COMMENTARY ON "THE US ARMY IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS 2028"

Huba Wass de Czege

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FOREWORD

Accepting General Mark A. Milley's invitation to provide critical feedback on the Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) discussion, Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, US Army retired, provides an institutionally informed critique of United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*.

Readily agreeing that the nation and the Army may have significant challenges in deterring either Russian or Chinese aggression, Wass de Czege's critique directly challenges the developing concept's logic and legibility of the core problem's frame. As Wass de Czege sees it, this logic and legibility gap raises at least a few critical questions and issues that future updates to the MDO concept need to address, including the following:

- The need for greater clarity on the overarching political concerns, as well as on the sources of Russian and Chinese behavior. What is their political purpose, and how do we and our allies counter it?
- The need for greater, clearer, and more detailed coverage of "deterrence," and consideration of "great power" and competitive behavior in light of the prerequisites of effective deterrence, which include credible, capable, and politically willing allies to defend against this deterrence. Then, the need for corresponding consideration of who are those treaty-bound allies?

A particularly insightful contribution in Wass de Czege's commentary is his coverage of the concept development of AirLand Battle, and his comparative

analysis of how today's MDO concept compares to the methodology that developed both Active Defense (1976) and AirLand Battle (1986).

The questions, and potential "lessons gathered, then-to-now," provide context and "historical minded-ness" that could prove essential to not only the sound-ness of MDO as a concept, but most importantly, to MDO as a new operating model with the promise of addressing the big question challenging US national security, and the future utility of US force and power: how has the character of global geopolitical competi-tion changed, how is it still changing, and what are the consequences?

Important additional questions include:
- Were these concepts effective in deterring Soviet and Chinese Cold War aggression?
- Were our assumptions about their use of nuclear weapons valid then? If not, how did their planned use of nuclear weapons then differ from Soviet and Chinese perceived overmatch in anti-access/area denial now?
- Are these assumptions similar and valid now?
- As after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, do our technological assessments require a conceptual evolution of our operations? If so, is this evolu-tion necessary to overcome the strategic degra-dation of our Alliances?

With a focus on the meanings of competition, the logic of deterrence, and the comparative historical analysis of MDO concept development with earlier concepts including the Active Defense and AirLand Battle, Wass de Czege and his commentary has pro-vided Army senior leadership with a comprehensive and critical appraisal of progress made, still with work

(and thinking) to be done in a manner "temporally" ripe and vital to getting MDO "right"—purposefully, spatially, and "just in time."

DR. ISAIAH WILSON III

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PREFACE

On January 30, 2017, General David G. Perkins, then Commanding General of United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), invited me to comment on an earlier draft of TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*. On March 12 of the same year, after I had gathered my thoughts, I replied that the current modernization initiatives within the US Department of Defense are too narrowly focused on physical and technological capability shortfalls. They lacked vision based on a fuller understanding of technological potential, timeless applicable logic, and sound theory. I saw the current state of reforms similar to the first post-Vietnam reform of 1973–76, called the Active Defense. This was the solution to the initial framing of the problem. AirLand Battle emerged in the early 1980s as the solution to a more mature appreciation of the situation. Like then, a more mature appreciation of the situation is required today. We need to shift from a domain-based concept of old tactics with new technology, to a highly integrated multidimensional operating approach of new tactics and strategies to perform the tasks and purposes of the most prudent plan for the future. It has taken this long to reduce my thinking to these essentials.

As a scribe contributing to the AirLand Battle operating concept, I observed, firsthand, the Army leaderships' demand for the intellectual rigor required to both develop a credible deterrent to the Warsaw Pact offensive threat in central Europe and to effectively communicate the concept's logic and requirements to the Army and, importantly, to our NATO Allies. While the ideological contest may have changed since the end

of the Cold War, the Army continues to wrestle with very similar enduring political challenges. As with the Cold War, our adversaries continue to advance their national ambitions by testing the sovereignty of our treaty-bound allies and others in their *near abroad* or *spheres of influence*. These adversaries apply all means of their national power in asymmetric ways to achieve their ends. Whether we call it "competition" or "hybrid war," we should clearly and concisely define "what" the problem is and "why," develop a compelling logical solution, and advocate for the necessary requirements to achieve feasible objectives. Although we anticipate how technological advances may continue to change the methods of war, the logic of warfare is timeless.

History doesn't repeat itself, but it certainly rhymes. While some in my generation struggled to find a counterinsurgency *theory of victory* for Vietnam, the Army's senior leadership maintained focus on countering the Soviet Union's aggression against our allies in central Europe—a vital national interest. Our support to a light infantry proxy fight in Southeast Asia detracted from the materiel and readiness requirements to deter and defeat numerically superior Warsaw Pact forces. During the very serious technological competition for the "Space Race," we should not have been surprised when Soviet-equipped and trained Arab forces outperformed American-equipped Israeli forces in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Yet, our adversary's technological advances applied on that battlefield challenged, if not invalidated, mostly all our assumptions for the defense of central Europe. Then, like now, our adversary's technological advances required operational solutions to guarantee strategic ends. It was during the course of developing

a credible operational concept to overcome this challenge, that the US Army rediscovered and incorporated the principles and lexicon of operational art and campaigning into Army, Allied, and, eventually, Joint doctrines.

Fortunately, our Army retained and promoted many critical and creative thinkers as the senior leaders required to shepherd the necessary changes to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities to field the asymmetric requirements for the aspirational AirLand Battle operating concept. The evolution and institutional learning in the development of that concept resulted in both a published doctrine and in an established norm of identifying the "what, why, and how" of the development of doctrine that informs the operations of the Army, Joint Force, and our Allies. Throughout that development, we scribes learned that our senior leaders' thinking and advocacy demanded a logical explanation. Informed by history, we had to confront the political and military context as it was. This required clear, easily understood prose that communicated just as effectively to an 18-year-old infantryman as it would to an ally's general staff. Moreover, both the problem and solution required sufficient scientific rigor to question, test, and improve the operational concept and determine the "man, train, and equip" asymmetric means to deter our adversaries credibly.

Contributing to the development of the AirLand Battle operating concept benefited me, both professionally and personally. Professionally, the effort challenged me intellectually. Understanding the problem required us to revisit history and study politics—ours and our adversaries—and the

neglected writings of military theorists that only a select few chose to read. We had to understand the physics of emerging technologies and its potential application on the battlefield—both kinetic and nuclear. We quickly gained an appreciation for the sheer scale of the logistics necessary to deter, defend, and, if necessary, secure occupied allied territories. With our cursory understanding, we then had to effectively communicate both the problem and a logical hypothesis that could withstand scientific rigor and testing. Above all else, I am most thankful that this professional experience led to my further contributions in how the Army articulated the "what" and "why" in its doctrine, fundamentally changed how we trained, and, most importantly, educated and trained the officer corps in "how" to think critically and creatively about the operational art.

Personally, my contributions to the development of the AirLand Battle operating concept introduced me to many mentors and peers who would go on to either serve as senior leaders or make lasting intellectual contributions to the Army. First, I'd like to recognize and thank the Army's senior general officer cohort of the decade beginning in 1979. They not only encouraged new ideas but also enforced disciplined thinking. They were led by Army Chief of Staff General Edward C. Meyer, and included Generals Donn A. Starry, William R. Richardson, Robert M. Shoemaker, Richard E. Cavazos, Edwin H. Burba, John R. Galvin, Gordon R. Sullivan, and Carl E. Vuono. They were my teachers. Next, I need to credit two teammates at Fort Leavenworth, then Lieutenant Colonel Leonard D. Holder and Colonel Richard H. Sinnreich, whose intellect, innovation, and common sense contributed much to our Joint enterprise. Finally, I need to thank

contemporaries whose time and concentration on this project helped me shape the arguments of this commentary: Major General Waldo D. Freeman, US Army retired; Colonel Paul Tiberi, US Army retired; Major General George A. Higgins, US Army retired; Major General Raymond D. Barrett, US Army retired; Major General William C. Hix, US Army retired; Colonel Isaiah (Ike) Wilson III, US Army retired; and Colonel George Shatzer, US Army.

