Characteristics of Successful Organizations

Reverse-Engineering the 1944 OSS Simple Sabotage Field Manual through the Lens of Classical Organization Theory

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Abstract

This Technical Memorandum reverse engineers the characteristics of a successful organization by examining, in the context of contemporary organization theory, the suggestions for organizational sabotage contained in the *Simple Sabotage Field Manual* published by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1944. The advice offered in the manual is evaluated against a framework consisting of Chester I. Barnard's three key elements of organization—willing cooperation, effective communication, and unity of purpose—in the context of Barnard's biaxial effectiveness/efficiency construct. The Memorandum concludes that, pace Barnard et al., the executive sub-unit of any organization is, by virtue of its centralized authority for decision-making and its internal dynamics, uniquely vulnerable to sabotage; and that by providing a useful "photonegative image" of the characteristics of a successful organization, the OSS Field Manual can serve as a "target list" not only for would-be organizational saboteurs, but also for leaders and managers hoping to identify areas for improvement of their organization's policies and processes.

Résumé

Le présent document désosse les caractéristiques d'une organisation efficace en examinant, dans le contexte de la théorie contemporaine de l'organisation, les propositions pour le sabotage organisationnel contenues dans *Simple Sabotage Field Manual*, publié par l'Office of Strategic Service en 1944. Les conseils donnés dans le manuel sont évalués en fonction d'un cadre constitué des trois éléments clés d'une organisation selon Chester I. Barnard—la collaboration consentante, la communication efficace et l'unité de dessein—dans le contexte du concept d'efficacité biaxiale de Barnard. Le document conclut que, n'en déplaise à Barnard et autres, la sous-unité exécutive de toute organisation est, en vertu de son pouvoir centralisé pour la prise de décision et de sa dynamique interne, particulièrement vulnérable au sabotage; et qu'en fournissant une « image photonégative » utile des caractéristiques d'une organisation efficace, le manuel de campagne de l'OSS peut servir de « liste cible » non seulement pour les saboteurs organisationnels éventuels, mais aussi pour les dirigeants et les gestionnaires qui espèrent cerner des les domaines où l'on peut améliorer les politiques et les processus de leur organisation.

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Executive summary

Characteristics of successful organizations: Reverse-engineering the 1944 OSS Simple Sabotage Field Manual through the lens of classical organization theory

Introduction: In 1944 the Office of Special Services (OSS, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency) promulgated a document entitled *Simple Sabotage Field Manual—Strategic Services (Provisional)*. This manual was intended to serve as the "basic doctrine for Strategic Services training" in the art and science of sabotage. While the bulk of the document focuses on means of degrading the effectiveness of occupying forces by damaging vital equipment, degrading transport and industrial production, and destroying war-relevant materiel, the manual—recognizing that "white collar" occupations will also continue to function under occupation, and may be special targets for co-opting by enemy forces—also devotes some attention to methods of impeding the smooth functioning of organizations. This sort of "indirect sabotage" requires no tools and produces no physical damage, but can nonetheless be highly effective in disrupting the enemy's campaign. Rather than making a target of himself by creating new or unique problems, the clever saboteur works to undermine organizational effectiveness and efficiency by exacerbating the spectrum of dysfunction already present. Through an examination of the suggestions for sabotage contained in the OSS Field Manual, this Technical Memorandum aims to reverse-engineer the characteristics of a successful organization in the context of classical organization theory as defined by, inter alia, the ground-breaking work in organizational theory published by Chester Barnard less than a decade before the OSS Manual came out.

Results: The "lens" provided by Barnard's theory offers a tripartite investigative rubric consisting of the three fundamental elements of organization: communication; willing contribution of actions or forces; and common purpose. The OSS Manual advises the prospective saboteur to attack the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the target organization in each of these three areas. Because it is charged with creating and maintaining each of these elements; with ensuring that the organization is effective (i.e., accomplishes its purpose); and with sustaining organizational efficiency (i.e., ensuring that the costs to the organization of accomplishing its purpose do not exceed the benefits deriving therefrom), the executive sub-unit of the organization is uniquely vulnerable to sabotage. By virtue of its role as the central organizational decision-making authority, sabotage at the executive level quickly promulgates nugatory effects throughout the organization. Moreover, the human characteristics and internal dynamics of executive sub-units, *pace* both Levitt and March, and Fayol, render these sub-units especially susceptible to subornation by clever malefactors.

Significance: The simplest means of describing the characteristics of a successful organization would be to produce a list of diametric opposites of all of the suggestions for organizational sabotage that are contained in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the OSS Field Manual. This is unnecessary, however, because the result would be a list of "management dos and don'ts" that simply reflects (a) the compiled wisdom of countless books discussing the leadership and

management in principle and practice, and (b) simple common sense. Essentially, the executive sub-unit should avoid doing things that impede communication or drain it of substance; avoid eroding cooperation; and steer clear of activities or policies that undermine the common sense of purpose that is the *sine-qua-non* of organizational cohesion. Executive sub-units should adopt a rational, evidence-driven approach to risk assessment; maintain open, transparent communications with staff; discourage risk-avoidance, and encourage courageous decision-making; eschew witch-hunts driven by non-operationally driven political concerns; and maintain politeness, honesty, openness, clarity and good humour in all interpersonal dealings.

The OSS Manual's suggestions for organizational sabotage offer a crisp "photonegative image" of what makes an organization strong by providing a list of what makes organizations particularly susceptible to subversion. If these areas are the easiest points for an organizational saboteur to exploit, then they should be the first target for auto-analysis and remedial action by an executive sub-unit hoping to prevent exploitation. Willing cooperation, communication and commonality of purpose are, according to Barnard, the heart of any organization. Keeping the "heart" in good working order should be the first concern of the sub-unit that purports to be the organization's "brain."

Sommaire

Characteristics of successful organizations: Reverse-engineering the 1944 OSS Simple Sabotage Field Manual through the lens of classical organization theory

D.A. Neill; DRDC CORA TM 2009-051; R & D pour la défense Canada – CORA; Novembre 2009.

Introduction ou contexte: En 1944, l'Office of Special Services (OSS, le prédécesseur de l'Agence centrale de renseignement [Central Intelligence Agency]) a publié un document intitulé *Simple Sabotage Field Manual—Strategic Services (Provisional).* Ce manuel devait servir de « doctrine de base pour la formation sur les services stratégiques » dans l'art et la science du sabotage. Tandis que la plus grande partie du document porte sur les moyens visant à diminuer l'efficacité des forces d'occupation en endommageant de l'équipement essentiel, en diminuant les possibilités du transport et de la production industrielle et en détruisant le matériel de guerre, le manuel—dans lequel on reconnaît que les emplois de cols blancs continueront d'être exercés sous l'occupation et peuvent être des cibles spéciales pour le ralliement par les forces ennemies—porte également sur les méthodes visant à entraver le bon fonctionnement des organisations. Cette sorte de « sabotage indirect » ne nécessite aucun outil et ne cause aucun dommage physique, mais peut néanmoins être très efficace pour perturber la campagne de l'ennemi. Plutôt que de faire de lui une cible en créant des problèmes nouveaux ou uniques, le saboteur astucieux travaille en vue de réduire l'efficacité organisationnelle en exacerbant le spectre de dysfonction déjà présent. Grâce à l'examen des propositions de sabotage contenues dans le manuel de campagne de l'OSS, le présent document vise à désosser les caractéristiques d'une organisation efficace, dans le contexte de la théorie contemporaine de l'organisation, telle qu'elle est définie, notamment, par les travaux innovateurs sur la théorie organisationnelle publiée par Chester Barnard moins de dix ans avant la parution du manuel de l'OSS.

Résultats: La « lentille » fournie par la théorie de Barnard offre une rubrique d'enquête tripartite comprenant les trois éléments fondamentaux de l'organisation : la communication, la collaboration consentante des gestes ou des forces et l'unité de dessein. Le manuel de l'OSS conseille au saboteur éventuel d'attaquer l'efficacité de l'organisation cible dans chacun de ces domaines. Parce qu'elle est chargée de créer et d'entretenir chacun de ces éléments, de veiller à l'efficacité de l'organisation (c.-à-d. accomplit ses fonctions) et de maintenir l'efficacité organisationnelle (c.-à-d. d'assurer que les coûts de fonctionnement de l'organisation ne dépassent pas les retombées découlant des activités), la sous-unité exécutive de l'organisation est particulièrement vulnérable au sabotage. En vertu de son rôle en tant que pouvoir décisionnel central de l'organisation, le sabotage au niveau de la direction provoque rapidement des effets négligeables dans l'ensemble de l'organisation. De plus, les caractéristiques humaines et la dynamique interne des sous-unités exécutives, n'en déplaise à la fois à Levitt et March, et à Fayol, font en sorte que ces sous-unités sont particulièrement vulnérables à la subornation par de malfaiteurs rusés.

Importance: La façon la plus simple de décrire les caractéristiques d'une organisation efficace est de produire une liste des contraires absolus de toutes les propositions de sabotage organisationnel qui se trouvent aux paragraphes 11 et 12 du manuel de campagne de l'OSS. Cette

mesure s'avère inutile, toutefois, car on obtiendrait une liste de « choses à faire et à ne pas faire pour la direction » qui rend tout simplement compte de la sagesse recueillie dans d'innombrables ouvrages portant sur le leadership et la gestion en principe et en pratique, et du bon sens. Essentiellement, la sous-unité exécutive doit éviter de faire des choses qui entravent la communication ou la vide de son fond, éviter de réduire l'efficacité de la collaboration et se tenir loin des activités ou politiques qui minent le but commun qui est la condition indispensable de la cohésion organisationnelle. Les sous-unités exécutives doivent adopter une démarche rationnelle axée sur la preuve relativement à l'évaluation des risques, maintenir des communications ouvertes et transparentes avec le personnel, décourager l'évitement des risques et encourager la prise de décisions courageuses, éviter des chasses aux sorcières motivées par des préoccupations politiques non opérationnelle et faire preuve de politesse, d'honnêteté, d'ouverture, de clarté et de bonne humeur dans toutes les relations interpersonnelles.

Les propositions du manuel de l'OSS pour le sabotage organisationnel donnent une « image photonégative » nette et précise de ce qui fait une organisation forte en fournissant une liste des facteurs qui rendent les organisations particulièrement vulnérables à la subversion. Si ces éléments sont les plus faciles à exploiter pour un saboteur organisationnel, ils doivent être les premières cibles d'auto-analyse et de mesures correctives de la sous-unité exécutive qui espère éviter l'exploitation. La collaboration consentante, la communication et l'unité de dessein sont, selon Barnard, au cœur de toute organisation. Le bon fonctionnement du « cœur » doit être la principale préoccupation de la sous-unité, qui est censé être le « cerveau » de l'organisation.

