



(U.S. Navy photo by Lt. j.g. Matthew Stroup)

1st Lt. Robert Wolfe, security force platoon leader for Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Farah, provides rooftop security during a key leader engagement 25 February 2013 in Farah City, Afghanistan. Civilian and military representatives from the PRT visited a newly constructed family guidance center run by Voice of Women in Farah City, an Afghan-operated nongovernmental organization, to discuss gender issues, conduct a site survey, and monitor programming.

# Continuity and Change

## The Army Operating Concept and Clear Thinking About Future War

Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, Ph.D., U.S. Army

*Anticipating the demands of future armed conflict requires an understanding of continuities in the nature of war as well as an appreciation for changes in the character for armed conflict.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept

Expert knowledge is a pillar of our military profession, and the ability to think clearly about war is fundamental to developing expert knowledge across a career of service. Junior leaders must understand war to explain to their soldiers how

their unit's actions contribute to the accomplishment of campaign objectives. Senior officers draw on their understanding of war to provide the best military advice to civilian leaders. Every Army leader uses his or her vision of future conflict as a basis for how he or she trains soldiers and units. Every commander understands, visualizes, describes, directs, leads, and assesses operations based, in part, on his or her understanding of continuities in the nature of war and of changes in the character of warfare.

A failure to understand war through a consideration of continuity and change risks what nineteenth century Prussian philosopher Carl von Clausewitz warned against: regarding war as "something autonomous" rather than "an instrument of policy," misunderstanding "the kind of war on which we are embarking," and trying to turn war into "something that is alien to its nature."<sup>1</sup> In recent years, many of the difficulties encountered in strategic decision making, operational planning, training, and force development stemmed from neglect of continuities in the nature of war. The best way to guard against the tendency to try to turn war into something alien to its nature is to understand four key continuities in the nature of war and how the U.S. experience in Afghanistan and Iraq validated their importance.

## First, War is Political

*Army forces are prepared to do more than fight and defeat enemies; they must possess the capability to translate military objectives into enduring political outcomes.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept<sup>2</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, defense thinking was dominated by theories that considered military operations as ends in and of themselves rather than essential components of campaigns that integrate the broad range of efforts necessary to achieve campaign objectives. Advocates of what became the orthodoxy of the "revolution in military affairs" (RMA) predicted that advances in surveillance, communications, and information technologies, combined with precision strike weapons, would overwhelm any opponent and deliver fast, cheap, and efficient victories. War was reduced to a targeting exercise.<sup>3</sup> These conceits complicated efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq as

unrealistic and underdeveloped war plans confronted unanticipated and underappreciated political realities. In particular, coalition forces failed to consider adequately how to consolidate military gains in the wake of the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Hussein regime in Iraq. In Afghanistan, after proxy forces helped topple the Taliban regime, those forces and their leaders undermined state-building efforts. Mujahideen-era militias pursued narrow agendas and competed for power and resources within nascent institutions. In Iraq, policies that exacerbated the fears of the minority Sunni Arab and Turkmen populations strengthened the insurgency as Shia Islamist militias and Iranian proxies subverted the government and security forces. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, political competition for power, resources, and survival drove violence and weakened institutions critical to the survival of the state.

With these lessons in mind, the recently published *U.S. Army Operating Concept (AOC)* observes that "compelling sustainable outcomes in war requires land forces to defeat enemy organizations, establish security, and consolidate gains."<sup>4</sup> Army forces are prepared to reinforce and integrate the efforts of partners as a fundamental part of campaign design.<sup>5</sup> Military professionals should be particularly skeptical of ideas and concepts that divorce war from its political nature and promise fast, cheap, and efficient victories through the application of advanced military technologies.

## Second, War is Human

*Conventional and special operations forces work together to understand, influence, or compel human behaviors and perceptions. Army commanders understand cognitive, informational, social, cultural, political, and physical influences affecting human behavior and the mission.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept<sup>6</sup>

People fight today for the same fundamental reasons that the Greek historian Thucydides identified nearly 2,500 years ago: fear, honor, and interest.<sup>7</sup> The orthodoxy of the RMA, however, dehumanized as well as depoliticized war. In Iraq and Afghanistan, understanding and addressing the fears, interests, and sense of honor among communities was essential to reducing support for insurgent and terrorist organizations. In



