Militaire misstappen van de Nederlandse Leeuw
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This is a book about failing military operations on the battlefield, that is to say the non-fulfilment of assignments of military units. The problem reads as follows: which aspects of synergy, freedom of action and appropriate acting had been neglected by the military management through which their units failed in the execution of their mission. In six case studies land operations of both armies of the Netherlands and the former Netherlands Indies have been examined. The selected period 1825-1950 covers the process of transformation between the Napoleonic warfare of encirclement and flanking and the modern instrumentalized warfare of ‘pushing buttons’.

In succession, the Java-war (1825-1830) in the Dutch East Indies had been examined, followed up with the Belgian revolution of 1830 and the Lombok expedition of 1894, also in the Dutch East Indies. The second part of this study firstly dealt with operations at the beginning of World War II when the Germans invaded The Netherlands and secondly with peace forcing actions shortly after the War when the Dutch tried to reestablish their former political position in the Indonesian archipelago and for that very reason military actions flared up twice.

The study of warfare can be carried out from several points of view and in the nature of things with different intentions. Barry Strauss and Josiah Ober focused on antiquity and derived lessons from ancient warfare. The premise is that the analysis and evaluation of ancient policy and strategy failures is a fruitful source for building policy/strategy models. Perhaps the most important lesson was that many of the wars discussed were unnecessary and, what is more, each of them resulted in catastrophic damage of social life. The meaning of this is the compelling requirement of a decision-making structure which has the power to realize that going to war might not be the best solution to the nation’s policy. Great warriors and brilliant leaders have lost wars in spite of winning battles because of their strategic illusions and failures of intellect. Strauss and Ober made an appeal to both modern strategists and policymakers to encourage a mind-set of intellectual habits, which has to be incorporated into the process of planning and rethinking. It will lead to a course whose context and consequences are better understood and will avoid making disastrous errors. Their emphasis on the highest levels of grand strategy and military strategy rather than on tactics and battles was a methodological decision. It was suggested that merely an overall approach could give insights in the intertwined link of policy and strategy. This link is usually critical for the outcome of war.

Eliot Cohen and John Gooch moved the scenery of failing but competent
military organizations from antiquity to a rather modern period, which is sufficiently close to the present-day 'automated battlefield'. The premise is that Western democracies shape their military organizations in important ways. In general these networks of military people reflect the social system for which they fight and so origins and the nature of failure depend on the political system. In short, are they free states or not? Covering a period of nearly sixty years (1915-1973), they dealt with military failures originating from incompetence rather than 'misfortunes'. In their 'disaster' theory three basic kinds of failure were developed: the failure to learn, to anticipate and to adapt. A combination of two kinds of failure will result in a failure of aggregation. Aggregate failures are not necessarily catastrophic since an ability to cope can make it possible to redeem error. When all three kinds of military failure occur together, catastrophe in the sense of serious risk of national collapse results. In their description of five different cases Cohen and Gooch examined successively institutional indictments and the nature of the failure(s). To that end each case was modeled into a matrix with a variable number of rows and columns. The rows consists of the relevant command levels, while the columns represents the different critical tasks. Some of these tasks were defined as critical, while other ones are marginal or catastrophic.

Cohen and Gooch claim to have developed a theory of failure. If military commanders do not stick to certain distinct rules, military operations will stagnate. In fact these rules have to be considered as 'strict formal military regularities'. As a matter of fact Cohen and Gooch gave a description of military failure categories which could be used as a scientific tool for analyzing battlefield processes. They scaled more or less a sequence of military failures from marginal through catastrophic. Such scaling will yield a hierarchy of failures and a framework built-up of well-defined touchstones. So the theory seems to have much to attract, yet unfortunately Cohen and Gooch omitted to formulate excellent definitions of battlefield processes. The least you might expect is a thorough description of critical functions/tasks in military units being crucial for reaching the set goals. Sad to relate Cohen and Gooch's meanings were not fulfilled. However it may be, the impulse they generated to developing a 'failure-taxonomy', is in itself very useful to theory-building in the field of warfare.