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1 Introduction

> The survival of an organization depends upon the maintenance of an equilibrium of complex character in a continuously fluctuating environment of physical, biological and social materials, elements, and forces, which calls for readjustment of processes internal to the organization.[1]

In 1941, President Roosevelt decided to establish a strategic intelligence arm to support what he foresaw as inevitable American military efforts in the war in Europe. In July of that year, General William J. Donovan was appointed Co-Coordinator of Information. The following summer, after Pearl Harbour and pursuant to a Presidential Military Order signed on 13 June 1942, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was established with Donovan at its head and a two-fold mandate: collection and analysis of strategic intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and conducting special operations not assigned to other agencies.

During the war, the OSS was active throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia, most particularly in the area of training insurgents in effective resistance against occupying forces, especially the Japanese and Germans. Personnel engaged in these operations gradually accumulated a wealth of information and expertise concerning, amongst many other things, effective methods of sabotage. On 17 January 1944, Donovan promulgated a document entitled *Simple Sabotage Field Manual – Strategic Services (Provisional).* This manual was intended to serve as the "basic doctrine for Strategic Services training" in the art and science of sabotage.[2]

While the bulk of the document focuses on means of impairing the effectiveness of occupying forces by damaging vital equipment, degrading transport and industrial production, and destroying war-relevant materiel, the manual—recognizing that "white collar" occupations will also continue to function under occupation, and may be special targets for co-opting by enemy forces—also devotes some attention to methods of impeding the smooth functioning of organizations. According to the author(s), this sort of "indirect sabotage" requires no tools and produces no physical damage, but can nonetheless be highly effective in disrupting the occupying power's efforts and further campaigns. Such organizational sabotage "is based on universal opportunities to make faulty decisions, to adopt a non-cooperative attitude, and to induce others to follow suit," leveraging the "'human element' [which] is frequently responsible for accidents, delays and general obstruction even under normal conditions." Ideally, the saboteur engaged in hindering the effective functioning of an organization should familiarize himself with the sort of "faulty decisions and non-cooperation [that] are normally found in his kind of work and should then devise his sabotage so as to enlarge that 'margin of error'."[3] In other words, rather than making a target of himself by creating new or unique problems, the clever organizational saboteur will simply work to exacerbate the various manifestations of dysfunction that are already present in the organization.

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[1] Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive, 30th Anniversary Ed.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 6.
[2] Office of Strategic Services, *Simple Sabotage Field Manual – Strategic Services Field Manual No. 3 (Provisional)*, (Washington, D.C.: OSS, 17 January 1944, DECLASSIFIED), frontispiece.
[3] OSS Field Manual, paragraphs 1.d. and 1.e.

Why Barnard?

Regrettably, the OSS Field Manual, like many wartime documents, does not contain references. However, some of the more detailed suggestions for disrupting organizational activity that it provides appear to correlate closely (in a negative sense, of course) with the principles for effective and efficient operation of organizations set forth in Chester Barnard's classical treatise on organization theory, *The Functions Of The Executive*. This book, the inaugural edition of which was published in 1938 (only six years before the OSS manual was promulgated) was the first comprehensive discourse on the theory and structure of formal organizations,[4] and thus it is the principal contemporary formal source of epistemological systematization upon which the OSS Manual might have been founded. From a purely chronological standpoint, therefore, it offers the most appropriate contemporary theoretical foundation for an examination of the ideas presented in the Manual, because it reflects the concepts, principles and prejudices governing organizational structure and management relevant to the epoch in which the OSS Manual was written and in which its suggestions for sabotage would have been expected to bear fruit.

Barnard's definition of the organization as "a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons;" his assertion that the three indispensible elements of an organization are the willingness to cooperate, the ability to communicate, and the existence and acceptance of unity of purpose; and his determination that the role of the executive is to create and maintain these three elements, together offered a hitherto unstated paradigm of organizational architecture and operation. They also, therefore, furnish a useful framework for reverse-engineering the characteristics of a successful organization from the matrix of targets and methods of sabotage described in the OSS manual.

In optics, light reflected from an object travels through a lens and projects an image on a surface. If one can see the image, and if the physical characteristics of the lens that produced it are known, then one may deduce, even reconstruct, many of the physical characteristics of the original object. In the present case, the "image" is that of the dysfunctional organization that is the ultimate goal of the sabotage efforts described in the OSS manual, while Barnard's theoretical construct is the "lens." By projecting the dysfunctional organization back through the lens of cooperation, communication and common purpose, it may be possible to reconstruct some of the key characteristics of a functional and therefore successful organization.

In this Memorandum, I will examine each of the OSS Field Manual's suggestions for organizational sabotage under the framework provided by Barnard's classical elements of organizational structure and function, illustrating my points with examples both contemporary and modern, and attempting to derive from the discussion, first, some of the characteristics of a successful organizations; and second, some of the potential vulnerabilities to subversion that organizations should strive to avoid. The purpose of using Barnard's theses as the organizing principle behind this study is not merely chronological. As E.H. Carr argued in *What is History*?, the purpose of conducting historical studies is not merely to recount the chronology of events, but to derive from those chronologies principles or lessons that may be generalizable to contemporary

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[4] Barnard was of course preceded by a number of important conceptual writers, among them H. Fayol's *General Principles of Management* (1916) and F.W. Taylor's 1912 testimony to the House of Representatives Committee, entitled "Scientific Management". But Barnard's was the first comprehensive theoretical treatment of the structure and functioning of simple and complex organizations.

or future situations. Thus, while to some it may seem anachronistic to attempt to use Second World War-era organizational concepts and strategies to illuminate contemporary problems in organization theory, this is in fact the central purpose of historical studies. In this context, contemporary problems and theoretical constructs can serve both to illustrate and to challenge the validity of Barnard's paradigm.

Military history holds that it is possible to derive military strategic lessons from another era to inform our consideration of present-day problems; perhaps the same principle holds true for discussions of organizational structures and strategy. If this is so, then the lessons derived from an examination of the OSS suggestions for undermining organizational effectiveness may help DND/CF avoid some of the more obvious pitfalls of structure and management that render organizations particularly susceptible to sabotage.

2   Barnard's elements of organization

According to Barnard, human intent and activity are the underpinnings of any systemic approach to accomplishing a given objective. In this paradigm, a formal organization is defined as "a *system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons.*"[5] Thus, *pace* Barnard, organization, pursuant to this admirably sparse definition, necessarily consists of five interdependent features: humans in numbers beyond the individual; their "activities or forces;" the coordination thereof; that such coordination be conscious rather than unconscious or accidental; and finally, an overarching system for ensuring the smooth functioning of all of these features.

In *Functions of the Executive*, these features are distilled down to a trio dubbed the "elements of organization." According to Barnard,

> An organization comes into being when (1) there are persons able to communicate with each other (2) who are willing to contribute action (3) to accomplish a common purpose. The elements of an organization are therefore (1) communication; (2) willingness to serve; and (3) common purpose.

"These elements," Barnard notes, "are necessary and sufficient conditions"[6] for the creation and maintenance of an organization.

In addition to these elements of organization, Barnard posited qualifiers to describe the manner in which the organization executes the objectives for which it was "consciously coordinated." All organizations exist for a purpose, generally the achievement of some specified goal beyond the capacity of an individual human, but which may be accomplished through the combined "activities or forces" of two or more people. While simply having a goal may be a sufficient condition for the creation of an organization, this is not a sufficient condition for organizational survival over the longer term. In order to enable and justify its continued existence, an organization must not only have a purpose, but also a reasonable prospect of attaining it. "The continuance of an organization," as Barnard puts it, "depends upon its ability to carry out its purpose."[7]

This may seem a truism, but it is not; the world is replete with organizations that do not fulfill their self-described purposes. It is not unfair or trite, for example, to argue that the founding goal of the United Nations—"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"[8]—is no closer to being achieved today, sixty-four years after its establishment, than it was in 1945. In making this argument, however, one must confront the question of whether the UN meets Barnard's definition of an organization in the first place. In order to make this determination, one must ask whether the UN in fact displays the three necessary and sufficient elements of organization: communication (probably, although diplomatic exchanges often seem designed to prevent rather than enable effective communication); willingness to contribute (possibly, although haggling over

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[5] Barnard, p. 73. Italics in original.
[6] Barnard, p. 82.
[7] Barnard, p. 91.
[8] *Charter of the United Nations*, 26 June 1945, Preambular Paragraph 1.

levels of contribution is in fact one of the UN's most time-consuming activities); and common purpose (true in principle, but often disproven in practice). A similar calculus may be performed for other international and intrastate multilateral entities. Not surprisingly, many so-called "organizations" which appear to have failed to fulfill their intended purpose turn out, on closer examination, not to qualify as organizations at all—at least according to Barnard's rather strict definition.

If failure to achieve its design objective should ordinarily doom an organization, so too, paradoxically, does success. "An organization," Barnard argues, "must disintegrate if it cannot accomplish its purpose. [But] it also destroys itself by accomplishing its purpose….Hence most continuous organizations require repeated adoption of new purposes."[9] The practical result of this principle varies from organization to organization. In business organizations, for example, its application is obvious; Ford, for example, exists not to build "a car" (an objective it completed in 1903) but rather to build and sell "many cars." In international organizations, this principle—constant reinvention of new purposes—is most visible in recent years in NATO's redefinition of its core purpose.

Originally conceived as a military alliance, NATO's founding agreement included provisions for intramural dispute resolution, consultation and collective defence that were specifically designed to serve as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism.[10] In Barnard's parlance, NATO's design purpose was to provide a service—defence—against territorial, socio-economic and (to a lesser extent) cultural encroachment by the USSR. That purpose was definitively achieved between 1989 and 1991 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the collapse of the Soviet polity; and cemented over the following decade by the progressive sweep of democracy through the former Soviet satellite states and republics, and the incorporation of many of them into NATO itself.

These events led to innumerable calls (not least by the rump USSR, reborn as the Russian Federation) for the dissolution of NATO. NATO's response was to redefine its purpose from providing "defence" to providing "security." This was a thoroughly Barnardian approach to the problem of success-driven organizational auto-obviation. The provision of defence, after all, is dependent upon the subsidiary qualifier, "against whom?," whereas "security" is a less specific and far more panoramic "service." One can provide security against "insecurity" instead of against a specific adversary; and insecurity may be (and usually is) defined as issuing from any (or all) of a wide variety of "threats to security."[11] Since 1991, NATO has included under the aegis of "security threats" all manner of things, including but not limited to terrorism, proliferation, pandemic disease, climate change, nationalism, radicalism, environmental degradation, militarism and religious fundamentalism.[12] Because none of these "threats" are likely either to abate on their own, be defeated by the application of military force, or be obviated

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[9] Barnard, p. 91.

[10] See Articles I-V of the Washington ("North Atlantic") Treaty, 4 April 1949.

[11] For a much more in-depth discussion of this phenomenon, see D.A. Neill, "The Evolution of Organizational Structures, Policies and Procedures for Crisis Management: NATO, Kosovo and the Transition from Collective Defence to Collective Security," Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent at Canterbury (Brussels School of International Studies, 11 April 2006), chapters 2-4.