Afghanistan, coalition forces struggled to understand local drivers of conflict and instability. Coalition forces sometimes unintentionally empowered predatory and criminal actors, fostered exclusionary political and economic orders, and alienated thereby key elements of the population. The Taliban, regenerating in safe houses in Pakistan, portrayed themselves as patrons and protectors of aggrieved parties in Afghanistan. In Iraq, an inadequate understanding of tribal, ethnic, and religious drivers of conflict at the local level sometimes led to military operations (such as raids against suspected enemy networks) that exacerbated fears or offended the sense of honor of populations in ways that strengthened the insurgency. Later, in both wars, as U.S. Army and Marine Corps forces “surged” into areas that had become enemy safe havens, they developed an understanding of local drivers of violence, often acting as mediators between the population and indigenous army and police forces. Ultimately, more inclusive and legitimate governance and security forces helped U.S. and Iraqi forces move Iraqi communities toward temporary political accommodations that removed support for illegal armed groups that were perpetuating violence and instability.



The cultural, social, economic, religious, and historical considerations that comprise the human aspects of war must inform wartime planning as well as our preparation for future armed conflict. Terrorist and insurgent organizations across the





(Photo by Pfc. David Devich, 55th Signal Company Combat Camera)

An Afghan National Army Commando and a U.S. Special Forces soldier assigned to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan direct ANA soldiers during a firefight with insurgents in Gelan District, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, 8 February 2014.

Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia use violence and propaganda to excite historical grievances, magnify nationalist or sectarian identities,

and pit communities against each other. Terrorist and insurgent organizations thrive in chaotic environments associated with communal conflict as



they endeavor to control territory and populations. Some of the armed conflicts that fit this pattern today include those in Mali, Libya, Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, Central African Republic, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines. Understanding the special circumstances and recent experiences of the people among whom wars are fought is essential if military forces are to avoid mistakes, consolidate gains, and isolate enemies from popular support.

Understanding the human aspects of war prepares leaders, soldiers, and teams for operations in environments of complexity and persistent danger. Moral, ethical, and psychological preparation for combat is critical to building resilient soldiers and cohesive teams that are committed to the Army's professional ethic. Concepts or plans that neglect the human aspect of war are unlikely to achieve lasting favorable outcomes. Neglecting the political and human continuities of war can lead to confusing military activity with progress.

### Third, War is Uncertain

*Although advances in technology will continue to influence the character of warfare, the effect of technologies on land are often not as great as in other domains due to geography, the interaction with adaptive enemies, the presence of noncombatants, and other complexities associated with war's continuities.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept<sup>8</sup>

The dominant assumption of the RMA was that knowledge would be the key to victory in future war. Near-perfect intelligence would enable precise military operations that, in turn, would deliver rapid victory. In Afghanistan and Iraq, planning based on linear projections did not anticipate enemy adaptations or the evolution of those conflicts in ways that were difficult to predict at the outset.

Army professionals recognize war's uncertainty because they are sensitive to war's political and human aspects, and they know from experience and history that war always involves a continuous interaction with determined, adaptive enemies. That continuous interaction with enemies and adversaries helped determine the course of events in the long

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Coalition plans did not always keep pace with shifts in the character of those conflicts. In Afghanistan, planned reductions in troops continued even as the Taliban gained control of territory and populations in the south and east between 2004 and 2009. In Iraq, the strategy remained based on rapid transition to Iraqi Security Forces even as large percentages of those forces had become party to a sectarian civil war. Some aspects of the coalition military effort, such as the absence of operational reserves, or the practice of announcing changes in mission and force levels years in advance reveal a tendency to assume that our plans dictate the future course of events and that progress in war is linear and predictable.

The AOC emphasizes the tenet of adaptability and the need for leaders to “assess the situation continuously, develop innovative solutions to problems, and remain mentally and physically agile to capitalize on opportunities.”<sup>9</sup> The AOC also redefines the tenet of depth to highlight the need to “think ahead in time and determine how to connect tactical and operational objectives to strategic goals.”<sup>10</sup>

### Fourth, War is a Contest of Wills

*While the ability to shape security environments through the threat of punitive action will remain important, Army forces conduct positive actions essential to reassuring allies, influencing neutrals, and dissuading adversaries.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept<sup>11</sup>

