are rarely clear or unchanging over the long term.

In practice, planning effectively often means combining the two methods, simultaneously using forward planning to provide an idea of what is feasible in the short term and reverse planning to provide a point of aim over the long term. The

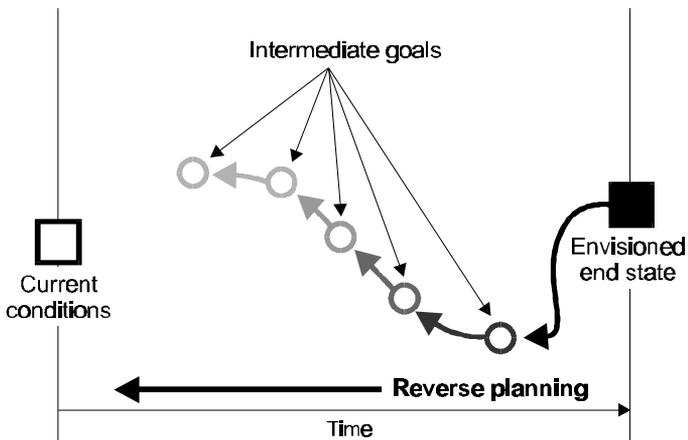


Figure 5. Reverse planning.

envisioned end state provides a point of aim for planning purposes at any moment in time. It is not necessarily a fixed destination. We may have to change our desired goal if, as we move forward in time, the situation changes dramatically. On the other hand, a well-chosen and enduring end state may provide continuity and focus even in the midst of turbulent and changing conditions.

COMPONENTS OF A PLAN

Regardless of other characteristics, every plan usually contains several basic categories of information.¹³ Each plan should have a *desired outcome*, which includes the intent (purpose) for achieving that outcome. The desired outcome often includes a time by which the mission must be accomplished. This element of a plan is essential because it forms the basis for the other components of the plan. Goals and objectives may be general, in which case they are defined by relatively few criteria and offer broad latitude in their manner of accomplishment, or they may be more specific, in which case they are defined by numerous criteria and are more narrowly bounded. We should recognize that there is a critical distinction between general goals, which may be good, and vague ones, which are not. While general goals have relatively few defining criteria, vague goals lack any usable criteria by which we can measure success.¹⁴ In a complex and difficult enterprise like war, few

things are as important or as difficult as setting clear and useful goals.¹⁵ This is a skill requiring judgment and vision. The reality is that, given the nature of war, we will often have to act with unclear goals. Unclear goals are generally better than no goals, and waiting for clear goals before acting can paralyze an organization.

Every plan includes the *actions intended to achieve the desired outcome*. Most plans include several actions, arranged in both time and space. These actions are usually tasks assigned to subordinate elements. Depending on circumstances, these tasks may be described in greater or lesser detail over farther or nearer planning horizons. Every plan should also describe the *resources to be used* in executing those actions, to include the type, amount, and allocation of resources as well as how, when, and where those resources are to be provided. Resource planning covers the personnel or units assigned to different tasks and other resources such as supplies or, in noncombat situations, funding.

Finally, a plan should include some *control process* by which we can supervise execution. This control process includes necessary coordination measures as well as some feedback mechanism to identify shortcomings in the plan and make necessary adjustments. The control process is a design for anticipating the need for change and for making decisions during execution. In other words, the plan itself should contain the means for changing the plan. Some plans are less adjustable than others, but nearly every plan requires some mechanism for

making adjustments. This is a component of plans which often does not receive adequate consideration. Many plans stop short of identifying the signals, conditions, and feedback mechanisms that will indicate successful or dysfunctional execution.¹⁶

TIGHT AND LOOSE COUPLING

We can describe plans as tightly or loosely coupled.¹⁷ Coupling is a relative term referring to how closely two or more actions in a plan interact. It is one of the most important features in plans. Tight coupling means there is a close relationship between two parts. Coordination must be precise. What happens to one directly affects the other. Tightly coupled plans have more time-dependent processes, and those processes are also more constant—that is, they must occur at specific times and in specific sequences. Plans with many tight couplings can be described as fully *integrated* or *synchronized*. Highly integrated plans may make efficient use of assets but usually at the expense of flexibility.

Under proper conditions, tightly coupled plans can achieve near-optimal results. However, tightly coupled plans do not tolerate friction or disruption well—a disruption to one phase of the plan can reverberate through the entire plan and cause systemic failure. In tightly coupled systems, tolerance for friction or disruption must specifically be designed into the plan. This can be a problem because predicting when and where friction

will arise is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Tightly coupled plans tend to be easily damaged and difficult to repair. In general, plans requiring continuous, close coordination between units are tightly coupled. Likewise, plans requiring numerous restrictive control measures, on-order taskings, or short phases are usually tightly coupled.

