

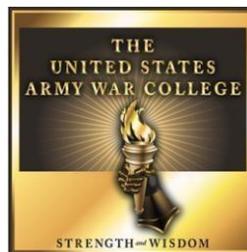
Strategy Research Project

Required Adaptation in an Increasingly Complex Operational Environment

by

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Abstract

The global operational environment has changed dramatically over the last three decades and the United States Army must adapt in order to maintain the capability and capacity to continue achieving strategic goals and securing national interests. While the nature of war transcends time, it's character has evolved immensely and to maintain not only global military primacy, but relevance, the United States Army must adapt at a pace that outperforms adversaries and competitors. Adaptation is primarily required across three lines of effort – understanding the complex and adaptive environment, United States Army doctrine and training, and leadership changes from the tactical to the strategic levels. Continued adaptation to meet the challenges posed by revanchist, rising, unstable, and extremist threats is paramount to the United States Army's ability to maintain relevance and dominance.

Required Adaptation in an Increasingly Complex Operational Environment

“A great wind is blowing, and that gives you either imagination or a headache.”

– Catherine the Great¹

The global operational environment has changed dramatically over the last three decades and the United States Army must adapt in order to maintain the capability and capacity to continue achieving strategic goals and securing national interests. A revanchist Russia, rising China, unstable North Korea, the pursuit of regional hegemony by Iran, and the continued threat of violent extremists on a global scale all create synergy in destabilizing the security environment. The compounding effects of globalization, exponentially evolving and proliferated technological advancements, and the ‘CNN-effect’² make the world a more connected and dynamic environment than ever experienced before. Given the last seventeen years of United States Army focus on defeating extremists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, competitors have worked on closing the immense capability gap that the United States military experienced for thirty years. While the nature of war transcends time, its character has evolved immensely and to maintain not only global military primacy, but relevance, the United States Army must adapt at a pace that outperforms adversaries and competitors.

This paper will provide a brief review of the pertinent actors and conditions that exist in the strategic environment which have the greatest impact on how the United States Army must prepare for future conflict. It will also describe adaptation that is required in three specific areas to secure future success. First, The Army must better understand the complexities of the environment and the underlying intent of competitors. This understanding will further the Army’s ability to implement holistic

change. The paper will then look at the history of United States Army doctrine and how evolution to the concept of Multi-Domain Battle is prudent and necessary to ensure success. Finally, a review of required changes to leadership, from the tactical to the strategic level, is posited for consideration.

Strategic Context

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States enjoyed a unipolar global position as the sole Super Power. With this position also came positional and fundamental responsibilities based on being a world leader and American inherent values and beliefs. The United States assumed the role of world-policeman with actions in Grenada, Panama, and Somalia during these years. Additionally, military forces were committed to defeating Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and subsequently globally, after the extremist organization's attack on the American homeland on September 11, 2001. This inexorably led to the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003 to depose Saddam Hussein and prevent his believed ability to proliferate weapons of mass destruction. Since that time, the United States has executed continuous operations to counter violent extremist organizations. This persistent conflict grew in scale on a yearly basis and extended further in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and across the African continent. Operational tempo for United States military forces remains at a level only previously seen during the conflict in Vietnam.

The last seventeen years of operations against Iraq and violent extremist organizations provided exceptional combat and operational experience for the Army, but several factors coincided to reduce overall readiness and preparedness of United States military forces to maintain national security and to ensure America's national interests. Late Congressional budget approvals and continuing resolutions prevented

the Army from effectively executing modernization and advancement of key weapons systems. A singular, but necessary, focus on combatting terrorism atrophied the Army's ability to conduct major combat operations as well. Additionally, the high operational tempo has taken a heavy toll on both personnel readiness and equipment maintenance. While far from broken and unable to accomplish assigned missions, the United States Army is at a point where lack of funding and back-to-back deployments has degraded its ability to rapidly adjust to today's emerging security threats.