No concept survives "first contact" with a new strategic problem whole or intact. Every strategic problem will be unique. Strategic context, the ends of strategy, the "enemy," physical conditions, social contexts, and technologies will change constantly, and methods are mere points of departure for adaptation. To be sound and useful, however, operating concepts cannot be a vague discussion of hypothetical cases. They must provide solutions for very real, specific, and salient strategic problems. I offer the following critique to contribute further to the Army's "discussion, analysis, and development" of its doctrine and operating concepts.

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SUMMARY

Any response to Russian or Chinese aggression from the United States and its Allies requires military operating concepts, materiel solutions, and forward deployed forces in well-planned and prepared defenses to deter these adversaries credibly and, if necessary, defend the status quo. These concepts must rely on sound military theories and testable hypotheses that yield a logical theory of victory. Unfortunately, the central ideas in United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (MDO), inherits foundational flaws from its preceding concepts (such as the AirLand Battle and the Operational Context); thus, the pamphlet fails the challenge.

Cold War requirements for deterrence and defense provide more relevance to these challenges than recent conventional combat operations. Then, we assessed the Warsaw Pact armies as capable of a "blitzkrieg" conventional attack that would overwhelm Allied defenses and NATO's nuclear deterrent. The Air-Land Battle concept provided NATO with logical and validated means to win the "first battle" decisively through the systemic defeat of Warsaw Pact armies. The concept's maturity required planners to gain a holistic understanding of the adversary to develop a campaign-quality set of ideas with testable lines of operations and objectives before identifying the methods or means to apply in an asymmetric way. The development of effective tactical ways and means for operational concepts requires credible analytical testing, gaming, and scientific rigor to avoid the risk of validation on the battlefield. Today's adversaries'

behavior and technological capabilities require the same approach.

A synthesis of the unclassified *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* and TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 yields the following concept objective (mission) and principal supporting (task) objectives for the US Army.

> Mission: Contribute to the Joint Force's principal task to deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict.

> Task 1: Contribute to the Joint Force's defeat of Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in political, military and economic realms without risking armed conflict.

> Task 2: Defeat Russian and Chinese technological adaptations and multiple layers of standoff in all domains (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information) that threaten coherence of operations.

> Task 3: Modernize our obsolete way of war, by adapting to the revolutionizing impact of the technology of war to succeed against the militaries of "post-industrial, information-based states like Russian and China."

This logic cryptically implies that *when* we can defeat Russian and Chinese *layered standoff* tactics in the political, military, and economic realms; *when* our warfighting techniques have evolved and adapted to

defeat defenses arrayed in multiple layers of standoff in all domains (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information); and *when* we can successfully *compete* against, *penetrate*, *disintegrate*, and *exploit* the aggressive military operations of our adversaries, then our new American way of war can deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict. Unfortunately, this foundational logic is flawed and the perception about the problem set and mission and situation is incomplete.

Chapter 2 of the MDO, "The Operational Context," does not articulate a well-developed *theory of the problem*. This chapter should answer questions such as the following: (1) Given the Army's mission, what problems arise; (2) What are the *cluster of problems* within the situation that help the aggressor achieve objectives without risking armed conflict; (3) What military weaknesses and disadvantages need to be overcome; (4) Why are the adversaries not deterred, and what would deter them; and (5) What are the "problems" in the defense that facilitate an enemy's early fait accompli occupation of a US ally? Without such a clear line of inquiry, readers must infer a complex leap of logic to grasp the concept's *military problem*.

Likewise, MDO's chapter 3, "Multi-Domain Operations," fails to articulate a clear solution to the military problem. Instead, the concept offers a flawed *central idea* that is insufficient as an understandable theory of victory supported by testable hypotheses and scientific inquiry. As such, it will likely fail to deter potential adversaries' attacks against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend. To deter credibly, the MDO must clearly define the military problem and articulate a theory of victory that is understandable and logical to Allies and adversaries alike.

Compounding these logical challenges, the MDO's use of vague language confounds the reader's understanding of the concept. For example, the frequent use of ill-defined terms such as *standoff* and *domain* confuse the already thin logic of the concept. The evolution of MDO must use common English words to provide clarity as it informs Army, Joint, and Allied doctrine.

A revised MDO concept must clearly articulate its mission purpose. To "deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict" is vague and lacks a meaningful purpose. We should clearly explain what Russian and Chinese behavior is intolerable and why and the consequences such behavior will likely incur. The key idea requires us to deter war as the overriding purpose. Aggressors must believe they cannot credibly succeed. Doubt invites a test. Therefore, defensive alliances are so important.

Unfortunately, the MDO concept advocates that we symmetrically counter these adversaries by framing *conflict* as a contest between their ability to deploy advanced air defense and area denial defenses and our ability to overcome them. This normalizes and legitimizes the coercion and subversion of our allies as mere competition.

The MDO concept for responding to and winning conflict is also symmetrically conceived. It assumes that an adversary's surprise attack will overwhelm an unidentified allied forward defense and then immediately array multiple layers of defenses in depth in all relevant dimensions (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information). The pamphlet seemingly overlooks the very demanding task of defending an ally's territory under armed attack. Subsequently, the United States and our allies would conduct a counteroffensive campaign of reconquest in the form of a

strategic movement to contact, which plays right into the strong conventional and nuclear defensive posture of our adversaries. We can and must avoid this asymmetric choice.

The MDO asserts that the biggest military challenge we face against adversaries like Russia and China is "maintaining the coherence of our operations." Such thinking limits our choices. We need more than the technological capability to defeat the defenses Russia and China can erect over their assault formations. We need to organize a forward stationed and rapidly deployable air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information defense of allied territory. This will require sustainment at the scale of the military enterprise and the successful practice of mission command initiative for us and with our allies.

The following argues for a revised theory of victory: deterring Russian and Chinese aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend. Having to defeat Russian and Chinese aggression is a distant second place, even when we are successful in achieving a stable and advantageous peace afterward. The real test of sufficiency is proving that the Army can succeed along all lines of operations and adapt the warfighting means and methods necessary to enable that mission. Although some very essential lines of effort in the concept may not be in the Army's power to initiate, they are vitally important to strategic success, and they are within the Army leadership's power to advocate.

COMMENTARY ON "THE US ARMY IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS 2028"

INTRODUCTION

Countering the aggression of Russian or Chinese "hegemonic" behavior will require a rapid, ready, and appropriate reaction along anticipated lines of operations to deter rather than accelerate crisis escalation, and to defend the status quo when challenged.[1] Such a reaction must rely on sound military theory built on a latticework of testable (and tested) hypotheses that yield logical *theories of victory*. To clarify, theory of victory is a term I have adopted and exemplified from Dr. Bradford A. Lee, formerly of the US Naval War College. *Military Strategic Concept* is the best term for a general conceptual scheme for achieving the purpose of a national or allied military strategy. In this case, *victory* should be defined as keeping the peace.

So, the question is, do the central ideas in the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, provide logical counters to hegemonic behavior from Russia or China? The principal challenge in the development of operating concepts requires sufficient scientific rigor so that purposeful analytical testing and "gaming" identifies true requirements for tactical ways and means. Given former Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley's

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1. Jim Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2018), 1–3, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

invitation for critical feedback in TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1's foreword, this commentary aims to strengthen the "foundation for continued discussion, analysis, and development" of the Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) important counteraggression concept.[2]

The logic of the counteraggression concept in the current version of MDO can be strengthened in a number of ways:

1. It must make clear what Russian and Chinese behavior is intolerable and why, and the likely consequences for such behavior.
2. It must not adopt the adversaries' terminology and logic of aggressive and subversive "competition" and armed "conflict." Doing so invites thinking and engaging our adversaries symmetrically rather than asymmetrically.
3. This counteraggression concept must include proven ways to offset the US and Allied disadvantages of distance and reaction in cases of Russian and Chinese aggression.
4. The MDO concept must correctly frame the actual problem that needs a solution.
5. The central idea or solution must reveal more than the broad rule of thumb (by way of three tenets) it currently provides.
6. Finally, friend and foe alike must clearly understand the concept's logic and theory of victory convincingly.