Clausewitz defined strategy as a sustained act of will necessary to master war's terrible uncertainties. Strategy begins with establishing a clearly defined objective or goal. Strategic goals in Afghanistan and Iraq were, at times, ambiguous. Ambiguity was, in part, due to a belief that one can achieve acceptable outcomes in war without a commitment to win. Because war is a competition involving life and death, and in which each side tries to outdo the other, establishing objectives other than winning can be counterproductive and wasteful. Winning is psychological and moral, as well as physical. Ending war, as Clausewitz observed, requires persuading the enemy that he has been defeated. Winning in war, however, neither requires unconditional surrender



(Photo by Spc. Ken Scar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Members of the Afghan Uniformed Police, Naka District, including the local chief of police, point out an enemy combatant they have spotted on the ridgeline about 500 meters away to Brig. Gen. Gary Volesky, deputy commanding general—maneuver, 1st Cavalry Division, and members of Company B, Task Force 2-28, 172nd Infantry Brigade, 20 September 2013.

nor a MacArthuresque lifting of restrictions on the amount of force applied. Rarely will winning be as simple as tracking the advance of forces across a map. What winning does require is a rational determination to achieve a sustainable outcome, usually a political outcome, consistent with vital interests.

In late 2001, the Taliban regime collapsed, in large measure because every Afghan was convinced of the inevitability of their defeat. The Taliban regenerated after 2004, not only because they were able to receive support from al-Qaida and foreign intelligence organizations in support bases in Pakistan, but also because they sowed doubts in the minds of Afghans, especially those in the south and east, about the Afghan government's and the coalition's ability and willingness to prevent their return. At times, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, doubts about U.S. and partner willingness to consolidate gains and sustain commitments for ample duration and in

sufficient scale to win not only encouraged enemies but also sowed doubts among friends and neutrals.

Winning in war, of course, is not a military-only task. Achieving sustainable outcomes consistent with vital interests is an inherently civil-military task that requires integrated planning and execution of political, diplomatic, military, economic, informational, intelligence, and, increasingly, law enforcement and rule of law efforts. The AOC highlights the Army's role in providing foundational capabilities that permit the United States to project national power and "help integrate and synchronize the efforts of multiple partners."<sup>12</sup>

To cope with what Clausewitz described as the blind natural forces of "violence, hatred, and enmity" that challenge the will, professionalism, and moral character of soldiers and units, the AOC emphasizes the development of resilient soldiers, adaptive leaders, and cohesive teams capable of operating



effectively and morally in environments of uncertainty and persistent danger.

## The Four Fallacies of Future War

*Thinking clearly about future armed conflict requires consideration of threats, enemies, and adversaries, anticipated missions, emerging technologies, opportunities to use existing capabilities in new ways, and historical observations and lessons learned.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept<sup>13</sup>

What military and civilian leaders learn from recent experience is important because those lessons influence operational planning and force development. As historian Williamson Murray has observed:

It is a myth that military organizations tend to do badly in each new war because they have studied too closely the last one; nothing could be farther from the truth. The fact is that military organizations, for the most part, study what makes them feel comfortable about themselves, not the uncongenial lessons of past conflicts. The result is that more often than not, militaries have to relearn in combat—and usually at a heavy cost—lessons that were readily apparent at the end of the last conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Efforts to learn and apply lessons of recent armed conflict consistent with continuities in the nature of war will not go unchallenged. That is because four fallacies that portray future war as fundamentally different from even the most recent experiences have become widely accepted. Those fallacies are based in unrealistic expectations of technology and an associated belief that future wars will be fundamentally different from current and past wars.



These fallacies are dangerous because they threaten to consign the U.S. military to repeat mistakes and develop joint forces ill-prepared for future threats to national security.

**The vampire fallacy.** The first of these fallacies, like a vampire, seems impossible to kill. Reemerging about every decade, it was, in its last manifestation, the RMA in the 1990s. Concepts with catchy titles such as “shock and awe” and “rapid, decisive operations” promised fast, cheap, and efficient victories in future war. Information and communication technologies would deliver “dominant battlespace knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> Under the *quality of firsts*, Army forces would “see first, decide first, act first, and finish decisively.”<sup>16</sup> Those who argued that these concepts were inconsistent with the nature of war were dismissed as unimaginative and wedded to old thinking.

The vampire fallacy is much older than the orthodoxy of the RMA. Earlier manifestations go back





(Photo by Rafiq Maqbool, Associated Press)

A line of Afghan policemen try to control a crowd during the celebration of Nowruz, the start of spring and the traditional new year celebrated in Afghanistan, Iran, and other countries of central Asia, from the hilltop at the Kart-e-Sakhi Shrine in Kabul, Afghanistan, 21 March 2010.

to strategic bombing theory in the 1920s. What is common across all that time is the belief that technology and firepower are sufficient to achieve lasting strategic results in war. Today, the vampire is back, promising victory delivered rapidly from standoff range, based on even better surveillance, information, communications, and precision strike technologies. Although the vampire fallacy is based on a suite of military capabilities vitally important to national defense, it is insufficient to solve the complex problem of future war.