Observing the United States' commitments and approach to a culmination point, aspiring super powers and revisionist countries are pursuing opportunities to challenge American global influence and reshape the international order.³ Russia seeks to limit United States influence in Eastern Europe and to continue extending their own influence throughout neighboring countries of the old Soviet bloc. Their revanchist behavior is destabilizing the entirety of Europe and threatens conflict with all North Atlantic Treaty Organization signatories. China is an aspiring super power who also seeks to mitigate United States economic, diplomatic, and military influence while creating regional influence throughout Asia. Their pursuit of positional and economic power harbingers regional conflict as it exerts both self-serving economic and military energy into the South China Sea. North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons as a means of regime survival threatens stability on the Korean Peninsula and is a distractor to United States and United Nations global security efforts. The Iranian pursuit of regional hegemony in the Middle East is an immense destabilizing factor and threatens United States military, economic, and diplomatic efforts in the region. Finally, the continued battle against extremism and terrorism has promulgated into a global fight against

radical and violent ideologies bent on anti-western motives and counter to any established world order. Addressing this wide range of threats and preparing potential military options to counter them requires the Army to adapt strategies and prepare itself once again for decisive action – which has not been a focus since 2003.

The United States has largely been in a defensive crouch for the last decade while conducting global operations. While limited offensive actions are executed, there remains a lack of concerted and offensive operations being taken. Because of the environments complexities, the United States observed how “Unintended consequences and uncontrollable forces militate against U.S. strategic coherence. U.S. decision-makers face unsatisfying choices, such as endless counterterrorism, questionable partnerships and expedient damage control.”⁴ The environment is unquestionably complex, and the United States made difficult decisions to uphold its values and stave off the wolves from the door over the last two decades. Rivals and enemies used this time to increase their global and regional power, to close technological gaps, and find levers to diminish American influence. While the United States is not in immediate peril and a great gap exists between aspiring super powers, adaptation and evolution is imperative.

Required United States Army Adaptation

There are three specific focus areas where the United States Army must exercise the most change and adapt. These are in the Army’s understanding of the uncertain and complex environment, updating doctrine to face assessed most likely and most dangerous threats, and that of leader development and training. While several external factors influence the global security environment, such as future Congressional funding

levels and contributions of other international organizations, they fall outside the scope of what the United States Army can impact and outside the scope of this paper.

The Environment as a Complex Adaptive System

The operating environment has evolved immensely since the end of the Cold War and the Warsaw Pact in 1991. In order to anticipate future environmental threats and challenges, today's Army leaders must understand how the environment has changed, its effects on both state and non-state actors, and they must identify trends which will better inform how doctrine, force Manning, and global posturing can best achieve United States national interests. Key factors include the impacts of globalization, the availability of technology, the prevalence of contested norms and persistent conflict that falls below the threshold of conventional 'war,' and how constructivism is a useful tool to better understand how violent extremist organizations increase their strength. Through analysis of the environment and understanding it is a complex adaptive system, Army leaders will be better armed to succeed in the violent, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment.⁵

The 2017 United States National Security Strategy informed that "many actors have become skilled at operating below the threshold of military conflict – challenging the United States, our allies, and our partners with hostile actions cloaked in deniability."⁶ These actions that are conducted below what is traditionally labeled as 'war' is exemplified in Russia's belligerent activities over the last several years and often referred to as hybrid war. The federal semi-presidential republic capitalized upon the United States' preoccupation in Southeast Asia and the Middle East by executing hybrid war in the Caucasus and with neighboring countries. Shortly after his appointment as Russian Chief of General Staff in 2012, General Valery Gerasimov published a military

strategy document that called for political warfare encompassing all elements of national power to include information and social aspects to accomplish strategic objectives. The key components were his preference for keeping actions below the level of open war and keeping cost comparatively low. This became known as the Gerasimov Doctrine and was operationalized in Russia's military intervention in the Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014.⁷

Further evidence of Russia's intent of reducing United States influence is presented in their current intervention in Syria. While the United States conducts operations within the weak state to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Russia is propping up the Assad regime and conducting their own limited operations against state opposition. In February 2018, despite previously coordinated deconfliction lines, this led to direct engagements between Russian 'security contractors' and United States forces in eastern Syria. While no Americans were injured, and the aggressors were resoundingly defeated, this is but one additional example of Russian tactics to achieve strategic effects while executing Gerasimov Doctrine.