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2. Headquarters, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Washington, DC: TRADOC, 2018), i, https://www.tradoc.army.mil/Portals/14/Documents/MDO/TP525-3-1_30NOV2018.pdf.

The return to near-peer competition requires revising this concept to think outside the framework of the planners' own experiences. The last 18 years of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations dominated institutional thinking over countering peer-level aggression. As a scribe of post-Vietnam leaders who were the motive force for a new way to think and fight against potential Warsaw Pact offensive operations designed to preempt a US-NATO nuclear deterrent that had lost credibility, I shared the challenges of thinking outside my own experiences from June 1980 to November 1985 when contributing to the development of the AirLand Battle concept.[3]

Our Cold War experience has more to teach us today than the large-scale conventional combat operations of Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom. The *way of war* we practiced in those wars of choice against minor powers is no guide on how we should react to wars of aggression by major nuclear-capable powers then, or in today's evolved world situation. Our experience from the Cold War taught clearly the importance of deterrence and defense. Subsequent operations were limited war offensives. A war which culminates from such an aggressor's initiative will require the full array of our military power at once. War with Russia and China may escalate quickly in ways difficult to control and in reaction to their initiative, not ours. They may attack allies that we are treaty-bound to defend; in places

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3. Huba Wass de Czege, *Lessons from the Past: Making the Army's Doctrine "Right Enough" Today*, essay no. 06-2 (Arlington, VA Institute of Land Warfare Publication, September 2006), https://www.ausa.org/publications/lessons -past-making-army's-doctrine-"right-enough"-today.

near and far from us, requiring the support of a large, capable alliance.

The challenge is convincing these aggressors they will fail if they try. Today, we need to think about the logic of the problem and the operational concepts of a solution within a more complex and multifaceted global situation.

The current MDO counteraggression concept shares the shortcoming of its recent predecessors Rapid Decisive Operations, AirSea Battle, and Multi-Domain Battle. Specifically, an operating concept design should first identify achievable objectives then the methods to apply. The current MDO concept fails to do this. Additionally, objectives will not be unitary. Multiple, mutually supporting, concept objectives will require a scheme of several simultaneous and sequential operational tasks, phases, and lines of operations. Concept designers must describe the set of problems; the situation (including the Alliance) and the adversary; and the testable logic for the ends, ways, and means of each task, phase, and line of operation. The formulation of *tenets* regarding operating methods follows once required actions are determined. The current MDO concept does not articulate vital conceptual and detailed development and jumps directly to these required actions. Such logical leaps confound the reader's understanding and may incur risks. Failing to develop these lines of effort frustrates the logic of the concept and the Army's ability to test and implement it.

Although some very essential lines of effort in the concept design may not be in the Army's power to initiate, because they are vitally important to strategic success, they are within the Army leadership's power to advocate.

LEARNING FROM THE POST-VIETNAM REFORMS

Like the Army of the early 1970s, today's Army must react to new and serious dangers:

1. *hybrid* aggression by Russians, Chinese, and others in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and in the South China Sea; and
2. the proliferation of the defensive technologies we pioneered before the turn of the century to such adversaries.

Unlike the reformers of the present, we post-Vietnam reformers faced only one overriding problem: Warsaw Pact forces forward deployed and postured for a surprise attack in the central region of Europe. Our solution came from thinking within the consensus logic of a broad Allied strategy of deterrence.

The Warsaw Pact forces that threatened aggression in the central region of Europe were not only surprisingly well equipped and numerous, but their military doctrine (readily available to the West) was also well-conceived and more suitable to an offense than defense. At the time, we assessed them capable of quickly activating a deeply echeloned, "blitzkrieg" style attack designed to overrun our chief Allies before NATO could agree to release nuclear weapons in response. To make NATO's nuclear deterrence strategy credible to Soviet leaders, NATO's conventional defenses needed to be strong enough to deny Warsaw Pact forces' territorial objectives long enough to complete the nuclear release consultations among Allies. How we achieved this aim was reframed three times after the 1973 Yom Kippur War when Soviet-equipped and trained Arab forces

outperformed American-equipped Israelis (namely, Active Defense, defense plus power, and defense plus tactical logic for disruption, delay, and destruction).

At first, the perceived "problem" was that NATO strategy and the General Defense Plan of its Central Army Group (CENTAG) in Europe required the conventional defenses of the several forward-positioned CENTAG corps to be powerful enough to lend credibility to NATO's nuclear deterrent. This required a shocking "First Battle" defeat at the Allied frontiers against a Warsaw Pact surprise attack that could materialize within 48 hours of warning.

The first framed solution to winning this first battle was the Active Defense concept, published in 1976. The means of this requisite shocking first battle victory required improved weapons and optimized platoon, company, and battalion level tactics of an *active* forward-positioned ground forces defense. The Army focused on fighting the enemy ground forces short of the mutually agreed to Fire Support Coordination Line. The NATO Air Forces focused on fighting the enemy beyond. The logic of Active Defense was not a convincing solution, and thus failed to win acceptance both within the Army and among our Allies.

Subsequently, we reframed the problem a second time. Though the tactical reforms added power to the defense, they also added offsetting vulnerabilities. Many critics did not believe that defensive power was sufficient to win the requisite shocking first battle victory.[4] Ten years later, a third reframed

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4. Huba Wass de Czege, *Lessons from the Past,* 5-8; and Wass de Czege, "Answering the Army's Critics: Doctrinal Reforms," in *The Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis*, ed. Asa A Clark IV, Peter W. Chiarelli, Jeffrey S. McKitrick, and James W. Reed (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

problem brought specificity. To convince the Soviet leadership that outnumbered NATO forces would win the opening conventional defensive campaign on short notice, a new theory of victory required the systemic defeat of the Warsaw Pact armies and front-level offensive formations to seem highly likely, if not inevitable.

The initial focus of the third revision was to add the logic for how brigades, divisions, and corps would fight within the NATO strategy and the CENTAG General Defense Plan. General Donn A. Starry's *Extending the Battlefield* provides an instructive review on the development and evolution of this operation concept design.[5] This evolution required the tactics of corps, divisions, and brigades to

- *look deep* to allow for early disruption, delay, and destruction of follow-on or reinforcing echelons;
- *move fast* against the unsupported assault echelons; and
- *strike quickly* to prevent the adversary's achievement of their objectives.

Most significantly, the US Army and Air Force partnered to encourage NATO air and ground forces to integrate their operations more effectively.

However, we came to a critical realization: the Active Defense doctrine was only a general philosophy, a method of fighting, or a way of war. A philosophy or method of fighting is based only on principles or tenets sanctioned by an accredited source of institutional wisdom.

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5. Donn A. Starry, "Extending the Battlefield," *Military Review* 61, no. 3 (March 1981): 31–50, http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll1/id/334/rec/8.

An operating concept must also outline a robust theory of victory. That theory of ways and means rests on credible and coherent theories of both the problem and the solution. The problem is defined by the logic of the various challenges that must be overcome to achieve the aim. The conceptual solution offered through the operating concept must credibly describe and explain the ways and means to achieve that aim.