[12] NATO's most recent Strategic Concept cites as threats terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, energy security and cyber-attacks. See http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-27C5A0DC-B67E6A57/natolive/topics_56626.htm for more details.

solely through diplomacy, NATO—again, in Barnardian terms—ensured its long-term survival by transforming its purpose to the provision of non-specific security against non-specific threats. Such a purpose can never be definitively achieved; and thus NATO is in no danger of success-driven disintegration.[13]

This is not to say that the mere avoidance of victorious self-obviation is a guarantee of organizational permanence. Barnard posited two qualifiers against which an organization's pursuit of its design objective must be evaluated. These are "effectiveness"—which is defined as whether the organization's goal is or is not achieved—and "efficiency." In Barnard's paradigm, "efficiency" consists of a subjective assessment as to whether the cost to the organization of achieving its goal exceeds, or does not exceed, the benefits thereby obtained. "Inefficiency" is what differentiates unalloyed success from a Pyrrhic victory, which is to say, success that leaves the victor with laurel in hand, but virtually prostrate and in no condition to pursue further objectives.

Continuing for the moment with the example of NATO, it is worth examining recent Alliance activities by these complimentary qualifying criteria. In Operation ALLIED FORCE, for example—the US-led NATO bombing of Serbia and subsequent occupation of Kosovo in 1991 in response to atrocities alleged to have been committed against Kosovar Albanians by the government of Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade—the political pressure applied against Allies by the Clinton Administration came close to rupturing Alliance cohesion and causing an open breach at the North Atlantic Council. This, arguably, would have been a worse outcome for NATO than failing to intervene in the crisis in the first place. Similarly, NATO's response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001—a marathon session of diplomatic arm-twisting by then-Secretary General Robertson that saw five meetings of the North Atlantic Council in a thirty-hour period, and resulted in the (grudging) invocation of Article V of the Washington Treaty—exposed serious rifts between Allies, especially in the area of the legal interpretation of the obligations described in the Treaty. NATO eventually dispatched its own AWACS aircraft to patrol American skies, releasing US AWACS for operations in Afghanistan—but the diplomatic cost of achieving even this small contribution was severe.[14]

A similar dynamic is eroding Alliance cohesion in Afghanistan today. The costs and pressures of the war to extinguish Taliban influence and create a sustainable, reasonably democratic government in what might charitably be described as infertile soil have exposed differing levels of effort and commitment to the collective campaign, especially concerning which nations are doing the lion's share of the "heavy lifting."[15] Allies have gone and are continuing to go to great lengths to avoid washing the Alliance's dirty laundry in public, but tales of discontent, disagreement, and disputes are becoming more frequent as the campaign drags on. While one might argue that NATO is meeting its self-imposed goals in Afghanistan (one might equally

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[13] "Failure to be effective is, then, a real cause of disintegration; but failure to provide for the decisions resulting in the adoption of new purposes would have the same result." Barnard, p. 92.

[14] For a more in-depth discussion of this phenomenon, see Neill, "The Evolution of Organizational Structures, Policies and Procedures for Crisis Management."

[15] See, for example, "Defence Secretary John Hutton tells NATO members to 'do more' for Afghanistan effort as they fail to offer extra troops," *Daily Mail Online*, 20 February 2009.

argue that it is not), the "organizational inefficiency" with which those goals are being pursued is such that the Alliance may be on the cusp of a Pyrrhic victory—or worse, a Pyrrhic defeat.[16]

The presumption, in all cases of organizational vivisection, is that one is dealing with a rational entity. In this context—as in the context of all international, governmental and public organizations—rationality is defined as "consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints."[17] In other words, it is assumed that when faced with a decision, the organization will decide in accordance with its best interests. But this is a sterile definition, which ignores the fact—highlighted by Barnard—that organizations are made up of humans who have undertaken to cooperate in order to achieve a mutually agreed goal. Because they are made up of humans, they are inherently political; and thus public organizations are "dominated by political groups that act in accordance with bounded rationality," where such rationality is defined as pursuit of the best interests of the individual sub-organizational polities. In this sort of environment, collective altruism takes a backseat to rational self-interest (*pace* Adam Smith). The end result is an organization wherein intra-unit competition is rife and no political entity is "selected out;" here "survival depends on pleasing one's clients, not on efficient production."[18] The clients being pleased may not, in fact, be those that the organization purports to serve.

The tendency for intramural behaviour and competition to be driven by the political interests of sub-units if anything places a higher premium on adherence to the elements identified by Barnard, and increases the vulnerability of the organization to activities that undermine those elements. The chapters that follow will describe how the elements of organizations are (or ought to be) structured and sustained in order to enable effective, efficient pursuit of organizational objectives; how, according to the OSS Field Manual, these elements may be most effectively undermined; and why the executive component of organizations is uniquely vulnerable to many of the pitfalls of organizational sabotage, whether accidental or deliberate.

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[16] Of course, one might also argue that, given NATO's structure and the nature of its mechanisms for consultation and decision-making, the Alliance is already at the upper limits of efficiency, and further improvement may not be possible. That, however, would be another paper.

[17] Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1999), 18.

[18] Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 55.

3 Eroding the cooperative system

> Organization doesn't really accomplish anything. Plans don't accomplish anything, either. Theories of management don't much matter. Endeavours succeed or fail because of the people involved. (Colin Powell)

If, as argued in the preceding chapter, an organization is defined as "a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons" designed to accomplish some purpose that is beyond the reach of an individual, then the first, and arguably most important, systemic requirement for the establishment of an organization is inducing willing cooperation between the persons comprising it. In this one sense, therefore, the existence of willing cooperation "justifies itself…as a means of overcoming the limitations restricting what individuals can do."[19]

It is worth noting that Barnard requires that cooperation be willing. This is not to suggest that a system that compels participation, whether by force ante-facto or the threat of punishment for non-cooperative behaviour, therefore does not qualify as an organization; the route whereby "willing cooperation" is extracted from the participant in the organization may include all manner of inducements, both positive and negative. What is important is that the individual, for whatever reason, makes a conscious decision to provide his best efforts to the organization. These efforts, Barnard argues, rather than the persons that furnish them, are in fact what constitutes the organization's human component:

> By definition there can be no organization without persons. However, as we have urged that it is not persons, but the services or acts or action or influences of persons, which should be treated as constituting organizations, it is clear that willingness of persons to contribute efforts to the cooperative system is indispensable.[20]

Where the willingness of the individual to contribute his "actions or forces" comes into play is not in the constitutional structure of the organization per se, but rather in determining its efficiency, in the sense discussed in the previous chapter. Recalling that Barnard defines efficiency as the delta between the cost to the organization of achieving a self-imposed goal and the value or benefit derived from achieving it, it is possible that the costs of compelling contributions from constituent members may exceed the value obtained through doing so.

This is especially true if "cost" and "value" are defined in broad strategic terms, rather than merely in the narrow context of institutional aims. The classic example is slavery. For centuries, the contributions compelled from forcibly relocated natives of Africa and other regions provided an enormous return on investment to slave-owners, particularly in labour-intensive agricultural industries in the Americas. The delta between the costs of employing slave labour (which were minimal) and the benefits deriving therefrom were enormous, and vast fortunes were accumulated as a result. However, the societal backlash against slavery—first in England in the late 18th Century, and later in the United States in the mid-19th Century—was such that the costs (including the societal stigma) of slavery exceeded the benefits. Slavery, in Barnardian terms,

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[19] Barnard, p. 23.
[20] Barnard, p. 83.

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became "inefficient"—especially once the Royal Navy began apprehending slavers on the high seas. When the horrific human and material costs of the Civil War are added to the balance sheet, the grim "inefficiency" of slavery becomes obvious.

Barnard elucidates this principal in more clinical terms, stating that "[t]he efficiency of a cooperative system is the resultant of the efficiencies of the individuals furnishing the constituent efforts, that is, as viewed by them," and arguing that, as a result of this principle, "[i]f the individual finds his motives being satisfied by what he does, he continues his cooperative effort; otherwise he does not. If he does not, this subtraction from the cooperative system may be fatal to it."[21] It is not necessary for the individual to openly rebel; by simply withholding his best efforts from the cooperative endeavour, he may effectively doom it. The delta in his "activities or forces" between whole-hearted participation and half-hearted mediocrity (to say nothing of "white mutiny"—deliberate, studied incompetence—or surreptitious sabotage) may exceed the delta between success and failure of the whole. In other words, the difference between efficient and inefficient performance by individuals may equal or exceed the difference between effective and ineffective action by the organization. For this reason, *pace* Barnard, it is in the organization's best interests to seek the active, energetic cooperation of its participants through appropriate inducements, rather than to attempt to compel it through threats.

The challenge for the coordinators of the organization is that because they are the sum of the collective cooperative efforts of individuals, systems of cooperation are inherently unstable. This is because individuals are not themselves stable. Attitudes, desires, fears, needs and personal cost-benefit analyses evolve over time. Indeed, individuals themselves change; new individuals join the cooperative system, and old individuals leave. Collective patterns of interaction between individuals—the sort of activity, conscious or otherwise, that results in the formation of the political sub-units referred to in the preceding chapter—also evolve, often rapidly, leading to change in sub-unit alignments, alliances and activities. The external environment changes, too; macro-level political, economic, socio-cultural and other influences impinge upon on the organization, altering its imperatives, its goals, and its boundary-layer interactions with the extra-organizational world. The result is a complex, highly mutable and often unpredictable collectivity that is more analogous to a biological organism than to a machine.

Even assuming that the organization's purpose remains fixed, the fluctuating character of external environments and the internal characteristics of an organization requires constant adaptation of the methodologies employed by the organization to achieve its ends. Barnard opines that this is the origin of decision-making sub-units within the broader complex of the organization—that the progressive "adjustment of cooperative systems to changing conditions or new purposes implies special management processes and, in complex cooperation, special organs known as executives or executive organizations."[22] Such entities, which exist both within the larger structure of the organization, and apart from it, have three key roles that set them apart from the demands made of individual actors. The first is to facilitate the cooperation without which the organization cannot initiate its function; and the second is to maintain the cooperative system.[23]

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[21] Barnard, pp. 56-57.
[22] Barnard, p. 33.
[23] Barnard, p. 33.

The third role of the executive organization, according to Barnard, is managing the continual process of adaptation necessitated by the ever-changing nature of the environment, of the organization within that environment, and of the environment within the organization. As he puts it,

> Adjustments of cooperative systems are adjustments in the balance of the various types of organizational activities. The capacity for making these adjustments is a limiting factor of another kind. Out of this fact develop such systems adjustment processes and special organs, specialized aspects of the activities designed to maintain cooperation; for if cooperation cannot adjust to attack new limitations in the environment it must fail.[24]

Accordingly, the best means of undermining the efficiency of an organization by attacking the cooperative system as described by Barnard is to (a) degrade the willing cooperation of the individuals whose "actions or forces" constitute the organization; and (b) to interfere with the ability of the executive organization to execute its three key roles, e.g., by preventing the emergence of cooperative effort; impeding cooperative activity; or thwarting attempts to adapt the organization's methods in the face of environmental or internal change.