Military strategists and those in academia often refer to this hybrid war taking place in an area known as the 'gray zone.' The gray zone is the space that exists between peace and war. "All gray zone challenges have three common characteristics: hybridity, menace to defense/military convention, and risk-confusion."⁸ Hybridity was seen in Crimea where Russia used conventional forces and supported dissidents to capitalize on unrest across southern and eastern Ukraine. Unwilling to openly confront the United States and NATO members in the Ukraine, Russia employed proxies and contractors – "little green men"⁹ – to achieve strategic goals. These actions, combined

with a heavy diplomatic and information campaign, provided Russia with a level of deniability that prevented open war from breaking out. The 2014 Ukraine incursion is another example of Russia's continued use of hybrid war to remain in the gray zone as it seeks to accomplish its strategic and revanchist goals in the region and against United States global influence. The hybrid challenge counters traditional military convention and falls outside what is currently described in United States joint doctrine's range of military operations and the conflict continuum.¹⁰ Adversaries will "employ sophisticated combinations of combined arms that include the use of space and cyberspace operations, economic influence, political shaping, information warfare, and lawfare to control the escalation and de-escalation of crisis in ways that undermine U.S. influence and delay U.S. reaction times."¹¹ The gray zone challenge of risk-confusion exemplifies how adversaries may utilize hybrid warfare in the gray zone to delay United States reaction times, conceal strategic aims, and swiftly accomplish their goals.

"Repressive, closed states and organizations, although brittle in many ways, are often more agile and faster at integrating economic, military, and especially informational means to achieve their goals."¹² Today, in the Middle East, this statement best describes Iran. The theocratic government of Iran, while experiencing internal revolutionary tendencies, has an immense military capability, continues to pursue nuclear capabilities under the auspices of the United Nations 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and heavily uses proxies throughout the Middle East to advance their strategic goal of regional hegemony. Since first discussed by the King of Jordan in 2004, a consistent concern and reminder of Iran's regional aspirations is the "Shi'a Crescent." This term describes the intent of Iran to spread its direct influence and

control over a span of terrain that originates in Iran, extends through Iraq and Syria, and culminates in Lebanon.¹³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, recently reinforced that Iran aimed to assert “an arc of influence and instability while vying for regional hegemony, using state-sponsored terrorist activities, a growing network of proxies, and its missile program to achieve its objectives.”¹⁴ These proxies and elements of Iran’s Quds Force, the foreign operations branch of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Force, execute well-documented destabilizing activities in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to simultaneously increase Iranian influence while mitigating United States influence and objectives.

Actors in competition with the United States will employ gray zone activities utilizing such alternate approaches as “legitimate and illegitimate motives and methods, universal and conditional norms, order and anarchy; and traditional, irregular or unconventional means.”¹⁵ Hybridity and gray zone actions are capitalized upon heavily by United States adversaries and enemies. Whether it is Russia’s actions in Syria, Iran’s actions in Iraq, China’s revisionist activities in the South China Sea, North Korea’s contention of international norms, or violent extremist organization’s proclivity for anarchy and disrupting world order – gray zone battle is the new norm and most persistent threat to United States interests. Now, more so than ever in this new gray world, “alliances and coalitions are the center of gravity – the source of power and legitimacy undergirding the order of the system and the legitimacy, prestige, and reputation and instrumental power of the United States as leader – and must be invested in accordingly.”¹⁶ The United States cannot face these numerous threats alone

and must continue to engage internationally through diplomatic, economic, and military means.

United States Army Doctrinal Relevance

Doctrine which governs the actions of the United States Army has evolved several times over the last thirty-six years. From AirLand Battle to Full Spectrum Operations to Counter-Insurgency (COIN) to Unified Land Operations (ULO) to now Multi-Domain Battle (MDB) – Army operating concepts and doctrine remained dynamic. Only twice has this change been anticipatory instead of reactive. That was first with the development of AirLand Battle in 1982 and again today with the creation of Multi-Domain Battle. The remaining operating concepts were derivatives and reactions to ongoing conflict which included the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the growth of violent extremist organizations. They served as stop-gaps to a problem in the existing environment that did not provide the United States Army with a long-term azimuth to focus leader development and systems procurement. General David G. Perkins, former Commander of the United States Training and Doctrine Command, stated that “Current U.S. Army doctrine effectively guides the relatively familiar low-intensity hybrid fights the Army likely would fight tonight, but that doctrine does not adequately address major combat operations.”¹⁷