This fallacy confuses targeting enemy organizations with strategy. Although targeting from stand-off range can disrupt enemy organizations, strikes often embolden rather than dissuade enemies unless

credible ground forces are available to compel an outcome.<sup>17</sup>

It is for these reasons that the AOC stresses that American military power is joint power. For example, Army forces make joint fires more effective because they compensate for enemy efforts to avoid detection (e.g., dispersion, concealment, intermingling with civilian populations, and deception). By placing valuable enemy assets at risk, Army forces may force enemies to reveal themselves as they concentrate to defend those assets. In short, Army forces, operating as part of joint teams, create *multiple dilemmas* for the enemy.

#### **The Zero Dark 30 fallacy.**

The *Zero Dark 30* fallacy, like the vampire fallacy, elevates an important military capability, raiding, to the level of strategy.<sup>18</sup> The capability to conduct raids against networked terrorist or insurgent organizations is portrayed as a substitute for, rather than a complement to, conventional joint force capabilities. Because they are operations of short duration, limited purpose, and planned

withdrawal, raids are often unable to affect the human and political drivers of armed conflict or make sufficient progress toward achieving sustainable outcomes consistent with vital interests. Like precision strikes, raids often embolden rather than dissuade the enemy and leave populations vulnerable not only to enemy action, but also to enemy propaganda and disinformation. It is for these reasons that the AOC calls for dynamic combinations of combined arms teams and special operations forces to provide *multiple options* to the joint force commander as well as Army forces capable of defeating enemy organizations and consolidating gains.

**The Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom fallacy.** The *Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom* fallacy



requires explanation for those of younger generations. In the 1960s on Sunday nights, U.S. families with young children gathered to watch *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* on television. The host, Marlin Perkins, introduced the topic of the show and provided commentary throughout, but he rarely placed himself in proximity to dangerous animals. He usually left close contact with the wildlife to his assistant, Jim Fowler. Under the *Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom* fallacy, western militaries assume the role of Marlin Perkins and rely on proxy forces in the role of Jim Fowler to do the fighting on land. There is no doubt that security force assistance, foreign internal defense, and combat advisory missions will increase in importance to national security; it is difficult to imagine future operations that will not require Army forces to operate with multiple partners. Primary reliance on proxies, however, is often problematic due to insufficient capabilities or lack of will based on incongruent interests.

Like the vampire and *Zero Dark Thirty* fallacies, the *Mutual of Omaha* fallacy confuses an important capability with defense strategy. While the AOC recognizes special operations as an Army core competency and identifies security force assistance as a first order capability, it also acknowledges that Army forces must not only operate with multiple partners but also be prepared to exert influence and convince those partners that actions or reforms are in their interest.<sup>19</sup>

**The RSVP Fallacy.** Finally, the fourth fallacy solves the problem of future war by opting out of armed conflict, or certain forms of armed conflict, such as fighting on land. The fundamental problem with this RSVP fallacy is that it fails to give due consideration to enemies in wars or adversaries in between wars. Wars often choose you rather than



the other way around. And the application of exclusively standoff capabilities to complex land-based problems in war leaves decision making in the hands of the enemy. If Western militaries do not possess ready joint forces capable of operating in sufficient scale and in ample duration to win, adversaries are likely to become emboldened, and deterrence is likely to fail. As George Washington observed in his first State of the Union address: “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.”<sup>20</sup>

Ready Army forces play a vital role in preventing conflict because they communicate U.S. commitment and remain capable of compelling outcomes. Army forces are particularly valuable in deterring those who might be tempted to wage limited war to accomplish limited objectives. That is because the forward positioning of capable ground forces elevates the cost of aggression to a level that the aggressor is unwilling to pay and prevents the aggressor from doing what Russia has in Ukraine—posing to the international





(U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Eric Petosky)

Personnel provide command and control information at the 612th Air and Space Operations Center, Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., 16 February 2010.

community a *fait accompli* and then portraying its reactions as escalatory.