By comparison, loose coupling refers to plans in which the interactions between parts are not close. Loosely coupled plans thus do not require close coordination between elements. They permit greater freedom of action and variation in execution. In general, plans that allow subordinates broad latitude without having to worry about adversely affecting the rest of the plan are loosely coupled. Loosely coupled plans thus tend to be more flexible and easier to execute than tightly coupled plans.

Loosely coupled plans may not be as efficient or precise as tightly coupled ones, but they tolerate friction and disruption better. Plans with many loosely coupled tasks can be described as *modular* or *asynchronous*—that is, each part of the plan is roughly independent of the others, which means that any part can be modified or repaired without affecting the other parts.

Whether a plan should have tight or loose coupling depends on a variety of factors, most important of which is the nature of the action being planned. Some plans or actions require tight coupling. When the integration and allocation of scarce resources, including time, are the overriding concern, plans generally require tight coupling. An example of tight coupling is a close air support strike that requires the aircraft to be on target

at precisely the right moment, a marking round on the target seconds before the aircraft makes its attack run, and indirect fire to suppress enemy air defenses immediately before and after the attack. Likewise, carrier flight deck operations require tight coupling. Other plans, such as for a main attack by one battalion and supporting attack by adjacent battalions, may not require close coupling.

If there is little chance of disruption or unanticipated developments, relatively tight coupling may be appropriate. However, in situations with high levels of friction, chance, unpredictability, and interaction between independent wills, loose coupling is more appropriate. This is especially true in cases—such as in most tactical situations—in which disruption to the plan is inevitable and repairs will be necessary.

SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY

Finally, we can describe plans by how simple or complicated they are.¹⁸ In large part, simplicity and complexity derive from the numbers of separate actions or parts in a plan. The more actions a plan contains, the more complicated it is—to include the number of different phases, branches, sequels, contingencies, and decisions. In general, the greater the number of parts, the greater the amount of coordination required among them. There are even more sources of complexity than the number of parts. Complexity also stems from the interactions among the

parts of a plan. For example, integrated plans, with their numerous tight couplings, tend to be more complicated than modular plans. Plans with high levels of detail and structure—as in numerous control measures—tend to be more complicated than coarser and less structured plans. Centralized plans, which place numerous actions under the direct command of a single authority, tend to be more complicated than decentralized plans, which distribute authority.

When it comes to simplicity and complexity, the needs of executors and planners may sometimes be in conflict.¹⁹ Given time to plan, planners may naturally tend to develop increasingly complex plans with numerous decision points, branches, or phases because this is a useful way of deepening and structuring their knowledge of a situation. The increasing complexity of a plan often reflects the increasing understanding of planners.

However, the needs of execution are usually better served by simplicity. We generally consider simplicity a virtue in plans, and this is a valid principle, but in practice, the level of complexity of a plan should be consistent with the nature of the situation. A plan that is overly simple in dealing with a complex problem is no better than a plan that is unnecessarily complicated. Some plans are unavoidably complicated by nature—such as an air plan, for example, which must account for a high number of sorties and a variety of different functions. Other plans can be extremely simple in concept even though they may involve the actions of large formations. Here, the

commander disciplines the planning process by ensuring that the plan emphasizes simplicity while at the same time conveying the appropriate level of detail. It is correct to say that the plan should be as simple as the situation allows. There is a variety of ways to simplify plans, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