An operating concept, like the logic of a campaign at war, needs to be the product of design based on a specific mission and context. As stated earlier, the campaign and operating concept design begin by first clarifying achievable objectives then determining the methods to apply. In both cases, objectives will not be unitary. Multiple, mutually supporting concept objectives will require a scheme of several simultaneous and sequential operational tasks, phases, and lines of operations. Concept designers must describe the set of problems, the situation (including the Alliance) and the adversary, and then the testable logic for the ends, ways, and means of each task, phase, and line of operation.

From this evolution, the Active Defense doctrine matured from a tactical method for fighting successive battalions coming over the hill into the AirLand Battle operational concept—an integrated Allied forward defense capable of defeating the system of attacking formations, at least to the depth of combined and tank armies. This required a systemic understanding of the enemy; a deeper battlefield; purposeful activity along multiple, mutually supporting lines of operations; operational unification between two chief fighting components for the defense of the central European region; and seamless integration of the

electromagnetic, chemical, biological, and nuclear dimensions of Allied force operations.

Applying such reasoning to present adversaries requires first asking and answering two questions. What is the wisest way to frame the problem of deterring Russian and Chinese aggression against cases that matter most? And, what is the wisest way to solve that problem? Of course, the answer to the first largely determines the second. In campaign design, the "problem" is always an interrelated cluster of problems, requiring a cluster of efforts to solve them. The campaign design effort also requires formulating the logic of the several simultaneous and sequential operational tasks, phases, and lines of operations of the concept.

MDO LOGIC AND THINKING

A synthesis of the unclassified *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* and TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 yields the following concept objective (mission) and principal supporting task objectives for the US Army.[6]

Mission: Contribute to the Joint Force's principal task to deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict.

Task Objective 1: Contribute to the Joint Force's defeat of the Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in the political, military, and economic realms to achieve objectives without risking armed conflict.

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6. Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 4–9; and TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, i–xii, 24.

Task Objective 2: Defeat the Russian and Chinese technological adaptations and multiple layers of standoff in all domains (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information) that threaten the coherence of our operations.

Task Objective 3: Modernize our obsolete way of war, by adapting to the revolutionizing impact of the technology of war, to succeed against the militaries of "post-industrial, information-based states like China and Russia."

This logic cryptically implies that when we can defeat Russian and Chinese *layered standoff* tactics in the political, military, and economic realms; when our warfighting techniques have evolved and adapted to defeat defenses arrayed in multiple layers of standoff in all domains (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information); and when we can successfully compete against, penetrate, disintegrate, and exploit the aggressive military operations of our adversaries, then our new American way of war can deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict. Or can it?

This theory of victory needs a more robust logic. Unfortunately, the current concept shares similar foundational flaws from its predecessor concepts, AirSea Battle and Multi-Domain Battle, undermining the logic of this concept and evolution of Army and Joint doctrine. What problem elements are embodied in first, second, and third task objectives when applied to vital and actual grand strategic missions? What is the Army's contribution to defeating Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in the political,

military, and economic realms? What is the Army's contribution to penetrating, disintegrating, and exploiting the aggressive military layered standoff operations of our adversaries? Finally, how do we gauge the size and scope of the modernization task against the requirements of task objectives one and two above?

The Five-Part Military Problem

The MDO's chapter 2, "The Operational Context," leaves the analytical chore of extracting a theory of the problem to the reader.[7] This chapter lists overly broad, potential mission conditions:
- the four challenging interrelated characteristics of the global *operational environment* the Army will encounter;
- the logic of the MDO framework (a graphical depiction of the interaction of anticipated arrays of friendly and enemy forces and weapons on the modern battlefield);
- Russian and Chinese modes of operating in recent competition and conflict scenarios; and
- recent assessments of Russian and Chinese systemic vulnerabilities.

The reader must make a leap of logic from the above general frameworks of partially relevant theoretical premises to a listing of five incomplete tactical and technical problem-framing questions, collectively identified as the military problem.[8]

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7. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, 6–15.
8. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, 16.

First, how does the Joint Force compete to enable the defeat of an adversary's operations to destabilize the region, deter the escalation of violence, and—should violence escalate—enable a rapid transition to armed conflict?

This three-part question asks how to achieve the three objectives inherent to achieving the first task objective above. Are these the only objectives the Army needs to accomplish in support of this strategic aim? The remaining questions pertain, in the same way, to the second task objective.

Second, how does the Joint Force penetrate enemy anti-access/area denial systems throughout the depth of the support areas to enable strategic and operational maneuver?

Third, how does the Joint Force disintegrate enemy anti-access/area denial systems in the deep maneuver areas to enable operational and tactical maneuver?

Fourth, how does the Joint Force exploit the resulting freedom of maneuver to achieve operational and strategic objectives through the defeat of the enemy in the close and deep maneuver areas?

Lastly, how does the Joint Force recompete to consolidate gains and produce sustainable outcomes, set conditions for long-term deterrence, and adapt to the new security environment?

Again, are these the only subordinate objectives the Army needs to accomplish to support this strategic aim?

A more complete description and defense of the theory of the problem would come from asking and answering the following questions:

1. Given the Army's mission, what problems arise?
2. What political, economic, and military weak-
   nesses on our side (our own, the ally's, or the

alliance's) allow Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in politics, economics, and military realms to achieve objectives (territorial conquest, radical change in alliance, or radical change in economic policy) that would otherwise require armed conflict?

3. What military weaknesses and disadvantages need to be overcome?

4. Why are the adversaries not deterred, and what would deter them? What are the problems in the defense that facilitate an enemy's early fait accompli occupation of a US Ally, or, when the defeat of an Ally happens so quickly and so effectively that Allies, including US forces, can do nothing about it?

5. What are the problems in Allied reinforcement between the earliest *nonambiguous warning* and the commencement of armed aggression?

6. What are the problems in Allied counteroffensive operations to recover territory lost due to early fait accompli offensive success by the aggressor?

The Central Idea

In chapter 3, "Multi-Domain Operations," we should expect to find the direct and clear solution (the logic of ends, ways, and means) to the five-part military problem. Instead, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 proposes a central idea that will deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict. That central idea is "to penetrate and disintegrate enemy anti-access and area denial systems and exploit the resultant freedom of maneuver to achieve strategic objectives (win) and force a return to

competition on favorable terms."[9] Success requires the following:

> Applying three interrelated tenets: calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence. Calibrated force posture is the combination of position and the ability to maneuver across strategic distances. Multi-domain formations possess the capacity, capability, and endurance necessary to operate across multiple domains in contested spaces against a near-peer adversary. Convergence is rapid and continuous integration of capabilities in all domains, the [electromagnetic spectrum] EMS, and information environment that optimizes effects to overmatch the enemy through cross-domain synergy and multiple forms of attack all enabled by mission command and disciplined initiative. The three tenets of the solution are mutually reinforcing and common to all Multi-Domain Operations, though how they are realized will vary by echelon and depend upon the specific operational situation.[10]

This central idea, as a theory of victory, has a major flaw—it is supported only by tenets. Even when tenets suitably describe an aspirational set of capabilities and practices, they cannot replace what is needed here: a concept of operations based on a reliable theory of victory supported by a latticework of testable hypotheses that can be questioned and improved by scientific inquiry.

By definition, a tenet is one of the main principles of a given doctrine. Tenets can highlight important ideas; they cannot convey the logic of the ends, ways, and means of the entire body of the operating concept. The four tenets of AirLand Battle doctrine—initiative, agility, synchronization, and depth—were chosen after the AirLand Battle counteraggression concepts

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9. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, 17.
10. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, vii.

were fully articulated to highlight and communicate essential ideas. Our Allies and we should not trust a counteraggression concept based on tenets, nor should we expect these will convince potential aggressors they will fail when they attack allies that we are treaty-bound to defend. Therefore, a counteraggression concept must be logical, well supported, and clearly understandable to stakeholders and adversaries alike. We need a theory of victory that rests on credible and coherent theories of both the problem and the solution.