The nascent Multi-Domain Battle concept is not revolutionary, but evolutionary. It possesses many capabilities likened to that of the 1982 AirLand Battle doctrine. AirLand Battle’s focus was on rapid offensive operations along narrow fronts to defeat a peer or near-peer competitor’s actions. Three of the most prevalent outcomes from development of AirLand Battle was the battlefield framework of deep, close and rear areas, the concept of operational art, as well as the concept of massing maneuver and

fires along narrow fronts in order to gain localized and temporal positions of advantage.¹⁸ These positions of advantage would create windows of opportunity to further the defeat of the adversary. The adversary at the time that doctrine prepared the United States Army to face was the communist Soviet Union. AirLand Battle served the United States Army well for over two decades. While the threat of war with the Soviet Union ended with its abrupt collapse in 1989, the doctrine was operationalized to great effect during OPERATION DESERT STORM in 1991 and again during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003 – both against the conventional military of Saddam Hussein. As the fight against Al Qaeda and other violent extremist organizations evolved in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army's doctrine changed to the environment – ergo Full Spectrum Operations and Counterinsurgency doctrine in the first decade of this century. The operational tempo in support of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Congressional budget constraints, led to an Army that was focused and resourced for the contemporary fight. Only after scanning the environment and more fully comprehending the growing threat that aspiring super powers and revisionist states possess did senior leaders energize the enterprise to once again become proactive in its pursuit of continued relevance and lethality into the future. Multi-Domain Battle, as a concept, was born in late 2016 by the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC).

Multi-Domain Battle concepts are aimed at defeating peer and near-peer competitors on tomorrow's anticipated battlefield across multiple domains. The concept is focused on those competitors that possess the future potential to become existential threats to America and its most vital national interests. The interconnectedness of

globalization and rapid technological proliferation necessitates that the United States Army prepares to fight across multiple domains simultaneously with the support of the entire joint force. Current United States Army Pacific Command Commander, General Robert B. Brown, stated in 2017 that the United States was facing an “increasingly contested global commons, with a loss of U.S. military dominance in the air and sea due to denial technologies and tactics.”¹⁹ The relevant domains addressed in Multi-Domain Battle concepts are the land, sea, air, space, cyber, and information domains. Given tomorrow’s battlefield complexities, only through application of the joint force’s combined efforts can the military achieve necessary cross-domain synergy required for victory.