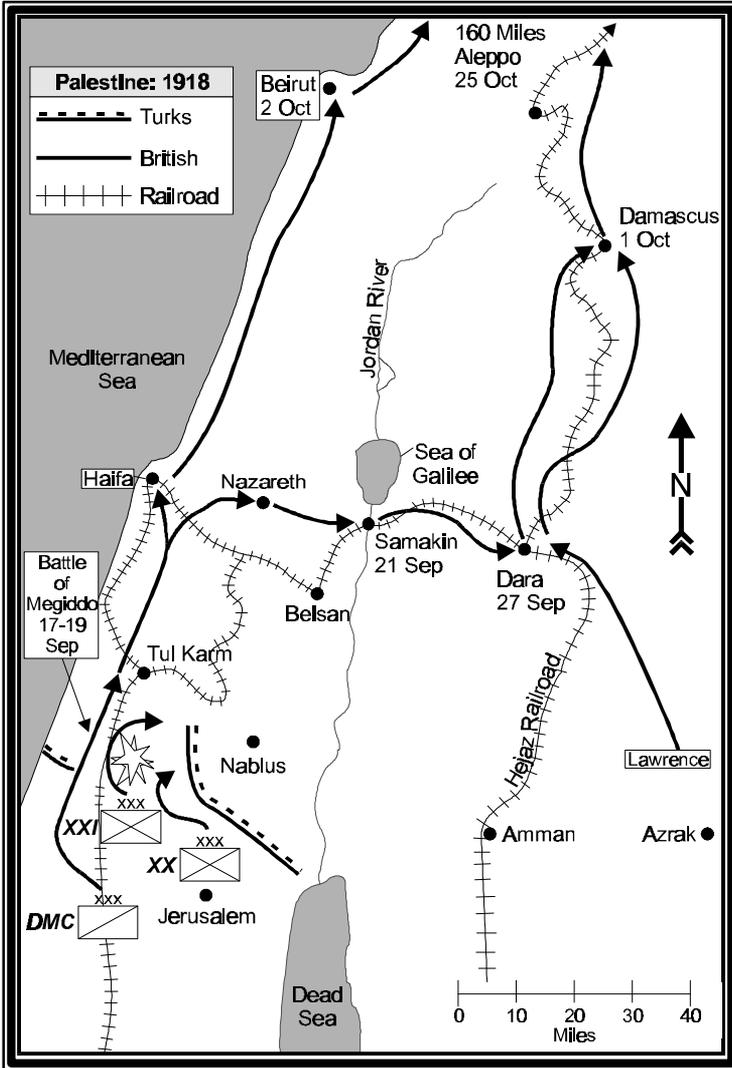
A CASE STUDY: PALESTINE 1918

General Sir Edmund Allenby's campaign against the Turks in Palestine in the fall of 1918 illustrates the use of the planning concepts discussed in this publication. Three Turkish armies totaling some 36,000 men and 350 guns defended a line from the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley. Allenby's British force of 57,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry, and 540 guns faced them from the south. Allenby's goal was the final defeat of the Turks in Palestine.

Allenby's plan directed the actions of three corps, T. E. Lawrence's Arab force, and supporting air forces. Yet his plan was inspiringly simple in concept. He would mass his forces to create a breakthrough along the Mediterranean shore, near Megiddo. His Desert Mounted Corps (DMC) would pour north through the gap on the heels of his infantry and flood into the Turkish rear while the British line would swing north and east, pivoting on the Jordan Valley, like a huge gate.

Keeping his final objective of Aleppo firmly in mind, Allenby planned his initial phases meticulously and the later phases only in broad outline. The initial breakthrough, which would become the Battle of Megiddo, was planned over the course of weeks and included a carefully coordinated deception operation. The deception operation especially required detailed planning involving the creation of phony assembly areas in the Jordan Valley and the conspicuous shifting of forces east by daylight and back under cover of darkness. A race meet was elaborately planned and widely publicized for the day of the offensive.

The offensive started when Lawrence's Arab guerrillas swept out of the eastern desert on September 17th to cut the railways around Dara in the Turkish rear. Lawrence's action was only very loosely coupled with the other elements of the plan. It supported the rest of the



plan indirectly by threatening the enemy rear and causing the Turks to commit reserves to Dara, but due to physical separation and the independent nature of Lawrence's mission, there was no requirement for direct coordination. Allenby's air forces also bombed Dara, but these air operations were again only loosely coupled with Lawrence's actions.

However, the main attack to create and exploit the breakthrough was closely coordinated. XXIst and XXth Corps attacked together, with XXIst Corps creating the gap on the left and XXth Corps staying abreast to prevent enemy forces from escaping east. Their operations, and the air forces supporting them, were tightly coupled. The two divisions within XXth Corps started out independently of one another but converged on Nablus in a coordinated attack. The Desert Mounted Corps' initial exploitation was also tightly coupled to XXIst Corps' advance, but once the pursuit began, coupling was much looser as cavalry divisions and even brigades were assigned independent objectives.

The initial operation was deliberately planned and executed with little need for modification. Because of the uncertain and disorderly nature of the situation after the breakthrough, the plan for the pursuit was of necessity more flexible and more rapidly developed. Unfettered by

by the need for close coordination with other units, Allenby's forces, led by his cavalry, raced generally northward through the disintegrating Turkish armies. By October 1st, Allenby had captured Damascus. Aleppo fell on October 25th. Starting with a tightly coupled deliberate attack to rupture the fortified Turkish defenses and moving into a loosely coupled pursuit, Allenby planned and conducted a masterful campaign, advancing 360 miles in 38 days, destroying three Turkish armies, and knocking Turkey out of the war.²⁰

CONCLUSION

We have addressed planning from several different aspects. This discussion outlines the range of factors governing the form that planning and plans may take. We have described the different modes of planning based on the level of situational uncertainty—from commitment planning to orientation planning. We have looked at the hierarchy of planning from conceptual planning, which deals with broad schemes and intentions, to detailed planning, which deals with the specifics of execution. We have discussed the basic parameters which all

planning must consider—the proper level of specificity and the proper time horizon. We have compared the characteristics of deliberate and rapid planning as well as forward and reverse planning. We have described the different features of plans, such as tight and loose coupling and simplicity and complexity. Planning effectively requires achieving the proper balance among these various and sometimes competing factors and characteristics. As we will see in chapter 3, the commander plays the key role in helping to achieve this balance, tailoring the approach to planning to the requirements of the specific situation.