TOWARD A MORE ROBUST LOGIC

Before we revise the logic of the current counteraggression concept in TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, we must consider ways to strengthen it. First, however, we may formulate the central idea of our theory of victory, and the logic of the words we use must be clear to friend and foe alike. Second, we should clearly state what Russian and Chinese behavior is intolerable, and the consequences for such behavior. Third, we must not adopt the terminology and logic of aggressive and subversive competition and armed conflict on the aggressors' terms. Finally, this counteraggression concept must include proven ways to offset the disadvantages of distance and reaction from aggression by Russia and China.

Words Affect the Way We Think

The ideas in this concept would benefit from more broadly understandable prose to encourage questioning, testing, and expansion. This creates consensus across US military services and Allies, clarifies professional thought and writing, and breaks down domain walls. To avoid confusion and promote

a broad understanding of how we developed AirLand Battle, we writers learned to work within two essential rules: we restricted our word choice to common English dictionary meanings and wrote at a 12th grade level of literacy. At first, these rules were irksome, but there was little confusion about what we meant to say. The articulation of this counteraggression concept, and any critique of it, is immediately clouded by the overuse of the words *standoff* and *domain*. Standoff is a word that came into frequent military use during the late 1970s, referring specifically to the tactic of engaging an enemy element when your weapons can reach him and his return fire cannot. That word usefully expressed fighting techniques in many diverse cases, including a dug-in anti-tank defense against an armored assault, attack helicopters versus tanks, artillery counterfire, air-to-air combat, and air attack of ground-based air defense. This term also succinctly expressed the principal advantage of the ambusher over the victim of the ambush, or the advantage of a well-developed, defensive position over the attacking formation maneuvering toward it. But, today, standoff is used in many contexts to replace words that are better suited. The text of TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 is full of similar words that confound the reader before they are defined.

The MDO says we need to defeat the Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in the political, military, and economic realms. But the MDO should state more clearly what it means to say, which is that under the guise of competition, the United States and our Allies must combat an array of Machiavellian scheming: military threats, predatory politics, coordinated diplomacy, and economic reward or penalty. Their *information warfare* will include classical

propaganda and masked cyber and social media interventions into the voting of our own and Allied elections. Against our most vulnerable Allies, they will employ coercive economic policies and direct subversion with armed proxy forces and contracted civilian unconventional operators. Our opponents mean to fracture our alliances, partnerships, and resolve. They intend to influence our home and Allied publics. They mean to create ambiguity, slow our recognition of danger, confuse our policy decisions, and block or misdirect our reactions. This would be a clearer statement of the problems we must address. Just how does the Army contribute to this political, military, and economic realm of international affairs? That also needs straight talk and clear thinking.

Likewise, the word domain, as used in MDO, does not describe the realm or context of air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information operations. While no nation's armed forces have ever fought by domains, this pamphlet gives the impression that the future armed forces might. This use concedes to the Air and Naval services early rhetorical use of the term domain to make their traditional claim of autonomy from land operations. Sometimes rhetoric clouds thinking, and this is an example of that.

A modern Joint Force is organized by components and their subordinated functional subdivisions. Use of the word domain suggests analogous reasoning applies to air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information operations when the particularities of each are more consequential.

Offensive maneuver and defensive operations, once composed of complementary contests in the air, at sea, and on land, are today composed of integrated contests in new dimensions as well—in space, media,

and the so-called cyberspace. Failing to contest any of these vital dimensions cedes advantages to the enemy.

One of the big ideas of the AirLand Battle concept was to find and force a separation in time, space, and function among the attacking enemy forces, at all levels of command. The MDO seems to suggest that employing multiple layers of standoff in all domains sounds like a great and recent discovery. Yet, it is a normal and commonsense aspect of the military art at all levels of command, and in every service. Finding and forcing a separation in time, space, and function among enemy forces is an age-old practice of war from the tactics of the Army infantry squad to the operational art of four-star military Joint and combined commands. However, due to new ways and means, how one obtains that result changes situation-by-situation, and over time. More important still is the military art of leveraging so-called standoff at the tactical level to defeat the functioning of the greater theater-level offensive system of attacking formations and their essential support, thereby causing a collapse of the enemy's theater-level ability to fight offensively. By this, I do not mean generic "systems" like long-range artillery weapons systems but, instead, the "system of attacking military organizations" understood in terms of the special function the elemental components each perform in the attack in progress (not by the book, but in the specific context).

The next revision of this text would benefit by replacing these terms, as often as possible, with common English words that would be more enlightening and precise. I provide the following to contribute to the concept's "foundation for continued discussion, analysis, and development."

The Mission Aim is Too Broad

It is impossible to construct a useful theory of the mission problem, and its solution, without specifying the object (even if abstractly) of the intolerable act. Even though this pamphlet's counteraggression concept does not explain this concept clearly, the *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* states that the aggression we should be most concerned about deterring is Russian and Chinese aggression against our European and East Asian treaty allies. Thus, we must have convincing conceptual solutions for specific and worrisome test cases. Russian aggression against Latvia and Estonia in Eastern Europe and Chinese and North Korean aggression against South Korea provide good examples. Therefore, it would be essential, and difficult enough, to formulate concepts we can use to meet these treaty obligations, before considering other unspecified cases.

These cases will differ. Russian aggression (in mostly a land theater) against our European NATO Allies, who are mostly contiguous and treaty-bound to help each other, will require a solution that takes into account the unique conditions, strengths, and vulnerabilities of that situation. Chinese aggression (in mostly a sea theater) against our East Asian Allies, where our Alliances are bilateral and our Allies are geographically separated, will require a different solution strategy. Whereas NATO has a history of Allied cooperation, codified interoperability agreements, and combined commands, our Asian Allies do not, except in the context of a renewal of the Korean War. In that case, the United Nations Command Korea still exists, as does South Korean/US Combined Forces Command. Such specificity cannot

be ignored. Additionally, how emerging technologies, space, cyber, information warfare, and more manifest themselves depends on the specific location and threat.

Additionally, it is necessary to assert that unless Allies step up to perform the roles they are financially able, best suited, and treaty-obligated to perform, our Alliances on paper will not be able to convince potential aggressors that their armed aggression will fail, even if America makes heroic efforts to bridge the gap. For reference, Russia's gross domestic product (GDP) is roughly $1.7 trillion. Compare that to the $11.7 trillion combined GDP of only the four wealthiest European Allies out of the 27 total countries in NATO: Germany's GDP is about $3.9 trillion, France has about $2.8 trillion in GDP, Britain has about $2.9 trillion in GDP, and Italy's GDP is about $2.1 trillion, which is more than seven times greater than Russia's.[11] A useful counteraggression concept for this region must identify and justify the most useful distribution of functions among Allies. During the early 1980s, the US Army had to take the lead in critical thinking about these matters, not just within our services, but within the services of our Alliances.

Such factors matter because deterring war is the overriding aim. To deter an aggressor, the opposing leadership must believe they cannot succeed. Doubt in the matter invites a test. To defeat a confident aggressor's attack, we must cause his attack to fail. That outcome is a loss to both sides, even when the defense holds, and it is why defensive alliances are so important. The aggressor must know that even if he wins against the defense of one ally, the alliance will

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11. "GDP (current US$)," World Bank, accessed December 21, 2019, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP .CD?view=map.

restore lost territory by counteroffensive, along with an advantageous and stable peace. The MDO revision must conceive of and explain how to do this.

Solve the Problem Asymmetrically

MDO's principal task of the counteraggression concept is to deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression in both competition and conflict. It advocates that we engage our enemies symmetrically (by their hybrid or *gray zone* methods) and by framing the conflict as a contest between their ability to deploy theater-level, advanced air defense and area denial defenses, arrayed in multiple layers of standoff in all relevant dimensions of warfare, and our ability to overcome them. As currently framed, the problem of defending our Allies this way leads to symmetrical, rather than asymmetrical, thinking about the mission. Once again, words matter. We should not fight fire with fire.