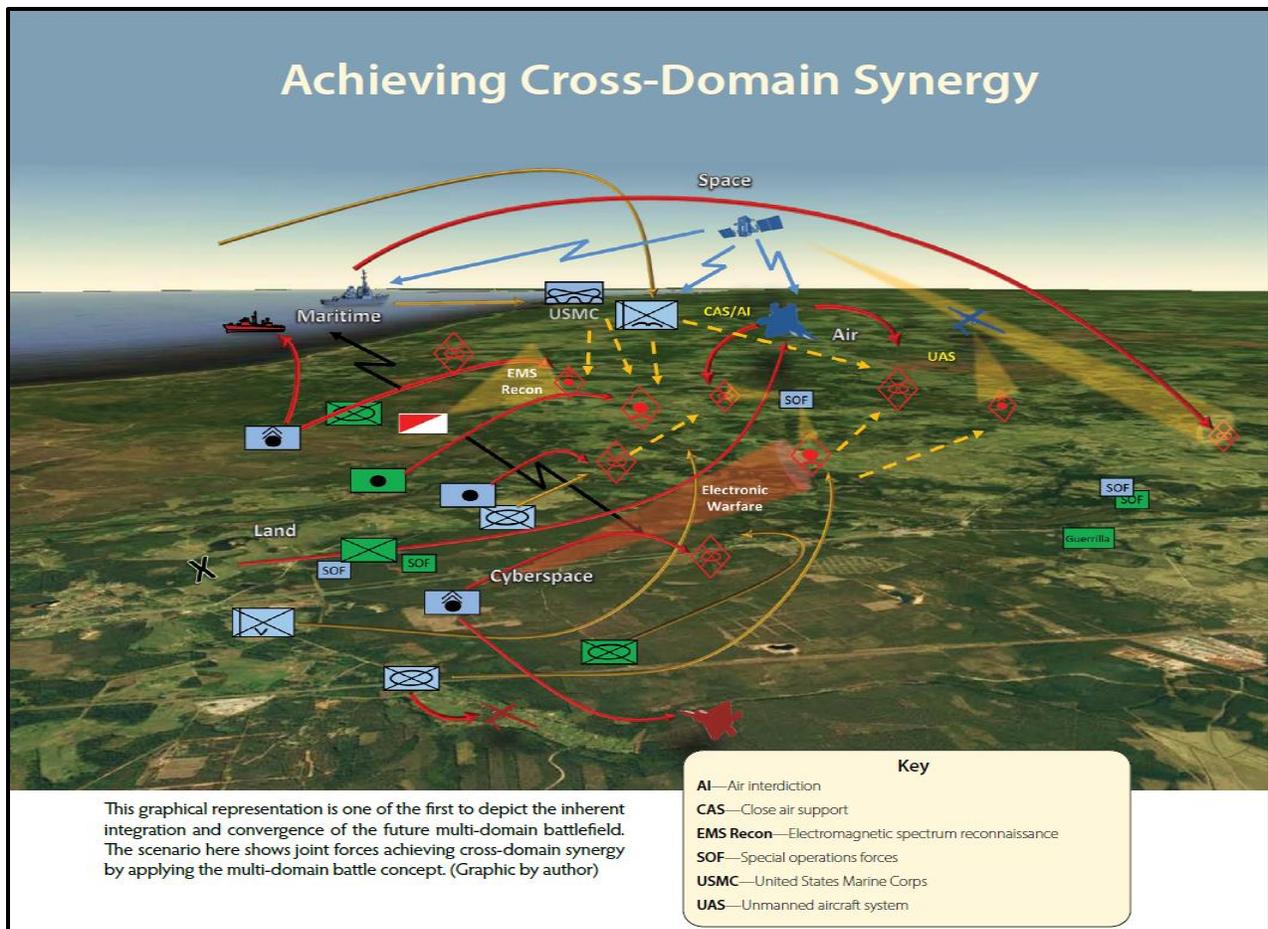


Figure 1. Achieving Cross-Domain Synergy Through Multi-Domain Battle Concepts²⁰

Multi-Domain Battle concepts provide the initial focus for combat developers and senior leaders to initiate required change. Given the United States current technological and military superiority, it is only logical that adversaries continue to operate in the gray zone into the immediate and foreseeable future. Benjamin M. Jensen, Assistant Professor at the Marine Corps University, posited in 2015 that as “the costs increase, and the utility of fielding massed formations decreases, actors seek speed and surprise to force decisions short of escalating into costly major wars.”²¹ The keys to Multi-Domain Battle concepts are the precepts that near-peer competition increases, actions are taken in the gray zone short of declared war, competition is continuous, and that

operations in the expanded battlespace will require joint force convergence of capabilities to, when required, win in war.