Moreover, as joint force freedom of movement and action in the maritime, air, space, and cyber domains become more contested, the deterrent value of land forces will become more important. Land forces operating in areas such as the South China Sea or the Persian Gulf may have to control territory not only to deny its use to the enemy but also to project power from land across multiple domains to restrict enemy freedom of action and preserve the joint force's freedom of movement at sea, in the air, in space, and in cyberspace.

## Thinking Clearly about War and the Future of Warfare

*Shifts in the geopolitical landscape caused by competition for power and resources influence the character of armed conflict. These shifts, and violence associated with*

*them, occur more rapidly than in the past due to advances in technology, the proliferation of information, and the associated increased momentum of human interaction.*

—The U.S. Army Operating Concept<sup>21</sup>

Fallacies persist, in large measure, because they define war as one might like it to be. Preparing Army forces to operate as part of joint, interorganizational, and multinational teams to prevent conflict, shape security environments, and, if necessary, win in war requires clear thinking. Army professionals might begin by rejecting fallacies that are inconsistent with continuities in the nature of war. But Army professionals must also consider changes in the character of warfare.

To understand continuity and change, it is hard to improve on the approach found in historian Sir Michael Howard's 1961 seminal essay on how military professionals should develop what Clausewitz describes as their own

"theory" of war.<sup>22</sup> First, "study in *width*." Observe how "warfare has developed over a long historical period." Next, "study in *depth*." Study campaigns and explore them thoroughly, consulting original sources and applying various theories and interdisciplinary approaches. This is important, Howard observes, because as the "tidy outlines dissolve," we can "catch a glimpse of the confusion and horror of the real experience." And last, "study in *context*." Wars and warfare must be understood in context of their social, cultural, economic, human, moral, political, and psychological dimensions because "the roots of victory and defeat often have to be sought far from the battlefield." As we consider war and warfare in width, depth, and context, Army professionals might consider change and continuity in four areas: threats, missions, technology, and history and lessons learned during recent operations.



## Army Operating Concept First Principles for Technological Development

The Army works with joint partners, industry, allies, and other key stakeholders to develop future force capabilities with the following technological first principles in mind.

- Emphasize integration of technology with soldiers and teams
- Simplify systems and integrate soldier training into design
- Maximize reliability and reduce life cycle costs
- Design redundant systems that improve effectiveness under conditions of uncertainty
- Develop systems that degrade gracefully
- Maintain foundational knowledge to reduce the opportunity for surprise
- Reduce logistical demands
- Anticipate enemy countermeasures
- Ensure interoperability
- Consider scale and organizational implications

## Threats, Enemies, and Adversaries

*Diverse enemies will employ traditional, unconventional, and hybrid strategies to threaten U.S. security and vital interests.*

—*The U.S. Army Operating Concept*<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that Army leaders and units must be prepared to fight and win against state and nonstate actors. Due to what some have called the *democratization of destructive power*, nonstate actors, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Hezbollah possess capabilities previously associated only with the fielded forces of nation-states. For example, nonstate organizations have unprecedented financial resources and access to sophisticated weapons. Moreover, nation-states such as Russia and Iran employ unconventional proxy forces, often in combination with their own special operations or conventional forces. As the historian Conrad Crane has observed, there are two ways to fight the U.S. military—asymmetrically and stupid.<sup>24</sup> Future enemies will not be passive; they will make every effort to avoid U.S. strengths, emulate advanced U.S. capabilities, and disrupt U.S. advantages. They will expand operations to other battlegrounds such as those of perception, political subversion, and criminality.

The AOC acknowledges the continuous interaction with enemies in war and the interaction with adversaries between wars. That interaction requires the Army to be a learning organization. When engaged with determined enemies, Army leaders “think ahead in time to gain and maintain positions of relative advantage over the enemy.” To defeat elusive and capable enemies, Army forces develop situational understanding through action in close contact with the enemy and civilian populations. In contrast to “rapid decisive operations,” Army forces are capable of sustaining high-tempo operations while consolidating gains to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative and achieve “lasting outcomes in the shortest time span.”<sup>25</sup> Future Army forces extend the “concept of combined arms from two or more arms or elements of one service to include the application of joint, interorganizational, and multinational capabilities in the conduct of joint combined arms operations.”<sup>26</sup>

## Technology

*The U.S. Army’s differential advantage over enemies derives, in part, from the integration of advanced technologies with skilled soldiers and well-trained teams.*

—*The U.S. Army Operating Concept*<sup>27</sup>





(U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Carlos M. Vazquez)

The guided-missile destroyer USS *Arleigh Burke* launches Tomahawk cruise missiles at ISIS targets 23 September 2014.

