

# Part III – Relative Overall Combat Proficiency (ROCP): the ROCP of Soviet and Axis Forces from 1941-1945

## Chapter III-1: Relative Combat Proficiency

Combat Proficiency is a term used to describe the level a particular armed force has reached in mastering the complex military art of war. The terms ‘Combat Efficiency’ and ‘Relative Combat Effectiveness’ are also commonly used to describe similar characteristics. The use of the word proficient implies a level of skill as opposed to simply a difference in machine like characteristics. A great football team would be more accurately described as proficient as opposed to simply efficient. Unfortunately, as with football, a lot of emotion is tied up with quantifying combat proficiency because it involves issues relating to national pride, war justification (including losses), current political agendas and ‘the bravery and heroism’ of the troops. Few people will admit their hated enemy had a more developed fighting technique.

In this context, Combat Proficiency is the level of skill achieved through a combination of training (including leadership), experience, motivation and efficiency of the military organisation. The efficiency of the military organisation includes factors relating to efficient command and control, and efficient supply distribution, but does not include the technological capabilities of the available weapons. The latter is considered separately under ‘Weapon Effects’ on Combat Proficiency.<sup>1</sup> The reason why Relative Combat Proficiency is so important to any accurate military simulation is because in its simplified form it is directly proportional to the military strength of the combat units in question. Therefore when factors for equipment (current technology), readiness, supply, terrain and weather are added, the relative ‘fighting strength’ or ‘combat power’ of the unit can be calculated at any given time.

Combat proficiency calculations for a particular force are really only useful when carried out **relative** to an opposing force. In this regard the term ‘Relative Combat Proficiency’ is more accurate, and this will be the main focus of our calculations relating to WWII. It is tempting to try to compare combat proficiencies of the great, and not so great, armies of history. This can be done by using factors to compensate for the various armies’ technological states and some sophisticated military models are able to do this with a reasonable degree of accuracy.<sup>2</sup> The resultant probable combat proficiencies of opposing forces are then sometimes used in military simulations to predict probable outcomes of possible future battles. Given the multitude of unknown variables, the ability to calculate the Relative Combat Proficiency of untested forces is very difficult compared to calculating the same relative proficiency of opposing forces involved in historical battles, provided the historical data is accurate. This is because the complexities involved in the military art of war change dramatically as technology and human knowledge in all areas move forward. In addition, an army is a product of the prevailing culture, traditions and political forces in the nation that created it at a specific time. These forces obviously change and are usually unique to that time and place in a country’s history. It is very difficult to quantify these effects if comparing forces from different historical periods. Conversely, in the historical model comparing contemporary forces the prevailing technology of the time, and the culture behind the respective armies, is more clearly defined. Equally as important, the actual historical results can be used to validate the Relative Combat Proficiency calculations for the opposing forces.

Most methodologies calculating Relative Combat Proficiency utilise the relative casualty inflicting efficiencies of the respective forces as the predominant factor to be considered. The

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<sup>1</sup> Refer Part III 2. 2) - ‘Relative Overall Combat Proficiency (ROCP) - ROCP Methodology: Key Assumptions’.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., the Dupuy Institute’s TNDM (Tactical Numerical Deterministic Model) or QJM (Quantified Judgement Model), and RAND’s JICM (Joint Integrated Contingency Model).

methodology may vary, and all sorts of human, terrain, weather, posture and technological factors may be included, but the casualty inflicting efficiency is the basis or start point. Because of the nature of attempting to quantify Relative Combat Proficiency, most methodologies examine division sized military operations over fairly limited time frames, usually days or weeks. The reasons for this are largely to do with the accuracy of the historical data available. The ideal operations to study are ones which are well documented and with reliable records from both sides. Also by limiting the time frame the impact of time related variables, such as weather and changes in force strength due to reinforcements, are limited.

For an operation the size of Operation Barbarossa, which was the largest military operation in history carried out under a single code name, accurate historical data is limited. For a military campaign of this magnitude, considered over a period of six months, we will be using a simplified method with only selected factors taken from other well known methodologies. Our objective is to calculate the average Relative Combat Proficiency from 22nd June to 31st December 1941 for the overall Soviet, German, Finnish, Slovakian, Hungarian, Rumanian and Italian land forces involved. This average overall Combat Proficiency is henceforth termed the Relative Overall Combat Proficiency (ROCP) for that combatant's land forces.<sup>3</sup>

In later sections we will also attempt to analyse significant changes in German-Soviet ROCP during the period June-December 1941, as this would also be very significant to any military simulation of the Axis invasion of the USSR during 1941.

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<sup>3</sup> Air and Naval force ROCPs use a different methodology and need to be considered separately.