The OSS Field Manual suggests numerous means of eroding the essential cooperation of an organization.[25] For example, under the aegis of activities undertaken at the interpersonal level to degrade the willingness of individuals to lend their cooperation to collective organizational effort, the manual counsels would-be saboteurs to adopt attitudes and approaches to work and interpersonal relationships that are deliberately hostile and uncooperative. Saboteurs are enjoined to avoid passing on skills or experience to new personnel in the workplace (11d6); to make unreasonable requests for materials or support, and to complain when these are not satisfied (11b5); and to insist upon perfect work in unimportant areas, while ignoring poor work in areas that are difficult to verify, but potentially disastrous (11b7). At the interpersonal level, saboteurs are advised to treat out-group individuals, including collaborators, coldly (12g);[26] to "stop all conversation" when they "enter a café" (12h); to "cry and sob hysterically" when forced to deal with them (12i); and to boycott all non-work-related activities, entertainments and information sources connected with such individuals (12j).

Similarly, the clever saboteur can prevent the emergence of cooperative effort by deliberately misunderstanding orders, quibbling over them, asking "endless questions" or pursuing "long correspondence" in order to obtain unnecessary clarification (11b2). Managers responsible for assigning tasks, meanwhile, are enjoined to focus first on tasking out "unimportant jobs", ensuring that these are assigned to the most competent employees, while simultaneously "see[ing] that the important jobs are assigned to inefficient workers" (11b6). Such deliberate mistaskings have a triple benefit; in addition to leading to inferior production, this practice over-challenges and over-works unskilled or more junior employees, resulting in increased stress, and irritates senior or more skilled employees because they feel their capabilities are being underused or going unrecognized.

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[24] Barnard, p. 37.

[25] As a space-saving measure, references to the OSS Field Manual in this section have been truncated to the paragraph of the document in which the individual citations appear.

[26] In Barnardian parlance, a "collaborator" would be defined as an individual who shares and supports the goals and methods of the executive sub-unit of the organization.

Unproductive procedural wrangling is, according to the Field Manual, the most effective means of impeding cooperative activity. Managers and employees alike may employ this tactic during meetings or conferences by "[h]aggl[ing] over precise wordings of communications, minutes, resolutions" (11a5), by calling repeatedly for a review of minutes of previous meetings, and attempting to reopen settled questions in favour of different decisions (11a6). Most organizations empower individuals to demand written orders (11b1), a time-consuming process that is fraught with pitfalls, especially for managers accustomed to the flexibility deriving from providing their subordinates with only ambiguous direction. Employees can protest being provided with "ersatz materials" (12f), or any materials or equipment that can reasonably be deemed sub-standard.

When dealing with other bureaus, the deliberate delay or prolongation of crucial interaction (11c2) vastly reduces efficiency; means of doing so include fixating on precise application of obscure policies, or focusing on unimportant matters, such as typographical or grammatical flaws, or on procedures and standards for correspondence. Finally, cooperative activity is easily impeded when one is working in a secondary language; the Field Manual advises that "[e]ven if you understand the language, [you should] pretend not to understand instructions in a foreign tongue" (11d3), necessitating lengthy and costly translation. Although this proposal was drafted with the intent of confounding an occupying foreign power, it (perhaps regrettably) translates all too well to any organization characterized by a multilingual working environment.

All of these methods in aggregate not only impede the performance of the organization; they also prevent the organization from adapting efficiently to environmental or internal change. The goal of such efforts, overall, is to force the organization into what has been described as a "garbage can" model of decision-making—"a setting in which organizational choices have to be made when issues are not clearly understood and when some participants offer solutions that do not correspond to clearly recognized problems or issues." Under such conditions, Haas argues, "choices are made, but they will not necessarily solve problems"—an ideal outcome from the point of view of the would-be saboteur.[27]

Willing cooperation by its constituent personnel is the *sine-qua-non* of organization. Preventing that cooperation from forming, degrading it when it does, and complicating the process of adaptation to change are all effective means of sabotaging an organization from within. This should not be possible; but because organizations are comprised of humans rather than machine components, it is. As Fayol noted nearly a century ago, "in a business the interest of one employee or group of employees should not prevail over that of the concern…[but] ignorance, ambition, selfishness, laziness, weakness, and all human passions tend to cause the general interest to be lost sight of in favour of individual interest and a perpetual struggle has to be waged against them."[28]

The competent manager attempts to prevent "ignorance, ambition, selfishness, laziness, weakness and all human passions" from undermining the willing cooperation that an organization needs to survive. The enlightened saboteur works to unleash their full, destructive potential.

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[27] Haas, p. 123.
[28] H. Fayol, "General Principles of Management" (1916), trans. Constance Storrs, in Derek S. Pugh, ed., *Organization Theory: Selected Readings*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 259.

4 Impeding organizational communication

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:9)

However willing to cooperate the individuals comprising an organization may be, cooperation is impossible in the absence of effective communication. The corollary to this principle, naturally, is that the clever saboteur can degrade an organization's performance by impeding its communications, both intramurally and with respect to external agencies.

Impeding effective internal communication is relatively easy. Communications are the lifeblood of organizations, and as with the human circulatory system, there are innumerable points at which the flow may be interrupted. The OSS Manual, for example, suggests that would-be saboteurs begin at the entry level, by providing "incomplete or misleading instructions" when inducting and training new workers (11b9). This is especially easy in an organization featuring numerous procedural regulations, for example controlled-entry areas, controlled-access files, high security levels, and eyes-only rules. The more procedures an organization has, the greater the number and variety of potential vulnerabilities to communications sabotage. Greater organizational complexity also simplifies the task of the saboteur by increasing the plausibility of claims of misunderstanding or confusion. Even in the absence of deliberate sabotage, the more difficult it is for employees and managers to navigate the maze of authority, direction, process and paperwork, the more likely it is that honest mistakes will be made.

Degrading or interrupting communications is even easier with respect to routine interoffice traffic. The OSS Field Manual, for example, suggests options as simple as advising "important callers the boss is busy or on another phone" (11c5), holding up interoffice mail "until the next collection" (11c6), or deliberately misunderstanding "all sorts of regulations concerning such matters as rationing, transportation, [and] traffic regulations" (12e). If such methods were easy in the 1940s, it is not difficult to imagine how much easier they are in an era of cellular telephones, Blackberries, text messaging, faxes and e-mail. As the complexity of a system increases, reliability and robustness tend to decrease, providing many more opportunities for obfuscation and interruption.

Paradoxically, such opportunities are increased along dual axes. The more difficult an organization makes it to communicate—e.g., by insisting that communications go through "official channels"; by requiring that communications follow strict procedural or stylistic policies; or by multiplying obligatory communications such as status, progress and budgetary reports—the more opportunities for sabotage the organization creates.

However, it is also possible for an organization to simplify the saboteur's task by attempting to improve robustness through increasing the number of available channels of communication. As an example, consider the transmission of an order from a supervisor to a subordinate. Forty years ago, there were only a few means of doing so. Telephone communications were far and away the most rapid and effective means of passing a message (lesser means included teletype or Telex messages, telegrams and routine mail)—and in an era predating answering machines (let alone voice-mail), the need for human-to-human communication meant that the supervisor could be

assured that his orders had been received and would be acted upon by a human component of the organization.

Today, by contrast, teletype and Telex messages have disappeared. Telegrams are obsolete; telephones are universal (as well as transportable and pocket-sized), but are also universally equipped with voicemail systems enabling an employee to plausibly dodge a supervisor's call. E-mail is the preferred method of communication, overtaking facsimiles (for paper documents) and closely followed by text-messaging, but both email and text-message systems also remove humans from the transmission chain, making it easier to delay action and response. An arithmetic increase in the number of communications options results in a geometric increase in possible permutations of communications, and therefore of the number of linkages potentially vulnerable to disruption. This is the dark side of redundancy. Furthermore, the proliferation of computer systems vastly increases the amount of time that an employee (and a manager) must spend simply managing his communications load, concomitantly increasing the likelihood that messages, whether routine or urgent, will either not be noticed, or will go astray.[29]

Internal communications also incorporate organizational procedures for gathering information, for disseminating information to recipients, and for making decisions. These generally take the form of meetings, conferences and symposia. At such gatherings, the OSS Manual advises, the saboteur should "make 'speeches'," "[t]alk as frequently as possible and at great length," and "illustrate [his] 'points' by long anecdotes and accounts of personal experiences" (11a2). He should "[b]ring up irrelevant issues as frequently as possible"(11a2), and should never "hesitate to make a few 'patriotic' comments." Focussing on procedural aspects of group activities wastes time, increasing the frustration level for participants, and reducing the time remaining for handling matters of substance.

Similarly, in dealing with external agencies, the saboteur should strive to miss dates for delivery of mail (see the previous chapter), and should moreover "do everything possible to delay the delivery of orders" (11b3). Even if "parts of an order may be ready beforehand," the Manual advises, the clever saboteur ensures that nothing is delivered until the whole of the order is ready. This is particularly easy when dealing with hard or paper copies travelling by interoffice mail; in an organizational culture accustomed to the immediacy of telephones, text messages and email, individuals are generally willing to accept inordinately long delays for the delivery of physical documents or materials on the assumption, often inaccurate, that "snail mail" is orders of magnitude less efficient than electronic delivery.

Finally, one of the easiest means of degrading the efficiency of communications is to attempt to push routine communications "down the ladder of rapidity." It takes longer, for example, to explain something in an email than on the telephone (both because speaking is faster than typing, and because, in a procedurally rigid bureaucracy, individuals are inherently more cautious when committing themselves to the written word than they are when speaking "off the record"), and longer still when physical documents must be exchanged. Asking someone to commit their orders to an email, or offering to summarize a conversation or conference in writing can significantly retard consultation and decision-making. It also introduces the potential for obfuscatory legalisms

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[29] As an example, I have spent most of the past decade responsible for a minimum of four computer systems, each with its own email. For two of those years, I had six-seven systems to monitor.

and procedurally- or politically-correct verbiage that will require numerable subsequent requests for clarification.

From the point of view of the organizational saboteur, written communications have a further ancillary benefit: they afford opportunities for creating or enhancing interpersonal conflict. Communicating in writing creates the illusion of distance, making it more likely that individuals will adopt attitudes or language that they would not use in face-to-face (or as on the telephone, voice-to-voice) exchanges—a phenomenon readily observable on the internet, where the incidence of "flaming" is directly proportional to the perception of anonymity. As Fayol noted, "[i]n dealing with a business matter or giving an order which requires explanation to complete it, usually it is simpler and quicker to do so verbally ….differences and misunderstandings which a conversation could clear up grow more bitter in writing."[30]

What was true in the era of telegrams and fountain pens is doubly true in the era of text-messages, Blackberries and blogs.

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[30] Fayol, p. 273.