It is likely we can more easily deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression against our Allies asymmetrically. First, the interests of the attacker and defender are, by nature of their purposes, asymmetric. Second, we optimize our strengths in all the dimensions of power that our Allies and we can muster. We take advantage of the weaknesses of potential hybrid aggressors. We employ military power to set and maintain the conditions for other instruments of power to succeed in their proper function. In order to defeat an adversary by asymmetrical strategies and tactics, we must understand how the terminology and logic of competition and conflict works for our adversaries, and not for us.

When the politics, economy, and internal (and possibly external) security of an Allied state is willfully subverted and undermined by a predatory power, why would we want to agree to normalize and legitimize such behavior as mere competition? Our counters must first legitimate the victim, and delegitimize the aggressor, whatever his tactics. They can assist that government's internal defense against subversive coercion and externally supported armed revolt. They can also strengthen its external defense in every practical and affordable way, such as preventing the hostile undermining of their external defenses, assisting frontline Allies in deterring sudden fait accompli attempts at conventional force invasion, and other defensive and deterring actions. Calling what we do either hybrid warfare or competition makes no sense. Call it what it is, defending an advantageous peace, one that was hard-earned by past collective efforts. The essential point here is that while the current MDO concept focuses mostly if not entirely on the "tasks" of "fighting," it should actually begin with and maintain focus on the ultimate *purpose* as Clausewitz and Sun Tzu would put it.

The MDO concept for responding to and winning conflict is also symmetrically conceived. War is a very specific kind of conflict in which the aggressor characterizes armed invasion (a clear act of war) as justifiable conflict, and the defender characterizes military preparations and armed reaction as prudent deterrence and defense of the peace (preparations for which I would call "responsive collective counteraggression operations"—reflecting the nature and superior moral purpose of such defense).

The current MDO assumes the aggressor's surprise attack, when it comes, will overwhelm an initial Allied forward defense, which is never identified and likely does not exist. The aggressor then immediately arrays multiple layers of defenses in all relevant dimensions (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information) from the aggressor's homeland to occupied Allied territories. Upon initiation of hostilities, responding US and Allied forces deploy from within the theater and beyond, and commence fighting their way toward the territory of the conquered ally. Unfortunately, according to the MDO's central idea applying the three tenets, success requires the vital assumption that MDO warfighting techniques have evolved and adapted to enable the US and Allied forces to penetrate and disintegrate adversary defenses, "exploit the aggressive military operations of our adversaries," and once again return to competition.[12] This untested assumption depends on logic examined in the upcoming section, "Task Objective 2: To Defeat Armed Aggression and Restore a Favorable Peace."

Offset Disadvantages of Distance and Reaction

Instead of matching adversary strengths, our counteraggression concept must adopt new ways to offset the disadvantages of distance and reaction from Russian and Chinese aggression.

The first disadvantage we must overcome is having to react to the aggressor's initiative. During the Cold War, we assumed 48 hours of unambiguous warning of an attack—the commission of the first act of war. At the time, this was considered sufficient time to deploy capable defenses. The second disadvantage

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12. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, 25–46.

is the potential aggressor's distance of his aggression. We can make conventional and nuclear deterrents, both supporting and credible. For example, a central question of the post-Vietnam military reforms was how to make NATO nuclear deterrence strategy credible to Soviet leaders. The conventional defenses of NATO needed to be considered strong enough on their own to keep Warsaw Pact forces out of NATO territories to complete the nuclear release consultations among Allies. How to achieve this aim was reframed three times after the 1973 Yom Kippur War (as discussed earlier). This question must be answered again for every potential case that matters.

We can enhance this credibility from an aggressive forward defense by Allied conventional forces and a suitable American forward presence as we did in the early 1980s and still do on the Korean peninsula. This defense must be sufficiently immune to a fait accompli territorial seizure while Allies confer on the release of authority to threaten and respond by nuclear means. Our European and East Asian treaty Allies can achieve such immunity when they fully exploit their natural defensive "home court advantage" with enhanced defensive technologies, and a well-planned, fully coordinated, and superbly executed Allied crisis response. Finally, we can reinforce these measures with the credible potential to reverse any gains by the aggressor and then impose an advantageous peace. This does not require the conquest of Russia or China. It only requires reconquest of lost territories and enough advantages over the aggressor to enforce the terms of a viable and stable peace.

FROM "WAY OF WAR" TO OPERATING CONCEPT

Next, we must translate a way of war thinking into a useful operating concept. First, we need to rearticulate the concept's objective. The current MDO requires the Army to contribute to "the Joint Force's principal task . . . to deter and defeat Chinese and Russian aggression in both competition and conflict."[13] This concept is vague and lacks a meaningful aim or purpose. A close reading of the unclassified *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* supports the need for a stronger counteraggression concept with a clear objective. Thus, a revised counteraggression concept objective should deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend. To feasibly accomplish this, we must also revise the pamphlet's component task objectives, which are listed below:

Task Objective 1: keep an advantageous peace in the face of hostile competitive efforts to disrupt the accord.

Task Objective 2: defeat armed aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend and restore a favorable peace.

Task Objective 3: enable the mission success of lines of operations identified for the first and second task objectives.

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13. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, vi.

By analyzing each of these components, we arrive at a cluster of objectives that, when achieved, produce feasible solutions. The following analysis enables a more methodical way to judge requirements than the rule of thumb metric of the concept's three tenets.

Task Objective 1: To Keep an Advantageous Peace

The idea of contributing "to the Joint Force's defeat of the Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in the political, military, and economic realms to achieve objectives without risking armed conflict" is better expressed by the more comprehensive objective of keeping an advantageous peace in the face of the following hostile competitive efforts to disrupt it.

What are the Russian and Chinese layered standoff tactics in the political, military, and economic realms? These tactics are the day-to-day Machiavellian campaigning by Russia and China to cause home and Allied publics to support and enable their predatory purposes, using all available means and methods short of overt warfare under the guise of normal competition among states.

What are their predatory purposes? These purposes intend to influence internal and external politics; weaken external military defenses; fracture our mutual defense alliances, partnerships, and mutual resolve; create ambiguity; slow our recognition of danger; confuse and slow our policy decisions; and block or misdirect our reactions.

What are these short of war means? Short of war means include coordinated diplomacy and economic reward, penalty, and dependence; threatening displays of offensive military power and readiness to use it; and what the Russians call information warfare. Information warfare is comprised of classical

propaganda, false narratives, and masked cyber and social media interventions that make their way into the voting of our own and Allied elections. Among our most vulnerable Allies, it means subversion by internal political parties supporting the adversary, and outright territorial seizures by armed unconventional proxy forces, which can sometimes be citizens or civilian contractors paid by our adversaries.

We can frame our countering tasks and objectives only when we understand the methods aggressors may use to succeed in their objectives, such as destabilizing and weakening target states, separating Allies to limit their coordination, and weakening the people's political will to resist. Among our NATO Allies, and even in the United States, we have evidence of effective information warfare tactics employed in the Russian *near abroad*, which refers to the group of new countries that split off from Russia in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union. Maintaining good working relations and preventing friction among Allies are common-sense objectives. The important operational question, without an off-the-shelf answer, is "what specific, concrete objectives can be pursued by causal logic?" We can frame task objectives when we understand how the aggressor can confuse, misdirect, and delay our countering methods and actions. To obtain the best outcome, information warfare (for example, social media, false narratives, and cyberattacks) must be employed by experts and tailored to the specific situation. Also, we see that advanced, well-governed industrial states are more likely to be resilient to subversion than recent Russian targets—Georgia and Ukraine. We have NATO Allies that we can lead and rally to maintain a viable UN Alliance in Korea.