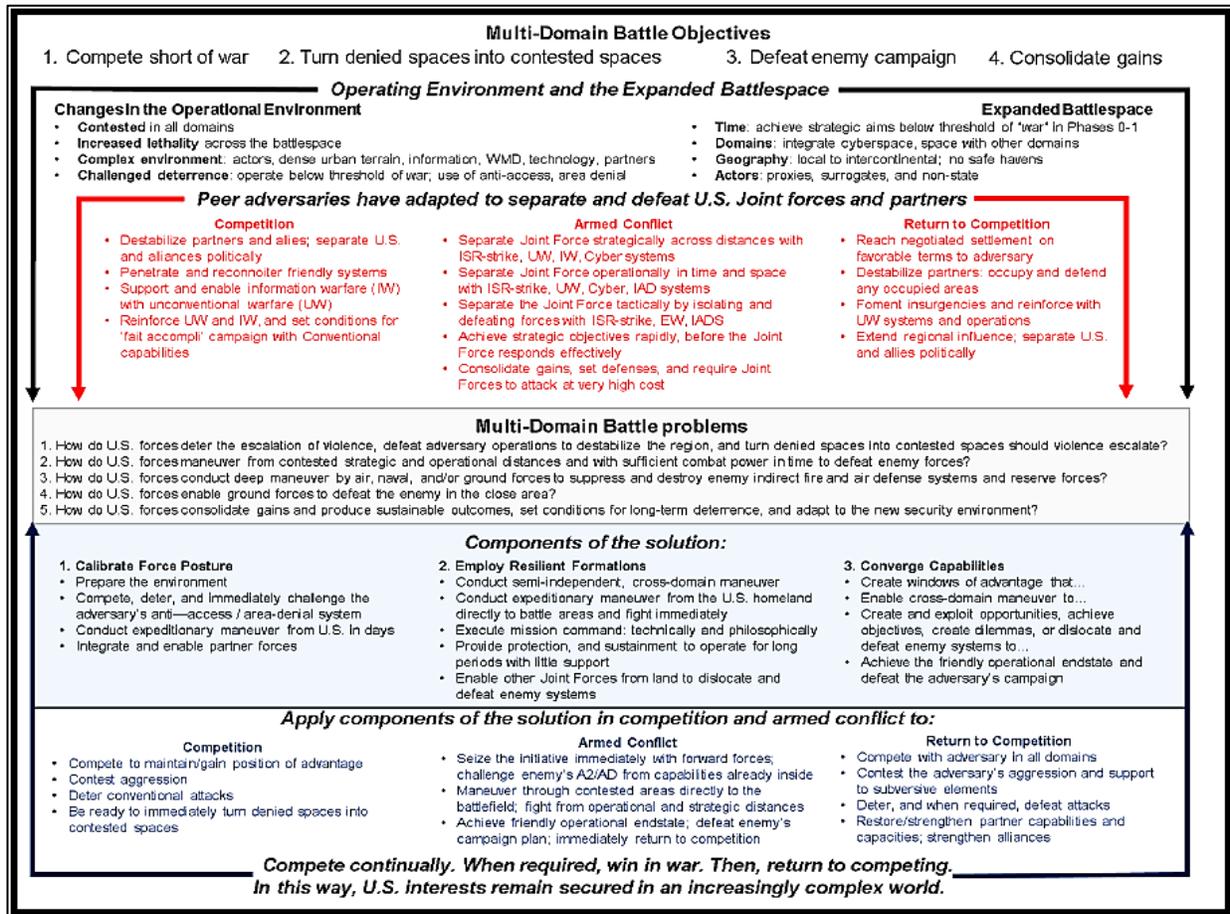


Figure 2. Multi-Domain Battle Logic Chart²²

While Army senior leaders expound upon the necessity of the Multi-Domain Battle concept, there are critics. Author and George Mason University PhD student Adam Elkus countered that Multi-Domain Battle is “yet another example of the recurring problem of military strategist and civilian analysts with inventing new terminology to replace, yet perhaps more coherent concepts.”²³ Another opponent of the new operational concept argued that a “cult of complexity leads to overhyping threats to US interests.”²⁴ Although the subsequent doctrine which will operationalize Multi-Domain Battle is

forthcoming, the Army's recognition that maintaining the status quo on defense preparations and training is commendable. Adversarial intent is undeniable and to remain stagnant in preparations for future war would only guarantee the United States' peril. The Army continues to exhibit the traits of a learning organization and evolving ahead of the threat environment is paramount.

United States Army operating concepts and doctrine impacts the entire Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) requirements process which serves to reduce capability gaps. In 2004, the United States Army transformed its regimental system of combat formations into the modular design of brigade combat teams. Modularity sought to meet the operational requirements of low-intensity conflict against extremist threats in Iraq and Afghanistan. Further, it aimed to reduce negative personnel and equipment readiness that resulted from an extremely high operational tempo. While there are critics of Multi-Domain Battle who assert the inadequacy of current force structure, staunch supporters remain who believe that a place still exists for modular formations with broad capabilities and that what the United States Army has is obviously "working."²⁵ As supporting Multi-Domain Battle doctrine is developed, it is prudent to look at today's modular formations to see where change is required. Tomorrow's formations will be distributed to mitigate electronic detection and destruction from enemy precision, long-range munitions while operating in often degraded, expeditionary, and denied environments. Modular formations offer the best starting point for further refinements and augmentation.

Leadership Requirements in a Dynamic World

Military senior leaders concerns about future combat and operational environments are warranted. In previous sections, this paper outlined the likely threat

that the United States Army is going to face. Since the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003 by a limited number of Army formations, service members have not faced a large-scale conventional threat. Notwithstanding the harrowing experiences by some platoons and even companies who valiantly fought against massed formations of Taliban, Haqqani, Al-Qaeda, or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria extremists, the peer-to-peer threat has not existed at the higher tactical, operational or strategic level. Joint Publication 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Environment*, informs that the full set of adversary courses of action must be evaluated and analyzed. This includes the most likely and the most dangerous enemy courses of action.²⁶ Arguably out of necessity, the real threat and high rotational tempo for formations deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan led to a focus of training on only the most likely enemy course of action. Subsequently, Army formations trained solely against their deployed mission essential task list which called for counter-insurgency operations and Advise and Assist missions. If the United States Army does not institute training and doctrine which prepares the force for major combat operations in the next two to five years, the majority of senior leaders who last trained for this type of conflict will have separated or retired from the Army. This would be a great loss of institutional knowledge.