5   Undermining commonality of purpose

> *Ignoranti quem portum petat nullus suus ventus est* – When one does not know
> what harbour one seeks, no wind is the right wind. (Seneca)

According to Barnard, the creation of an organization depends upon two concurrent, complimentary and equally critical events: the acceptance of a common purpose for the organization, and the coalescence of willingness to cooperate (see Chapter 3) on the part of the constituent individuals around that purpose. These two events cannot occur in isolation.[31] Accordingly, examining the third element of Barnard's organizational model, "commonality of purpose," it is necessary to always bear in mind the role that "purpose" plays in initiating the cooperative consensus, and the role that "willingness to cooperate" plays in enabling the emergence of common purpose as the structural keystone of the organization.

Because the keystone of any arch is the crucial element tying the system together through distribution of forces, it is also the most likely target for anyone seeking to introduce instability. Once formulated, an organization's "purpose" is not fixed, but mutable, the more so to the extent to which it is subject to transformation at the whim of the executive sub-unit within the larger organization. It is difficult to take the analogy too far, in fact. Not only is the keystone of an arch precisely cut to fill the gap between arcs supported by columns; once installed, the role of the keystone in transmitting vertical forces from the superior wall or lintel to the columns is such that it cannot easily be altered, let alone removed, without endangering the entire structure. Like a carefully-designed and well-built organization, an intact structural arch is relatively resistant to change, even catastrophic change, in the surrounding environment (witness the innumerable pictures of cathedrals damaged by bombing during the Second World War, where the ogival arches of windows and doors are often the only features still standing). But if the keystone is damaged, the resultant instability can quickly bring it down.

So too with the sense of common purpose that animates an organization. The firm maintenance of a central purpose buttressed by unwavering willingness to cooperate can withstand severe external or internal shocks without collapsing. Barnard described this principle in the following terms: "Instability...comes not merely from the changes of the physical environment and from the uncertainty of the adjustment and managerial processes within cooperative systems, but also from the alteration of the character of purposes of action with change of possibilities."[32] In other words, damage to the organization resulting from instability of purpose is more likely to be the result of conscious executive decision than of environmental influence. Commonality of purpose is far more vulnerable to internal than to external forces. To paraphrase Arnold Toynbee, organizations are more likely to die by suicide than murder.

If transformation of purpose can destabilize an organization, so too can multiplication thereof. Commonality of purpose as envisaged by Barnard is similar in concept to the "mission statements" routinely formulated by military operational planners. Ideally, a mission statement should be concise and easily understood, describing the aim of an operation and the desired end-state in as few words as possible. Complexity—a feature of warfare since the dawn of

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[31] Barnard, p. 86.
[32] Barnard, p. 35.

civilization, and the origin of, amongst other things, the Clausewitzian discussion of "friction"—must, in a mission statement, be avoided, and for the same reason that any organization would avoid it: because it introduces the possibility of confusion and makes it difficult for subordinate elements not only to focus on a single, overriding aim, but also to coordinate their efforts towards achieving it. Once again, *pace* Barnard, "expansion of the number or variety of purposes constitutes in itself a factor of instability in cooperation, and probably an increasing one as cooperation develops and becomes more complex."[33]

The corollary, too, is true, and equally obvious. Organizations that permit their accepted purpose to become contaminated through multiplication suffer from complexity-induced instability. The situation is exacerbated if the organization is large, multifarious and has a number of different, only loosely-connected sub-units. "In general," Barnard states,

> …complex organizations are characterized by an obvious lack of complete understanding and acceptance of general purposes or aims. Thus it is not essential and usually impossible that the company should know the specific objectives of the army as a whole; but it is essential that it know and accept an objective of its own, or it cannot function.[34]

Nor is this simply a logical, rational calculus. Purpose, under Barnard's paradigm, is more than merely a statement of the organization's *raison d'être*; it is itself a cooperative venture, in which the constituent individuals whose "actions or forces" make up the organization accept, adopt and internalize an agreed, shared understanding of what the focus and eventual outcome of their shared efforts should be. "Purpose," thus, is not so much a "mission" as it is a gestalt; a construct of diverse, but mutually accepted, agreement of individuals as to the rationale for and target of their "willing cooperation." According to Levitt and March, cooperation is based on "the construction of a moral order in which individual participants act in the name of the institution—not because it is in their self-interest to do so, but because they identify with the institution and are prepared to sacrifice some aspects of themselves for it."[35] Barnard accords it a quasi-mystical character, noting that "[i]t is belief in the cause rather than intellectual understanding of the objective which is of chief importance."[36]

Given its importance as the keystone linking the disparate strands of individual willingness to cooperate into a unified whole, an organization's commonality of purpose makes an excellent target for the saboteur. Once again, as with attempts to impede the flow of essential intramural and extramural communication, the OSS Field Manual counsels the would-be saboteur to degrade rather than attempt to wholly interrupt this element in order to avoid attracting suspicion.

One of the easiest and most readily deniable means of undermining commonality of purpose is to become a staunch and rigorous advocate of "caution." "Be 'reasonable'," the Manual advises, "and urge your fellow conferees to be 'reasonable'," while ensuring that 'reasonableness' is taken to such an absurd extent that it retards the flow of activity. Employees should press their co-

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[33] Barnard, p. 36.

[34] Barnard, p. 137.

[35] Barbara Levitt and James G. March, "Chester I. Barnard and the Intelligence of Learning", in Oliver E. Williamson, Ed., *Organization Theory from Chester Barnard to the Present and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 13.

[36] Barnard, p. 138.

workers and superiors to "avoid haste which might result in embarrassment or difficulties later on"(11a7). This is a particularly useful tactic in an organization where the executive sub-unit is for whatever reason naturally predisposed to be risk-averse. The goal is to create an atmosphere where productivity takes a back-seat to self protection and avoidance of controversy. The effect of this approach may be enhanced by deliberately spreading rumours about high-level concerns and intentions. If these have the semblance of veracity (11c7), they can be used to create confusion and discontent at all levels of the organization.

Employee committees offer numerous opportunities for undermining commonality of purpose. The Manual suggests that the saboteur should, "if possible, join or help organize a group for presenting employee problems to the management." The goal in doing so is to use mechanisms of collective presentation and resolution of grievances to subvert the normal business of the organization, to create discontent and discord, to highlight differential treatment of employees by supervisors, and in general to increase the administrative burden of management. The saboteur should strive to ensure

> …that the procedures adopted are as inconvenient as possible for the management, involving the presence of a large number of employees at each presentation, entailing more than one meeting for each grievance, bringing up problems which are largely imaginary, and so on.(11d8)

Because such employee committees can be justified as embodying the collective will of the work force, it is difficult for management to oppose their formation, and even more difficult to counter their resolutions and requests, especially if these are couched in management vernacular. Ironically, the utility of such assemblies as a means of destroying the common purpose that binds the organization together derives from the very commonality of purpose that they purport to represent.

A key means of undermining commonality of purpose and damaging internal cooperation at the managerial level is to invert the normal order of merit. "To lower morale and with it, production," the Manual advises, "be pleasant to inefficient workers; give them undeserved promotions"(11b10). At the same time, the saboteur should strive to "[d]iscriminate against efficient workers [and] complain unjustly about their work." Incentives, rewards and punishments should be applied arbitrarily. Employed over time, this tactic can convince workers that they have little or nothing to gain through hard work, innovation or cooperation, and will create discontent as plaudits and benefits are accorded individuals that are perceived by their colleagues to be unworthy of them.

Disgruntled individuals at the managerial and employee level alike can make good use of the Manual's suggestion that saboteurs "[r]eport imaginary spies to the Gestapo or police"(12b). While in a contemporary context this hint obviously cannot be taken literally, the spirit of the idea—that a saboteur can disrupt commonality of purpose by levying false charges against subordinates, superiors or co-workers—may be even easier in modern organizations than in occupied Europe during the Second World War. The vast and often overlapping array of policies and regulations pervading organizations in the modern world restricting or prohibiting such things as discrimination, employment equity, sexual harassment, smoking and even individual scents provide endless opportunities for interpersonal complaints. In most cases, organizations are bound by policy and/or law to investigate, prosecute and punish alleged offenders, activities that

consume time, sow distrust, and severely degrade the commonality of purpose upon which the organization depends. Nothing is more corrosive of morale than a witch-hunt. Moreover, because in most cases the purported victim/complainant is guaranteed protection from retaliation (whether under "whistle-blower" rules or through simple common sense), such tactics are a relatively risk-free way to undermine organizational cohesion. It is in this spirit that the Manual counsels the would-be saboteur to "[b]e as irritable and quarrelsome as possible without getting [him]self into trouble"(12d).

It is difficult to overstate the damage that can be done to an organization by breaking the bonds that link the willing cooperation and commitment of individual constituent members into a single, common purpose. Fayol argues that while "[d]ividing enemy forces to weaken them is clever…dividing one's own team is a grave sin":

> Whether this error results from inadequate managerial capacity or imperfect grasp of things, or from egoism which sacrifices general interest to personal interest, it is always reprehensible because [*sic*] harmful to the business. There is not [*sic*] merit in sowing dissension among subordinates….real talent is needed to coordinate effort, encourage keenness, use each man's abilities and reward each one's merit without arousing possible jealousies and disturbing harmonious relations.[37]

And, one might argue, even greater talent is needed to halt and reverse the collapse that is all but inevitable when the ties that bind willing cooperation into common purpose are accidentally or deliberately disrupted.

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[37] Fayol, pp. 272-73.

6   At the juncture of "effectiveness" and "efficiency"

As noted above, Barnard posits a biaxial assessment of the fashion in which an organization pursues its purpose. "Effectiveness," it will be recalled, is a statement of whether an organization achieves its self-imposed objective, while "efficiency," by contrast, is an assessment of the balance achieved between costs and benefits in doing so. The result of any organization action therefore falls somewhere on a matrix consisting of four quadrants (see Figure 1): effective, efficient action (the ideal); effective, inefficient action (a Pyrrhic victory); ineffective, efficient action (undesirable, but merely a temporary setback which leaves the organization in a position to try again); and ineffective, inefficient action (abject, catastrophic failure):

> …we shall say that an action is effective if it accomplishes its specific objective aim. We shall also say it is efficient if it satisfies the motives of that aim, whether it is effective or not, and the process does not create offsetting dissatisfactions. We shall say that an action is inefficient if the motives are not satisfied, or offsetting dissatisfactions are incurred, even if it is effective.[38]

Figure 1 – Barnard's Effectiveness/Efficiency Matrix

Sabotage is an inherently dangerous activity; the penalties levied against saboteurs in wartime depend upon the nature of the occupying power, but have historically ranged from severe to savage. While summary execution is probably unlikely in a contemporary organizational context, few organizations would be likely to deal gently with an individual perceived to be deliberately subverting the organization's purpose. For this reason—self-preservation—would-be saboteurs

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[38] Barnard, pp. 19-20.

are advised not to target the organization's effectiveness. That is to say, they should not attempt to interfere directly with the organization's attainment of its self-imposed objectives. Rather, they should confine their efforts to degrading the efficiency of organizational activity, thereby raising the cost both of success and of failure.