But, even when we have Allies, there are two more preconflict objectives to pursue. First, we must strengthen weaknesses at potential points of attack because current defenses are ill-designed, unready, and understaffed, and neighboring Allies are too few, slow, or weak. Second, we must plan and prepare, during a preconflict crisis and thereafter to protect the movement of near and far Allied reinforcements into deterrent and defensive postures. Fluidly identifying and attending to such preconflict objectives reinforces the aggressor's belief that he cannot succeed in the offense. When the aggressor believes that, we keep an advantageous peace.

Through the evolution of the AirLand Battle, we anticipated and understood the dramatic shifts of war escalation, but never forgot the military's supporting role to the highest strategic, political, and economic aims of Allied governments. Typically, it is the Army's task to support the government lead agencies in the political, strategic communications, and economic arenas, and to avoid intruding into the sovereign prerogatives of an ally. Thus, it is the Army's primary task to prepare for war in order to keep the peace. Our adversaries are unpredictable, intelligent, hardened, and multifaceted. They actively undermine our strategic interests by overt or covert means, and they prepare for possible overt aggression. When we "prepare for war to keep the peace," we do whatever we can to cause our foes to react (and be deterred) as intended. Also, we seek to gain and keep the support from our people at home, Allies abroad, and even people among an uncommitted local population. To summarize:

Task objective one: Keeping an advantageous peace in the face of hostile, "competitive" efforts

requires deterring Chinese and Russian aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend. This requires

- supporting the US government lead agencies in the political, strategic communications, and economic arenas and the sovereign political prerogatives of an ally;
- assisting frontline, ally-led forces' efforts to defeat subversives;
- demonstrating to potential aggressors that their best attack schemes will likely fail to defeat forward defenses that optimize the defender's home court advantages with modern defensive technologies;
- organizing and securing the movement of near and far Allied reinforcements during preconflict movement into deterrent postures;
- making conventional and nuclear deterrents mutually supporting and credible; and
- establishing the credible potential to reverse any gains by the aggressor and impose an advantageous peace.

The logical lines of effort that achieve these objectives also enable the lines of effort required to achieve the second task objective.

Task Objective 2: To Defeat Armed Aggression and Restore a Favorable Peace

The current MDO's second task objective is to overcome Russian and Chinese technological adaptations "to fight the US through multiple layers of standoff in all domains—air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information . . . that threaten the coherence of our

operations."[14] In reality, however, this articulation of the second task objective is an enabling objective of a much more multifaceted task.

As stated in MDO's foreword, "US Army forces, as part of the Joint Force, will militarily compete, penetrate, disintegrate, and exploit our adversaries in the future."[15] This seemingly overlooks the demanding task of defending the territory of an Ally under armed attack. Success in this task is more dependent on what is done ahead of time than by what is done under attack. It appears that the MDO pamphlet does not consider the idea of preparing forward defenses and defending against attack as task objectives for the US Army. Alternatively, perhaps it assumes that Allied defenses will inevitably fail before the US Army arrives. If so, the Allied task then becomes a counteroffensive campaign of reconquest in the form of a strategic movement to contact, which plays right into the strong defensive suite of our adversaries and their nuclear deterrent. This situation can and must be avoided.

Therefore, the second task objective requires defeating armed aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend and restoring a favorable peace. This implies achieving several enabling lines of operations and supporting objectives.

One line of operations requires the defeat of the aggressor's multiechelon (theater, district, front, combined arms army, and division level) defenses of multidimensionally integrated, defensive strike complexes (comprised of air, sea, land, space, cyber, and information components) in order to operate on all other lines of operations successfully. Branching

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14. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, i.
15. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, i.

subordinate lines of operations must destroy the aggressor's supporting offensive and defensive aviation, missile, naval, space, and cyber organizations, as they affect the ends, ways, and means of the other lines of operations.

The second line of operation must foil the early fait accompli defeat of the frontline ally's defenses by shoring up the "home court advantage" of the defender with modern defensive technology. This should not be expensive, nor difficult to do, but is essential self-help for frontline Allies. It is important to support the leading role of sovereign Allies while integrating the consolidation of gains and restoration of peace into this line of operations.

The third line of operations must prearrange and facilitate the reinforcement of frontline Allies by other Allies nearby and, when possible, by forward-deployed American forces. Success along this line of effort depends on the well-planned use of so little time between the first unambiguous warning and the arrival of assaulting forces.

The fourth logical line of operations marshals reinforcements behind the forward defense. From behind the forward defense, Allied counterassault and deep fires forces can launch simultaneous attacks on the enemy's assault forces and the supporting artillery behind them.

Finally, the fifth logical line of operations prepares, with Allies, the credible potential to reverse any gains by the aggressor, and thereby impose an advantageous peace. The task elements of reversing gains and imposing an advantageous peace require inseparable coordination from start to finish. Other logical lines of operations are likely required and must

be developed as this new counteraggression operating concept matures.

In sum, the second task objective is to defeat armed aggression against allies we are treaty-bound to defend and restore a favorable peace.

This restoration requires supporting lines of operations that

- defeat Russian and Chinese multiechelon (theater, district, front, combined arms army, and division level) defenses of multidimensionally integrated defensive strike complexes comprised of air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information components (success on this line of operations is key to successful operation on all other lines);
- foil the early fait accompli defeat of the frontline ally's defenses by shoring up the "home court advantage" of the defender with modern defensive technology;
- arrange and facilitate the reinforcement of Allies under attack from nearby Allies and American forward presence forces, making optimum use of the scarce time between the first unambiguous warning and the arrival of assaulting forces and fires;
- marshal reinforcing counterassault forces, and deep fires forces behind the forward defense, to attack the enemy's assault forces and the supporting forces behind them simultaneously; and with Allies,
- marshal and commit to action the credible potential to reverse any gains by the aggressor, thereby imposing an advantageous peace.

We must not overlook the most valuable lesson of the Cold War: We can avoid combat operations by succeeding in our deterrence efforts. We can do this by leading and rallying Allies to upgrade their readiness; committing to Allied cross-reinforcement; preparing modern forward defenses against fait accompli assaults; and exercising Alliance reinforcement plans, among other methods.

Task Objective 3: To Modernize America's "Way of War"

The third task objective frames the priority and day-to-day challenge of the Army stationed at home: this is modernizing America's way of war specifically to deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend. And that means enabling the mission success of lines of operations identified for task objectives one and two.

All of the emerging technologies mentioned in MDO's foreword will change techniques, methods, and even the *character of war*, but the *nature of war* continues to mean causing intractable and clever humans to react as we intend either to keep the peace or to defeat armed aggression. That difficult task must be performed not within a generic operating environment, but within the mission-specific situation of the lines of operations that must succeed.

MDO's current foreword, preface, and executive summary say that the biggest military challenge we face against "post-industrial information-based states like China and Russia" is "maintaining the coherence of our operations."[16] That may seem to be the case, but thinking so limits us. We must certainly

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16. TRADOC, *U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*, i–vi.

do more than adapt to the revolutionizing impact of the technology of war, as the guidance says. We must have a Joint Force capable, at all echelons, of synergistic multidimensional (air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information) operations. However, these rule-of-thumb standards are insufficient for our purposes. We must measure the size and scope of the modernization task against real mission requirements—the requirements of task objectives one and two above. That means enabling the range and scope of the core solution lines of operations missions identified above for both the first and second task objectives. Unfortunately, the current MDO focuses on only the second task objective's conflict and combat line of operations: defeating Russian and Chinese multiechelon (theater, district, front, combined arms army, and division level) defenses of multidimensionally integrated defensive strike complexes comprised of air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information components.