Consequently we applied Cohen and Gooch’s basic ideas as a useful tool for this study. For getting to the very root of military fightings one has to describe and analyze the decisionmaking process, which is also the essence of this book. Once involved in battle, the original commander’s order including his plan of execution only rarely will be carried out. Military fights on the battlefield are characterized by continuously correcting for drifts. In the military, organization planning processes have been subdue to strict rules. Like the well-known Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat analysis in marketing, also the military have their equally simple and very effective OTVEM-procedure (Opdracht-Terrein-Vijand-Eigen Middelen). 

In this research the OTVEM-model has been moulded in a model of decision making, in which the essential elements of a decision making process have been
By investigating which of these elements had not been paid attention to, had not properly been paid attention to or had not in time been paid attention to, in the plan of execution and/or in the carrying out on the battlefield, possible causes of failure can be discovered; indicated as military failures in this study.

These variables are supposed to have a direct influence on the fighting power: a necessity of synergy, freedom of action and appropriate acting (efficiency). The way managers are dealing with all those variables of our decision making model will be both an essential indicator for their competence of military management and an indicator for successfulness of their units.

Moreover in this study the line of an organization consisting of four levels is taken; one political and three military echelons. The 'grand strategy', being the politico-strategic level where expressions of national struggles unfold, will always be the source for all military actions. The 'theater strategy' unites the interactions of the armed forces as a whole within the entire theater of warfare, i.e. the overall conduct of the strategic, the operational and the tactical level.

The basic problem concerning the solution to the research subject is to find a way out of measuring the discrepancy between the projected battle (the standard) and the perceived reality. It is plausible to define the subject of military failures within the boundaries of a decision making model. This model should contain the critical factors (critical mass) of each (military) order, regardless of the level of management, which means that character, form, time, place and relevance of the order have been described in the model.

As already mentioned, this study includes six case-studies. With exception of the German invasion, the cases examined are standard examples of political disobedience to the constitutional authority of the Netherlands.

The German invasion was typically an act of international warfare, whereas the other cases can be identified either 'Imperialist war' or 'Civil war'. The Lombok-expedition and both the First and Second Dutch Military Action after the Second World War are examples of an imperialist war. The Java-war and the Belgian Revolution may be characterized as phenomena of civil warfare. The immediate reason for the Java-war was an unwilling and religious fanatic who, under the mask of Javanese nationalism, turned himself against the authorities, meanwhile mobilizing activists for insurrection towards the colonial government.

The Java-war became a symbol for Indonesian sovereignty and independency. A good 120 years later former 'servants' permanently challenged the languishing feudalism. They acted as political actors who were waiting for a wrong move of their adversary, i.e. the Dutch. And promptly the Dutch made serious mistakes, even twice. They lost patience and initiated war. A good 50 years earlier, an almost identical affair, although on a smaller scale, had taken place on the isle of Lombok. The extremely challenging conduct of the Balinese-Hindustani executives, being in search of political and cultural autonomy, resulted in a military expedition set up by the Dutch towards the Balinese rebels.

The question is now how the aforesaid discrepancy between the standard and
the perceived reality was 'measured'. To that end we accentuated the concept of efficiency, being the dominant parameter for trying out the organization's effectiveness. This concept of efficiency has been built up on four pillars:

- the techno-economic component (optimizing the sacrificed resources);
- the psycho-social component (maximizing the motivation of the system-members);
- the external social component, which has to do with the demands coming up from the society (maximizing the confrontation between the suppliers -political and military power- and the demanders -civil power);
- the management component (basically in their role of strategic decision makers).

The methodology we used gave us the opportunity to solve the problem and to determine -in general- that the inadequacy of the socio-political analysis of societies with which the Dutch are dealing, lay at the root of the failures of the Dutch strategic management. They failed to cope more effectively with revolutionary movements and their mental programming. As a result the responsible Dutch leaders made wrong estimates about the opponent's force and neglected the enemy's intentions. Consequently it initiated a chain of 'failures to adapt' and the results were dramatic. Most of these failures to adapt as well as to anticipate can be attributed to the so-called middle-line. So the necessary joining of the strategic apex to the operating core by the chain of middle-line managers was disconnected.