The reason for this is simple: while direct opposition to an organization's objectives is generally interpreted as disloyal or treasonable, and is often both obvious, and obviously deliberate, actions that degrade efficiency are easy to excuse as simple incompetence. Most people, consciously or not, obey Heinlein's axiom ("You have attributed conditions to villainy that simply result from stupidity"),[39] and generally interpret actions that degrade efficiency as deriving from incompetence rather than malice. This provides a superb entrée to the would-be saboteur, all but guaranteeing him absolution, even pity, provided that he is able to demonstrate that the degradation of organizational efficiency was the result of an accident that occurred despite the best intentions and efforts of its author.

While this may seem like an incremental and therefore less than ideal means of disrupting an organization, as Barnard notes, the erosion of efficiency, in addition to leading to problems with morale, can have a disproportionate effect on organizational cohesiveness because it also undermines collective confidence. It is possible, he contends, for an organization to survive an ineffective, efficient action (a failure of purpose that nonetheless leaves the organization in a position to try again) because "satisfactions may be secured even though the end is not attained." However, "the attainment of some end, and belief in the likelihood of attaining it, appears necessary to the continuance of coordinated action. Thus, even though the attainment of a given end is not necessary for itself, it is necessary to keep alive the cooperation." If the saboteur can sufficiently decrease the efficiency of the organization, therefore, he can raise the costs of action to the point where "efficient" successes and failures are no longer an option, and all action becomes inefficient. If collective sabotage renders success unlikely, the only remaining outcome for the organization is ineffective, inefficient action (or abject failure). If employees perceive that success of some sort is possible, they may still be willing to lend the organization their support (Barnard calls this the "minimum effectiveness that can be tolerated"); but if even qualified, partial success is deemed unlikely, the common purpose will collapse. Simply put, "the attempt to do what can not be done must result in the destruction or failure of cooperation."[40]

The vulnerability of organizations to degradation of efficiency in this matter increases over time. Absent some sort of success—either effective action, or ineffective/efficient action—an organization has limited long-term survival prospects. Because the viability of an organization, under Barnard's paradigm, depends upon the continued willingness of individuals to contribute their "actions or forces" to the cooperative system, the maintenance of that willingness is (or should be) the principal concern of the organization's executive sub-unit. Persistence of that willingness, however, depends in turn upon the shared perception that success is possible; that the organization is, at some point, capable of achieving its self-selected purpose. This "faith," Barnard suggests, "diminishes to the vanishing point as it appears that it [the organization's purpose] is not in fact in process of being attained. Hence, when effectiveness ceases, willingness

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[39] This notion was formulated by Robert A. Heinlein in the short story "Logic of Empire", in *Astounding Science Fiction*, March 1941.

[40] Barnard, p. 56.

to contribute disappears."[41] In other words, an organization can only survive on "ineffective efficiency" for so long; the longer it goes without becoming effective, the less likely it is to survive.

For all of these reasons, the OSS Field Manual places significant emphasis on methods of sabotage that are specifically designed to degrade the organization's efficiency. The easiest, and most easily deniable, means of doing so is through slavish adherence to the organization's own procedural rules and controls. The most effective approach, available to managers and employees alike, is to "[i]nsist on doing everything through 'channels'," and to "[n]ever permit short-cuts to be taken in order to expedite decisions" (11a1). This tactic has the dual benefit of being both highly effective (particularly if the organization's "channels" are especially Byzantine) and entirely deniable. No one can criticize an employee who operates in such a fashion; if fanatical devotion to procedure degrades efficiency, then it is the procedures that must be at fault, not the individual who simply insists that they be followed to the letter.

The same logic applies to logistic functions. Organizations dependent upon sequential task completion can be disrupted if the work sequence is slowed. The saboteur, for example, can delay ordering new materials until existing stocks are depleted (11b4). In addition to slowing production, this places the onus for the slowdown on the provider rather than on the employee. Once materials are in the pipeline, they can be "mistakenly" rerouted to the wrong addressee, further impeding productivity (11b8).

At the managerial level, efficiency can be degraded by holding meetings or conferences "when there is more critical work to be done"(11b11). As noted above, the list of attendees for such deliberately obfuscatory or time-wasting activities should be as broad as possible. In addition to preventing attendees from doing useful work, these meetings provide, as noted above, excellent opportunities for further sabotage aimed at wasting time, preventing important decisions from being reached, and exacerbating interpersonal tensions.

Managers can also decrease efficiency by expanding the administrative workload of the organization. The Manual exhorts supervisory personnel to "[m]ultiply paperwork in plausible ways" and to "[s]tart duplicate files"(11b12). The utility of duplicate files as a means of sabotage is illustrated by the adage that while a man with one wristwatch always knows what time it is, a man with two watches is never certain. The existence of multiple copies of the same file can be exploited in accordance with this principle to create confusion as to which is the authoritative reference.

Similarly, by creating, and forcing personnel to adhere to, novel procedures for routine activities that have hitherto been governed by individual judgment and common sense, managerial-level saboteurs can simultaneously decrease efficiency and increase individual frustration. On this point, the Manual suggests that managers "[m]ultiply the procedures and clearances involved in issuing instructions, pay checks, and so on," and that they ensure that "three people have to approve everything where one would do" (11b13). Once an order has been issued on a given subject, employees—especially in a process-driven organization—will tend to wait for orders when a similar circumstance arises. The potential for institutional paralysis deriving from the unconstrained proliferation of unnecessary direction is obvious. Ideally, from the saboteur's

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[41] Barnard, 82.

perspective, the end result will be a working environment where employees spend more time on process-oriented administration than they do working toward the accomplishment of the organization's purpose.

At the level of the individual worker, there are innumerable options for the would-be saboteur. The Manual suggests that employees "[m]ake mistakes in quantities of material when…copying orders, [c]onfuse similar names, [and] use wrong addresses"(11C1); that they "[m]isfile essential documents"(11C3); and that they "[W]ork slowly"(11C3), "[c]ontriv[ing] as many interruptions to [their] work as [they] can"(11d2). Employees should either "[p]retend that instructions are hard to understand, and ask to have them repeated more than once," or "pretend that [they] are particularly anxious to do [their] work, and pester the foreman with unnecessary questions"(11d4). They should do their work poorly, blaming their failures on "bad tools, machinery, or equipment," and "[c]omplain that these things are preventing [them] from doing [their] job right"(11d5). Finally, they should endeavour to "[s]narl up administration in every possible way," inter alia, by filling out forms incorrectly or incompletely (11d7), and by misrouting or mixing materials (11d9, 11d10).

Above all, employees at all levels are enjoined to "[a]ct stupid"(12c). This is not as simple as it sounds. "Purposeful stupidity," the Manual notes optimistically, "is contrary to human nature."[42] Gibson et al. define wilful stupidity as a deliberate violation of the "psychological contract" into which employees voluntarily enter when they undertake to lend their willing cooperation in support of the organization's common purpose.[43] Most people, especially those who consider themselves professionals, may find it difficult to deliberately perform below what they consider to be an acceptable standard of work; however, if they perceive the organization to be violating its side of the "psychological contract" (for example, through many of the sabotage methods defined in the OSS Field Manual, such as irrational feedback from managers, non-merit-based evaluation and remuneration, excessive limitation of employee job autonomy, or "reneging on a specific promise to provide a promotion for excellent performance"),[44] then the height of the psychological hurdle will be proportionally reduced, and the employee will be that much more willing to consciously and purposefully undermine the organization.

Similarly, while uncooperative, even combative behaviour is a highly effective means of reducing efficiency and undermining both morale and commonality of purpose, normally civil people may find it difficult to behave in so deliberately unpleasant a fashion. A balance must be found. Excessive, deliberate stupidity can be risky under the principle (attributed, inter alia, to Vernon Schryver) that "any sufficiently advanced incompetence is indistinguishable from malice," and thus can lead to discovery and punishment if the saboteur is ham-fisted or incautious.[45]

From the point of view of the organizational saboteur, incompetence in work and unpleasantness in interpersonal interactions are the gold standard he should strive to achieve because they are both effective at degrading the organization's efficiency, and at least plausibly deniable if the malefactor is apprehended *in flagrante delicto*. While it may be unpleasant to be derided as either

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[42] OSS Manual, paragraph 3.b.

[43] James L. Gibson, John M. Ivancevich, James H. Donnelly, Jr., and Robert Konopaske, *Organizations: Behaviour, Structure, Processes,* 13th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2009), p. 122.

[44] Gibson et al., p. 123.

[45] This principle is apocryphally referred to as Gray's Law, although this appears to be a tongue-in-cheek rather than an empirically validated definition.

an imbecile or a "jerk", such epithets are infinitely preferable to being exposed and prosecuted as a saboteur. Unfortunately, from the perspective of organizations if not from that of would-be saboteurs, there is at present no objective empirical means of differentiating between incompetence and malice in order to distinguish between a person who is merely "acting stupid," and someone who actually *is*.

7   The unique vulnerability of the executive

The emergence of an executive sub-unit is an inevitable consequence of organization. Under Barnard's paradigm, "executive organization" is an outgrowth of the organization's need for a definitive system of communication.[46] This is the first of what Barnard describes in his eponymous volume as the three key "functions of the executive." The other two key functions, not surprisingly, correspond to the remaining elements of organization. The second function of the executive, for example, is "to promote the securing of the personal services that constitute the material of organizations,"[47] in other words, the "willing cooperation" of the individuals comprising the entity in question; while the third is to "formulate and define the purposes, objectives, ends of the organization."[48] In other words, the functions of the executive are: establishing and maintaining willing cooperation, effective communication, and unity of purpose.

These tasks, Barnard warns, are by no means separate; rather, they are intimately interdependent. "The survival of cooperation" within the organization, he states,

> …depends upon two interrelated and interdependent classes of processes: (a) those which relate to the system of cooperation as a whole in relation to the environment; and (b) those which relate to the creation or distribution of satisfaction among individuals.
>
>   The instability and failures of cooperation arise from defects in each of these classes of processes separately, and from defects in their combination. The functions of the executive are those of securing the effective adaptation of these processes.[49]

Avoiding such defects in the first place, and repairing or reconciling them when they arise, is key to ensuring that the synergistic interdependence of the elements of organization remain smoothly operational and undisturbed. Communication and cooperation in pursuit of purpose depend upon this. They also, however, depend upon the discrete calculations made by individuals on a cost-benefit basis about the balance between their inputs to the organization, and the benefits they derive from it.