In a series of articles written by Lieutenant General Gary Volesky recounting his time commanding Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJFLCC-OIR) from 2016-2017, Volesky stated that in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the “human domain is of preeminent importance and it is the key to both victory and defeat.”²⁷ The United States Army and CJFLCC-OIR utilized a great deal of technology and resources to aid the Iraqi Security

Forces in defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and regaining captured territory. In the end though, it was United States Army and coalition advisors on the front lines in Mosul that truly enabled the Iraqi Army to retake the city and liberate almost one million residents. While studies on fighting in the dense urban environment are underway, it is imperative that the United States Army capitalize on these lessons learned and implement change into the training and educational bases to better prepare tomorrow's leaders for the potentiality of a return to major combat operations – especially in dense urban terrain. Potential implementation strategies include vignettes and instruction in the Army's generating force and through increasingly complex and adaptive training exercises in the Army's operating force. While further analysis is needed, these adaptations will likely necessitate increased funding to support range and facility improvements on installations and the increased size and scope of training exercises involving the joint force.

Given the dangerous scenario of facing a peer or near-peer competitor with the electronic ability to degrade or momentarily deny the United States Army the ability to communicate on the battlefield, it is paramount that “operational agility and integration are increased by pushing decision making down to the lowest level.”²⁸ This will lead to a high degree of discomfort with operational and strategic level leaders. A tendency that has potential to emerge is the ‘six-thousand-mile screwdriver’ where the longing for information and control has previously encouraged higher headquarters to stymie initiative and deny tactical leaders from capturing or regaining the initiative. When denied a common operating picture, operational level headquarters may attempt to “revert to hierarchy as a means of control.”²⁹ When now retired General Stanley A.

McChrystal commanded the Joint Special Operations Command in Iraq and Afghanistan in the mid-2000s, he understood the complexities and evolutionary nature of the violent extremist threat. Because of the enemy's speed of adaptation, General McChrystal knew that his forces had to adapt equally fast. "In order to realize this intent, McChrystal did not merely devolve decision-making authority to subordinates who acted on their own initiative," he created a "shared consciousness" which allowed subordinates to "understand and react to the interdependence of the battlefield."³⁰ The Army's mission command philosophy will become increasingly decisive in future degraded or denied environments.

Military theorist B.H. Liddell Hart once stated that "The only thing harder than getting a new idea in the military mind is to get an old one out."³¹ To drive change and ensure that the next generation of officers that will face major combat operations as part of Multi-Domain Battle are prepared for success, it is paramount that this change is top-driven due to given time constraints and importance of action. The Army's senior leaders must display unity of effort and necessity of change to assist cementing adaptation. Military strategist LTC J.P. Clark wrote in 2016 that "only a senior military leader who imparts his conceptual vision to a rising cohort of junior followers can fundamentally reorient a larger organization."³² Training and Doctrine Command is executing an outstanding strategy and illuminated a sense of urgency through multiple on-line publications and speeches by General Perkins. The Army Chief of Staff, General Mark A. Milley, also assisted establishing a sense of urgency and communicated both vision and strategy to audiences such as Congress during testimonies and while at the 2017 Association of the United States Army conference. To make the vast

organizational and leadership change necessitated by the anticipated future operating environment, the Army's senior leaders must continue leading change and inculcate this into Army culture.³³

This required change will not be without its challenges. The frames of reference that the United States Army's company and majority of field grade officers possess are cemented from years of counterinsurgency, Advise and Assist, and low-level conflict training and combat experiences. "Frames of reference are the complex knowledge structures we develop through personal and professional experiences that influence – and often limit – the way we approach issues."³⁴ The mental models that junior and mid-grade leaders developed over the last fifteen years are thoroughly engrained and making the mental leap to what is required for major combat operations will take time. The majority of today's leaders are accustomed to short duration missions conducted out of forward operating bases while operating under very stringent tactical tasks with a very restrictive set of rules of engagement. In Iraq while fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, authorities to order the delivery of munitions and tactical level decisions were held at the operational level until late 2016. A similar situation existed in Afghanistan for several years. This control and centralization of authorities was an attempt to reduce civilian casualties and decrease the risk of negative strategic effects. When facing a peer or near-peer threat, leaders must be able to operate independently, often out of communications with a higher headquarters for extended amounts of time, and possess the ability to rapidly seize and maintain both the initiative and momentum required to defeat adversaries given increased authorities. They must also be better prepared for

handling the eventuality of increased friendly casualties that will result from this level of warfare.