Today, we need more than the ability to defeat the defenses our adversaries erect over their assault formations. We need to organize a rapidly deployable air, land, sea, space, cyber, and information defense of Allied territory. This means Allies need to be capable and ready, and we need the capacity to reinforce them rapidly with minimum losses. This is a bigger task than we now anticipate. Fortunately, we can count the potential aggressor pressure points on a single hand. It is not an overwhelming problem if we decide where we will defend Allies and then apply the capability and capacity to reinforce. Doing so is certainly expensive, but it is far cheaper than the cost and casualties involved with waiting to reinforce unprepared Allies already under attack.

One way to answer General Milley's challenge to modernize our obsolete way of war is to apply revolutionizing technologies, as he directs, to the new strategic mission in new ways. There is much to learn from "the integration of machine guns, tanks, and aviation which began the era of combined arms warfare" mentioned in the MDO's foreword. In fact, the rate of integration of new tools of war has been accelerating ever since. Many of the technologies that revolutionized warfare during the AirLand Battle era are commonplace now and provide the platform for the current technological evolution.[17] For example, the means and methods we are now seeing in the hands of the Russians and Chinese are based on what we invented then.

While our Joint and combined operations achieved high levels of excellence in integrating air, sea, and land operations since AirLand Battle, new levels of excellence must purposefully integrate the newer dimensions of Joint and combined operations throughout space, cyber, and information. While Joint and combined maneuver and fires have always been the bone and sinew of campaigning across the globe, within theaters of war, and on tactical battlefields, we must rejuvenate military campaigning and appreciate the scale of sustainment required of the military enterprise in new ways. The US Army provides an inordinate and underappreciated proportion of this sustainment to the common effort of the Joint and combined military enterprises, and it will be required to do even more in the future.

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17. Donn A. Starry, "To Change an Army," *Military Review* 64, no. 3 (March 1984): 20–27; and Huba Wass de Czege, "How to Change an Army," *Military Review* 64, no. 11 (November 1984): 33–49.

According to timeless principles, while new technology may be crucial to such rejuvenation, applying it is even more crucial. For instance, new technology has revolutionized ways to move, share, and store information within our multiecheloned and multiarmed organizations. Ways to guard and improve this system are always advancing, but ways to invade and degrade the enemy's systems are also always advancing. This dynamic places a premium on enabling initiative. However, the successful practice of mission command initiative, at any scale, at any time, requires a leadership culture capable of

1. formulating and clearly transmitting the intent of operations and orders to subordinates;
2. encouraging subordinates to act on unanticipated opportunities and unexpected dangers, without permission; and
3. establishing a habit of expeditious information sharing with subordinates, superiors, and peers.

Technology applied through the prism of timeless principles improves ways to clarify, test, and verify information, making it useful knowledge. Maintaining superiority in this dimension of operations is vital.

The Active Defense doctrine of 1976 was an application of new technology to the tactical tasks of battalions, companies, and platoons. The AirLand Battle doctrine of 1986 applied new capabilities, born of new technology, to the missions of Brigades, Divisions, and Corps. The current effort needs to extend that thinking to theater-level missions of deterrence, defense, and counteroffensives.

From General Starry's perspective in 1981, the battlefield and the battle were extended in three ways. First, the battlefield was extended in depth because

commanders had the means to engage enemy units that were not yet in contact with frontline defenses and could thus disrupt the enemy timetable, complicate command and control, frustrate plans, and weaken the enemy commander's grasp on the initiative. Second, the battlefield was extended forward in time because of the current actions of our commanders against interrelated enemy preparations (the movement of follow-on echelons, the accomplishment of essential logistical tasks, and the execution of preparatory maneuver plans) create winning conditions in later key engagements of the larger campaign. Third, the battlefield was extended in the supporting means available to commanders, both those organic to their formations and those acquisition means and attack resources available from higher-level Army and sister service organizations.

But we can do more. A modern synergistic multiechelon fighting method is based on a systemic understanding of the enemy and on an effective organizational system for engaging and defeating the opposing enemy organization, echelon by echelon. Today, we can extend the reach of higher commanders to more than the normal one or two echelons; thus, we can concentrate more resources on the more difficult engagements of subordinates, and reinforce to ensure that outcomes critical to higher levels are won. This would be a fourth way modern forces can extend the battlefield and the battle within the lines of operations of their campaigns.

To summarize task objective three: Enable the mission success of lines of operations identified for task objectives one and two. To deter and defeat Russian and Chinese aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend, we must modernize with

a specific aim. That is to enable the range and scope of the core solution lines of operations missions identified above for the first and second task objectives:

1. *to keep* an advantageous peace (in the face of Russian and Chinese challenges to the international status quo);
2. *to defeat* Russian and Chinese aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend; and
3. *to lead* an Allied offensive, when necessary, to restore an advantageous peace in the wake of war.

We have some clarity of what these three broader tasks entail from the discussion above.

Modern military professionals understand that warfare, by advances in its means, has proliferated many novel ways to exert power relative to the various elements of an organized and unified opposing force. This proliferation of novel ways to exert power always challenges the status quo. Synergy is an old idea becoming more powerful as technological innovations accrue. The invention and development of new means are important, but their successful integration with more established ways to exert power is more pivotal. The sheer difficulty of causing clever and determined adversaries to accept the terms we desire to impose demands that we use as many complementary ways of exerting power over the enemy as we can find.

CONCLUSION

At the heart of an operating concept should be its theory of victory—the higher purpose to be achieved and the logical basis for achieving that desired result. That 1986 AirLand Battle theory of victory was to

deter attack against Allies by making a systemic defeat of the Warsaw Pact army and front-level offensive formations seem highly likely, if not inevitable, to the other side. In contrast, the aim of the Army's MDO concept seems to only solve the problems of "ground combat operations against a sophisticated peer enemy threat" within a generic future "operating environment." The logical basis for achieving that desired result is to apply three operating tenets.

Instead, the MDO concept needs a credible theory of victory—one that accomplishes the 1986 AirLand Battle's theory of victory for each possible offensive, whether overt or covert and subversive. This purpose is far more difficult to achieve. It will require daily Allied efforts to keep an advantageous peace in the face of the hostile competitive effort to disrupt it. At the same time, the United States and its Allies must stand ready together to defeat armed aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend and to restore a favorable peace thereafter. Formulating a credible and useful operating concept requires examining the array of concrete cases of at-risk-of-aggression Allies with the scientific discipline to see what ways and means are useful to achieve the aims outlined above while challenging every unsupported assertion and unwarranted assumption.

World War III has never happened because the leadership of the potential aggressor believed they would fail. Here, I propose the logic of a strong and testable counteraggression theory of victory within the Army's senior leadership thinking. I argue that responding to Russian or Chinese hegemonic behavior will require a rapid, ready, and appropriate reaction along anticipated lines of operations to deter rather than accelerate crisis escalation and defend the status

quo when challenged. That reaction must rely on sound military theory built on a latticework of testable (and tested) hypotheses that yield logical theories of victory.

Recognizing many of the challenges I learned in contributing to the development of AirLand Battle, I offer this critique of TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 to avoid the foundational flaws from its predecessor concepts, AirSea Battle and Multi-Domain Battle, and to reinforce the "foundation for continued discussion, analysis, and development" to evolving Army and Joint doctrine.

I advocate for a revised theory of victory: Defeating Russian and Chinese aggression against allies that we are treaty-bound to defend is a distant second place, even when we are successful in achieving a stable and advantageous peace afterward. The real test of sufficiency requires the Army to succeed along all of the lines of operations identified in task objectives one and two. Task objective three is to evolve and adapt the warfighting means and methods necessary to enable that mission. While some very essential lines of effort are not in the Army's power to initiate, they are vitally important to strategic success and are within the Army leadership's power to advocate. Today, the United States and its Allies must cooperate to keep our advantageous peace. By keeping the peace between the United States, Russia, and China, and by the logic of our theory of victory, we are all more likely to manage all the other lesser anticipated and unanticipated dangers ahead.

COMMENTARY ON "THE US ARMY
IN MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS 2028"

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