> The continuance of willingness [to contribute] also depends upon the satisfactions that are secured by individual contributors in the process of carrying out the purpose. If the satisfactions exceed the sacrifices, willingness persists, and the condition is one of efficiency of organization.[50]

If the satisfactions do not, however, exceed the sacrifices required, willingness disappears, and the condition is one of organization inefficiency. Gibson et al. note that cooperation fails in four recognizable stages: ***voice***, in which an individual expresses consternation about a perceived

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[46] Barnard, p. 217.
[47] Barnard, p. 227.
[48] Barnard, p. 231.
[49] Barnard, pp. 60-61.
[50] Barnard, p. 82.

violation of the psychological contract between organization and employee, and attempts to restore it; *silence*, during which the employee cooperates with the organization's demands, but without commitment on his or her part to continue compliance; *retreat*, characterized by "negligence, shirking of responsibility, and passivity" vis-à-vis the organization's demands; and finally *destruction*, which may see the employee retaliate for the organization's breach of the psychological contract through "slowdown of work, sabotage, hiding papers or tools, theft, or even violence."[51]

Because the second and third stages ("silence" and "retreat") take place largely within the mind of the employee and are therefore invisible, and because the fourth stage ("destruction") may be difficult to detect until after significant damage has been done, a key challenge for the executive sub-unit is identifying and rectifying dissatisfaction at the first stage, "voice", when disgruntled individuals often self-identify by expressing concern about the organization's direction and/or policies (and before they progress through the remaining, largely invisible, stages). In the first stage of dissatisfaction, the employee is probably still willing to extend willing cooperation to the organization, and is thus likely avail himself of official problem solving channels, whether formal or informal. However, the likelihood of aggrieved employees continuing to do so decreases over time. As organizational problems, perceived or real, linger unresolved, employee confidence in the ability/willingness of the executive sub-unit to address them declines, further eroding the psychological contract, and perforce the employee's willingness to continue to lend his "forces or efforts" to what he perceives as an increasingly imbalance of "satisfactions and sacrifices."

The effectiveness of official problem-solving mechanisms tails off sharply once the employee begins to perceive the mechanisms themselves as ineffective and therefore part of the problem, rather than as a functional route to achieving a lasting and mutually satisfactory solution. Indeed, once the "silence" stage has been reached, the employee is by definition no longer confident in the ability of the executive sub-unit to resolve outstanding problems. From that point forward, the executive sub-unit attempting to re-acquire the employee's "willing cooperation" will face an uphill struggle.

Interestingly, it is irrelevant whether the withdrawal of willing cooperation by an employee via this route is genuine (i.e. an actual breach of the psychological contract resulting from failures of management, either real or perceived) or artificial (i.e., the result of deliberate, conscious sabotage). The outcome, from the point of view of the organization's efficiency and effectiveness, is the same. From the perspective of the executive sub-unit, it may be difficult—even impossible—to distinguish between a genuinely disgruntled employee and a deliberate saboteur.

Accordingly, a crucial overarching function of the executive is ensuring that the balance between individual sacrifice and individual benefit remains such that the individual continues to consider it in his best interest to continue to furnish his "willing cooperation"—the "actions or forces" that make up the working capital of the organization. This goes beyond such obvious considerations as remuneration, ancillary benefits and working conditions to less tangible matters such as job security, job satisfaction, and individual opportunities for self-actualization; it incorporates remedial action to rapidly address perceived breaches of the psychological contract between the organization and the individual, before such perceptions gestate into malignancy and metastasize throughout the organization writ large.

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[51] Gibson et al., p. 122.

Because it serves this indispensable role at the heart of the organization, the executive sub-unit is uniquely vulnerable to sabotage. It is an axiom of military strategy that force effects are greatly enhanced at bottlenecks and choke-points. History is replete with examples the role of geographical constraint as a force multiplier for numerically inferior armies. From Thermopylae to Salamis, Agincourt to Lepanto, the Nile to the Battle of the Bulge, armies and navies have been able to exploit valleys, defiles, straits and passes to enhance their own combat effectiveness. Executive organizations offer a tempting target for organizational saboteurs for precisely the same reason: because the flow of paperwork, administration, and most importantly *decision*, inevitably channel through them. An employee who, pursuant to the advice of the OSS Manual, "works slowly," affects only those tasks which pass through his hands. A single manager "working slowly," however, can affect the productivity and therefore the efficiency of the organization as a whole.

A saboteur seeking to degrade organizational efficiency at the managerial level, therefore, will logically target his efforts at interfering not only with the elements of the organization, but also, and more profitably, with the functions of the executive. If he can bring about a failure to maintain effective communications, willing cooperation or unity of purpose; or if he can disrupt, from the point of view of the work force, the perceived balance between sacrifice and benefit, then he will achieve far more than if he had merely restricted his efforts to the working level.[52]

Opportunities for degrading organizational efficiency at the managerial level abound. The most obvious target is decision-making, one of the principal tasks of managers in any organization. It may not be possible to cause a deleterious decision to be deliberately taken; but because executive organizations tend to be conservative and risk-averse, it is generally not difficult (as noted above) to retard the decision-making process by continually appealing to extremes of prudence and caution. Similarly, and for the same reason, it should not be difficult to induce the executive to postpone decisions on complex or controversial subjects in favour of less important, but also less confounding, matters. "The fine art of executive decision," Barnard avers, "consists in not deciding questions that are not now pertinent, in not deciding prematurely, in not making decision [*sic*] that cannot be made effective, and in not making decisions that others should make."[53]

The clever saboteur will therefore attempt to seek decisions on irrelevant issues to the exclusion of more important matters (after all, managers are humans, and are thus inclined to pick "low-hanging fruit" first); to provoke precipitous decisions, before all the facts are known; to elicit decisions that are inherently unenforceable; and to sow dissent and confusion by inducing the executive to take decisions in areas outside of its span of authority. The effectiveness of the above-mentioned exhortation to caution, for example, is multiplied enormously when espoused by a manager of sufficient seniority. The OSS Field Manual echoes Barnard almost to the letter, advising managerial saboteurs to "[b]e worried about the propriety of any decision", and to "raise the question of whether such action as is contemplated lies within the jurisdiction of the group or whether it might conflict with the policy of some higher echelon"(11b8). The natural conservatism/risk-aversion of the executive sub-unit will do the rest.

One particularly useful means of delaying decision-making is almost universally considered legitimate, not least because it derives from parliamentary procedure. Whenever possible, the

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[52] Barnard, p. 165.
[53] Barnard, p. 194.

OSS Manual advises, the managerial saboteur should "refer all matters to committees, for 'further study and consideration'"(11A5). The Manual adds that the saboteur should strive to ensure that the committees include as many potential participants as possible—"never less than five."

A committee—satirically derided as "a body that keeps minutes and loses hours," "twelve people doing the work of one", or a "form of life with six or more legs, three or more stomachs, and no brain"—illustrates the impact on organizational efficiency of diffusion of responsibility for decision-making. An especially pernicious manifestation of this phenomenon, according to classical organization theory, is duality of command (two people, after all, constitute the smallest possible "committee"). Fayol, for example, argues that unity of direction is vital, and defines it as "one head and one plan for a group of activities having the same objective." In typically vivid prose, he states bluntly that a "body with two heads is in the social as in the animal sphere a monster, and has difficulty in surviving."[54]

He goes on to argue that

> For any action whatsoever, an employee should receive orders from one superior only….Should [unity of command] be violated, authority is undermined, discipline is in jeopardy, order disturbed and stability threatened….As soon as two superiors wield their authority over the same person or department, uneasiness makes itself felt and should the cause persist, the disorder increases, the malady takes on the appearance of an animal organism troubled by a foreign body, and the following consequences are to be observed: either the dual command ends in disappearance or elimination of one of the superiors and organic well-being is restored, or else the organism continues to wither away. In no case is there adaptation of the social organism to dual command.[55]

An organizational saboteur ensconced at the managerial level in the executive sub-unit is uniquely placed to degrade efficiency by splitting direction. Even informal divisions of authority can prove useful, for example by enabling a saboteur to sow confusion about chains of command and responsibility, and sources of approval authority. But should he succeed in establishing two (or more) formal avenues of direction for subordinates or sub-units, the opportunities for accidental confusion, let alone deliberate obfuscation, will be multiplied accordingly, and the results for the organization will be potentially severe.[56]

Managerial saboteurs are uniquely able to employ to advantage tactics that are far more effective if applied across an organization, rather than in merely one small part of it. For example, the Manual suggests that anyone seeking to undermine an organization be a stickler for regulations, and insist that they be applied "to the last letter"(11b14). Such an approach is obviously more deleterious of efficiency if it is enforced across the breadth of the organization. This approach can have the additional benefit of sparking second-order sabotage, as employees, frustrated by the demands of what they perceive to be an irrational system, rebel against it, and work to undermine

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[54] Fayol, p. 259.

[55] Fayol, pp. 257-58.

[56] For a more in-depth discussion of this problem, see Aimee Arlington and Wayne E. Baker, "Serving Two (or More) Masters: The Challenge and Promise of Multiple Accountabilities", in Robert E. Quinn, Regina M. O'Neill and Lynda St. Clair, eds., *Pressing Problems in Modern Organizations* (New York: American Management Association, 2000), pp. 31-58.

it.[57] Similarly, the Manual's suggestion that speakers "give lengthy and incomprehensible explanations when questioned"(12a), while effective at disrupting communications and undermining willing cooperation at the level of individuals, is far more effective if employed during large-scale seminars and conferences, or the sort of "town-hall" meetings that have come into vogue in recent decades.

The vulnerability of the executive sub-unit to system-wide organizational sabotage derives from the malign synergy that often arises between organizational dynamics and human nature. The above-mentioned tendency to dilute responsibility tends to lead executives to attempt to solidify their positions through creating networks of supporters. This is exacerbated in environments where organizational and task structure are volatile and subject to rapid and frequent change. Such circumstances, Hass notes, "give the executive head the incentive to seek support from multiple and changing coalitions." He suggests that this "tendency will result in the creation of a large number of 'political' positions on the staff and thereby further reduce the executive heads' discretionary authority."[58] Dilution of authority in this manner does not actually degrade the executive's actual aggregate power; but by disaggregating responsibility and disconnecting it from authority, the saboteur vastly complicates the challenge of recognizing and diagnosing problems; designing and implementing measures to rectify them; and establishing appropriate prophylaxis to guard against recurrence.

This dynamic is a natural outgrowth of the human tendency to attempt to maximize authority while minimizing responsibility. Fayol, for example, argues that "generally speaking, responsibility is feared as much as authority is sought after, and fear of responsibility paralyses much initiative and destroys many good qualities." The remedy, he suggests, is for the executive sub-unit to "possess and infuse into those around [it] courage to accept responsibility."[59] Hatch and Cunliffe refer to this propensity as "non-decision-making."[60] Repairing it, however, according to Fayol, is a task not for an organization, but rather "a good leader."[61]

The degradation of responsibility through intramural disaggregation is a more serious problem than many realize; after all, the fundamental role of the executive sub-unit is taking decisions on behalf of the organization, and "decision-making is fundamentally a process for assuming responsibility for a proposed action."[62] If the managerial-level saboteur is able to dissuade individual members of the executive sub-unit from accepting responsibility for taking decisions (for example by highlighting the "risks" of doing so; by increasing the number of individuals or offices that must be consulted; or by throwing so many procedural hurdles before the decision-makers that the process bogs down in technicalities) he will have done far more damage to the organization's effectiveness than if he had simply interfered with productivity at the level of the individual employee. As one popular author has argued, "the primary job of the manager is not to

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[57] Mary Jo Hatch and Ann L. Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 120. Rebellion can take many forms, including (but not limited to) outright sabotage, limp non-responsiveness, or derision and mockery. Hatch and Cunliffe, p. 159.