The scale of conflict and the probability of United States casualties not seen since the conflict in Vietnam necessitates that the Army relooks how it assesses risk. United States “strategic leaders are more risk averse or more *risk-confused* (original emphasis) than are their gray zone competitors.”³⁵ While there is sometimes truth to the old adage that deciding *not* to do something may be the best available solution, “Gray zone opponents can perceive inaction or ineffective action in response to them as an open door for stronger and more assertive follow-on actions.”³⁶ Competitors are planning against delayed United States reactions. They understand that while the United States can deliver decisive military actions, it is usually slow to implement. Actors like Russia see this as an opportunity to gain strategic initiative in the gray zone and rapidly seize objectives while buttressing gains before the United States initiates action. Understanding this dynamic will better enable Army leaders and planners to identify precursors to enemy actions and develop further flexible deterrent and response options. Clear policies and an approved set of contingency and response plans are required for the combatant commands to better react to a competitor’s potential disruptive and offensive actions. Again, Russian activities in the Ukraine are an excellent example where a ‘risk-confused’ North Atlantic Treaty Organization was not able to react quick enough to deny Russia their strategic goal in 2014.

Conclusion

The “scholarship of military adaptation offers three broad causes for change: external direction that overcomes military conservatism, internal direction emanating from a visionary leader, or an institutional reaction to an external shock.”³⁷ The efforts of

senior leaders like General Milley and General Perkins are shaping how the United States Army prepares for great state competition and potential near-peer conflict. Training and preparing again for high-risk major combat operations is the best way that the Army can guarantee that it remains a credible deterrent and able to react to the full array of military options. This internal direction in advance of conflict is much better than after the fact and reacting to an external shock. Given recent congressional testimonies by Army senior leaders that garnered an increased two-year military budget, the Army must cement these gains and continue implementation of change across the entire DOTMLPF process.

Primarily, updated doctrine derived from the Multi-Domain Battle concept is critical to necessitated adaptation at the tactical and operational level. Updated Joint and Army doctrine will further thought on organizational structures at all echelons, refine what tactical and operational leaders are taught during professional military education, and better inform equipment and technology requirements to increase lethality and the Army's ability to operate in degraded and denied environments. The perceived credibility of United States military forces is paramount to effective deterrence of any competitor's malign actions. Given the probability of rapid adversarial action that counts on risk-confusion in gray zone conflicts and competitor's pursuit of anti-access and area denial technologies, increased forward landpower presence in the form of basing or exercises merits further research.

The adaptation required for the United States Army to successfully accomplish future missions against the anticipated threat must be enabled by sufficient capabilities and manpower sourcing. This includes apportionment of funding and allocation of joint

forces to participate together in decisive action training exercises at the country's Combined Training Centers in Louisiana, California, and Germany. "Rigorous iterations of decision making, including "impossible" scenarios or "black swans" that soldiers would not expect, can help develop critical thinking skills. Failure must be an option, under the principle that learning exercises develop leaders who will respond better in actual conflicts."³⁸ The Combat Training Centers must continue to serve as crucible training events for Army brigade combat teams, as well as warfighting division tactical command posts, and resourced appropriately to better prepare the force. Equally, this focus must be recursive and funded adequately during home station training.

Even as the United States continues to operate in an era of contested norms and perpetual conflict, it is important to remember that while direct confrontation is not always desired – the country will always execute in accordance with protecting its enduring interests and values. The country must be "An America that successfully competes in the best way to prevent conflict. Just as American weakness invites challenge, American strength and confidence deters war and promotes peace."³⁹ Given the aforementioned complexities of Multi-Domain Battle and gray zone activities, continued adaptation to meet the challenges posed by revanchist, rising, unstable, and extremist threats is critical to the United States Army's ability to maintain relevance and dominance.

Endnotes

¹ "Catherine the Great Quotes," linked from the *BrainyQuote.com* home page https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/catherine_the_great_388523 (accessed March 3, 2018).

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