[58] Haas, p. 57.

[59] Fayol, p. 256.

[60] Hatch and Cunliffe, p. 267.

[61] Fayol, p. 256.

[62] Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 261-62.

empower but to remove obstacles."[63] It follows, therefore, that the clever saboteur can undermine organizational efficiency by increasing the number of obstacles to efficient decision-making.

In a decision-averse executive sub-unit—especially one which, according to Haas, derives its intramural authority from appointment rather than from "knowledge superior to that accepted by forces in the task environment"—a defining distinction, characterized in more contemporary sources, between "positional authority" and "expert authority"—"executive heads will be tempted to avoid exercising discretionary power." The result will be an organization mired in process, trapped by an executive sub-unit plagued with an excess of authority that is counterweighted and neutralized by collective unwillingness to accept responsibility. The consequence is likely to be paralysis—an executive sub-unit that "will call attention to their successes and avoid systematic investigation of their records while explaining away their failures."[64]

Decision-cell paralysis is a self-reinforcing phenomenon that can be difficult to recognize, let alone repair. Unwillingness to accept responsibility and individual lassitude or prostration tend to be chronic rather than acute organizational ailments. Because these are just as likely to be features of organizational culture as weaknesses of discrete individuals, they can easily survive the replacement of individual managers or even groups of managers. Obviously, from the point of view of someone seeking to harm the organization, the persistence of such a condition is desirable. Accordingly, should the executive sub-unit begin looking in earnest for means of extracting the organization from the doldrums, for example by making a conscious effort to adapt to unfamiliar or unforeseen situations,[65] the clever saboteur would encourage recourse to means that are likely to be deleterious rather than effective.

Levitt and March, for example, note the tendency of moribund organizations to define virtually any outcome as success (also known as "lowering expectations"). This is a short-term, process-oriented "solution" that can do considerable damage over the longer term. In a healthy organization, after all, routines that lead to success tend to be reinforced, while routines which lead to failure tend to be inhibited. The organization, as a result, becomes committed to success-generating routines—but because "success" has been redefined as a victory of process rather than of substance, the wrong routines are being reinforced. In the context of a "learning organization," the wrong "lessons" are being learned because the executive sub-unit has, in effect, redefined as "effective" a substantively ineffective outcome.[66]

This in turn can lead to a malign synergy. Because organizational structures tend to create "advocates for routines," the routines which are employed by executive mechanisms (e.g., recognition, promotion, awards and the like) tend to be reinforced through repetition because they generate outcomes which have been defined as success. As a result, they tend to acquire

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[63] Scott Adams is the author of the "Dilbert" comic strip and series of books, which take a satirical and bitingly unvarnished look at dysfunctional organizations. Some of his books—notably *The Dilbert Principle*, and *The Joy of Work*—comprise what amounts to a graduate seminar in organizational sabotage. Aspiring managers would do well to read them, if only to be aware of the techniques they describe, in order to be able to guard against them. It is worth noting that, according to Adams, virtually all of the episodes of dysfunctionality presented in his books and cartoons strips derives from factual incidents in actual organizations, either deriving from personal experience, or as recounted to him by readers.

[64] Haas, p. 57.

[65] Allison and Zelikow, p. 149.

[66] Levitt and March, p. 21.

executive-level "champions." These "champions" naturally seek to defend the routines—not because they are substantively successful, but because they lead to outcomes that are beneficial for individual managers. The end result (again, according to Levitt and March) is the formalization of a suite of procedurally effective but substantively ineffective policies that are, on the whole, nugatory to the organization's interests, but that tend to be perpetuated because they have acquired high-profile patrons—who in turn defend their continued application by converting policies into responsibilities, and encouraging "rule zealotry" to defend them (or as the OSS Manual says, applying regulations and policies "to the last letter").[67]

Because it is charged with safeguarding and advancing the organization's collective interests, but consists entirely of human beings with individual needs, desires and fears, the executive sub-unit of any organization is also uniquely vulnerable to subversion of the decision-making process. These characteristics make the executive a valuable mark for sabotage. The clever saboteur will work to destroy confidence, sow cowardice, and undermine collective purpose by creating suspicion, division, and fear; the competent manager, the capable leader, must work to inspire confidence, buttress individual and collective courage and reinforce the collective goals (or "unity of purpose," to use Barnard's term) of the executive.

The situation is loosely akin to that between the security forces of a nation, and terrorists bent on striking at its vital interests. The modern organization, due to the size, complexity, interdependence and risk-aversion of executive decision-making systems, offers innumerable potential targets for a talented and imaginative saboteur. The organization's executive sub-cell, as its "defenders," must perforce be "lucky" all the time, whereas a saboteur bent on undermining an organization by striking at (or, more dangerously, through) its executive sub-cell need only be "lucky" once.

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[67] Levitt and March, pp. 20-21.

8 Conclusion: Characteristics of effective organizations

The aim of this Memorandum was, through an examination of the suggestions for sabotage contained in the OSS Field Manual, to reverse-engineer the characteristics of a successful organization in the context of classical organization theory as defined by, inter alia, Chester Barnard. The "lens" provided by Barnard's ground-breaking exposition suggested that the question be addressed under a tripartite rubric consisting of the three fundamental elements of organization: communication; willing contribution of actions or forces; and common purpose. The saboteur is enjoined to attack the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the target organization in each of these three areas. Because it is charged with creating and maintaining each of these elements; with ensuring that the organization is effective (i.e., accomplishes its purpose); and with sustaining organizational efficiency (i.e. ensuring that the costs to the organization of accomplishing its purpose do not exceed the benefits deriving therefrom), the executive sub-unit of the organization is uniquely vulnerable to sabotage. The human and internal characteristics of executive organizations, *pace* both Levitt and March, and Fayol, are easily suborned by clever malefactors; and the role of such organizations in centralized decision-making ensures that nugatory effects metastasize throughout the entirety of the organization.

In one sense, the simplest means of describing the characteristics of a successful organization would be to produce a list of diametric opposites to all of the suggestions for organizational sabotage that are contained in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the OSS Field Manual. Where the Manual, for example, suggests that the saboteur "insist on doing everything through 'channels'" and "never permit short-cuts to be taken in order to expedite decisions" (11a1), an effective organization would be characterized by flexibility vis-à-vis routine administrative matters, and by simple, direct and adaptable processes for decision-making. Instead of "making long speeches" (11a2), effective managers conducting meetings would strive for brevity. Rather than "worrying about the propriety of any decisions" and obsessing over "the question of whether such action as is contemplated lies within the jurisdiction of the group"(11a8), effective managers would consciously adopt a decision-making policy based on rapid response and informed risk-management.

All of the suggestions for sabotage could be reversed in this manner to produce sound, cogent management advice. It is not necessary to do so, however, because the result would be a list of "management dos and don'ts" that simply reflects not only the compiled wisdom of countless books discussing not only leadership and management in principle and practice, but in most cases, simple common sense. However, it is perhaps worth reviewing and reiterating the importance of Barnard's elements as the foundation of a successful organization.

The executive sub-unit should aspire to clear, concise, substantive communications, both within the organization, and between it and external entities. It should seek to buttress the willing cooperation of employees, without which the organization cannot exist (it goes without saying that while organizations can certainly function via compelled cooperation from unwilling employees—e.g., in the context of a slave plantation, an internment camp, a factory in an occupied nation, or a prison—managers in a business or government organization should normally consider compelled cooperation sub-optimal). And it should at all costs strive to

maintain the common sense of purpose that is the *sine qua non* of organizational cohesion. It should adopt a rational, evidence-driven approach to risk assessment; maintain open, transparent communications with staff (averting the potential damage of rumour); discourage risk-avoidance and encourage courageous decision-making; eschew witch-hunts driven by non-operationally driven political concerns; and maintain politeness, honesty, openness, clarity and good humour in all interpersonal dealings. These, and many more suggestions deriving from the foregoing discussion, are all sound advice for managers seeking to safeguard organizational efficiency and ensure organizational effectiveness.

These conclusions, like the OSS Manual itself, are of course focussed on undermining organizations by internal action; they do not offer any insights into how, for example, the Western nations involved in the war in Afghanistan might work to undermine enemy organizations from without. The advice offered in the OSS Field Manual was designed specifically to aid partisans in an occupied nation, and thus would be of more use to a cunning enemy agent attempting to undermine a NATO or national organization than to a NATO or national agency attempting to undermine the enemy. Moreover, an occupying state always has kinetic options for degrading the effectiveness of enemy organizations. Accordingly, while they will not necessarily be of help to defence and security agencies focussed on attacking enemy organizations, they may assist those agencies in hardening their own organizations against successful internal sabotage. In this sense, the lessons derived from the foregoing discussion have defensive rather than offensive applicability. For states (and alliances) structured upon multicultural principles and accustomed to welcoming, naturalizing and employing personnel with vestigial ties to enemy states or organizations, this is not a trivial consideration.

In one sense, the suggestions for sabotage in the OSS Field Manual provide a useful challenge function. Just as medieval armourers once "proofed" a breastplate by firing a pistol ball into it at close range, and just as modern military plans are exhaustively war-gamed before being put into effect, the Manual's suggestions for organizational sabotage offer what amounts to a "photonegative image" of what makes organizations strong by providing a list of the most effective ways of weakening or destroying them. If the areas cited above are the most vulnerable points of an organizational that a potential saboteur is likely to exploit, then they should also be the first target for auto-analysis, remediation and preventive action by an executive sub-unit hoping to prevent subversion and avert a descent into dysfunctionality.

Willing cooperation, communication and commonality of purpose are, according to Barnard, the heart of any organization. Keeping the heart in good working order should be the foremost concern of that part of the organization that purports to be its brain.

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List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

AWACS   Airspace Warning and Control System

NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSS   Office of Strategic Services

UN   United Nations

USSR   Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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This paper reverse engineers the characteristics of a successful organization by examining, in the context of contemporary organization theory, the suggestions for organizational sabotage contained in the *Simple Sabotage Field Manual* published by the Office of Strategic Service (OSS) in 1944. The advice offered in the manual is evaluated against a framework consisting of Chester I. Barnard's three key elements of organization – willing cooperation, effective communication, and unity of purpose – in the context of Barnard's biaxial effectiveness/efficiency construct. The paper concludes that, pace Barnard et al., the executive sub-unit of any organization is, by virtue of its centralized authority for decision-making and its internal dynamics, uniquely vulnerable to sabotage; and that by providing a useful "photonegative image" of the characteristics of a successful organization, the OSS Field Manual can serve as a "target list" not only for would-be organizational saboteurs, but also for leaders and managers hoping to identify areas for improvement of their organization's policies and processes.

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