Science and technology will continue to influence the character of warfare. While the U.S. Army differential advantages over potential enemies will continue to depend in large measure on advanced technology, winning in a complex world requires powerful combinations of leadership, skilled soldiers, well-trained units, and technology. There are no technological silver bullets. The Army must integrate new technological capabilities with complementary changes in doctrine, organization, training, leader development, personnel, and other elements of combat effectiveness.<sup>28</sup> Army technological development emphasizes the need for all formations to possess the appropriate combination of mobility, protection, and lethality. And the Army places soldiers at the center of that effort, pursuing “advances in human sciences for cognitive, social, and physical development” while fitting weapons and machines to soldiers and units rather than the other way around.<sup>29</sup>

## Missions

*The complexity of future armed conflict, therefore, will require Army forces capable of conducting missions*

*in the homeland or in foreign lands including defense support of civil authorities, international disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, security cooperation activities, crisis response, or large-scale operations.*

—*The U.S. Army Operating Concept*<sup>30</sup>

The Army is not a boutique force. Soldiers and units must be prepared for a broad range of activities. The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review identified 11 mission areas in which the Army plays a significant role. Army forces must be prepared to conduct operations successfully in the context of future enemy capabilities and technology. Missions will often overlap and place varied and simultaneous demands on the joint force. In future crises, demands on all components of the Army are likely to increase as threats overseas generate simultaneous threats to the homeland.

To shape security environments and prepare for a broad range of missions, Army “conventional and special operations forces contribute to a global land network of relationships resulting in early warning, indigenous solutions, and informed campaigns.”<sup>31</sup> The theater security cooperation activities



## The Army's Missions and Contributions to Joint Operations

The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review identified 11 enduring Armed Forces missions in which the Army plays a substantial role:

- Provide for military defense of the homeland
- Defeat an adversary
- Provide a global stabilizing presence
- Combat terrorism
- Counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
- Deny an adversary's objectives
- Respond to crisis and conduct limited contingency operations
- Conduct military engagement and security cooperation
- Conduct stability and counterinsurgency operations
- Provide support to civil authorities
- Conduct humanitarian assistance and disaster response

of regionally aligned Army forces as well as the foundational capabilities that Army forces provide to the joint force set “favorable conditions for commitment of forces if diplomacy and deterrence fail.”<sup>32</sup> Because future enemies will attempt to deny access to the joint force, future Army forces must be prepared to conduct expeditionary maneuver, “the rapid deployment of task-organized combined arms forces able to transition quickly and conduct operations of sufficient scale and ample duration to achieve strategic objectives.”<sup>33</sup> Highly mobile combined arms air-ground formations will see and fight across wider areas, operating widely dispersed while maintaining mutual support and the ability to concentrate rapidly.

Regional engagement as well as the Army's ability to conduct expeditionary maneuver and joint combined arms operations are critical to demonstrating U.S. resolve, deterring adversaries, and encouraging allies and partners.

### History and Lessons Learned

Sir Michael Howard warned that we should not study history to make us “clever for the next time,” but instead to help make us “wise forever.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Clausewitz, observed, the study of war and warfare “is meant to educate the mind of the

future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self-education, not to accompany him to the battlefield; just as a wise teacher guides and stimulates a young man's intellectual development, but is careful not to lead him by the hand for the rest of his life.”<sup>35</sup> In short, history can help military leaders ask the right questions, but leaders must consider the unique context and local realities of a particular conflict to develop answers. History does, however, amplify many of the lessons relearned in recent and ongoing conflicts.

On the need to consolidate gains or integrate efforts of multiple partners, for example, the father of the Army War College, former Secretary of War Elihu Root, commented in 1901 on “the wide range of responsibilities which we have seen devolving upon officers charged with the civil government of occupied territory; the delicate relations which constantly arise between military and civil authority.” To cope with the complexity of war in the early twentieth century, Root highlighted the “manifest necessity that the soldier, above all others, should be familiar with history.”<sup>36</sup>

Our Army pursues lessons of recent and ongoing operations enthusiastically but often has difficulty applying these lessons. It is for that reason that the AOC (Appendix B) establishes a framework



### The Army Warfighting Challenges

The Army Warfighting Challenges provide an analytical framework to integrate efforts across warfighting functions while collaborating with key stakeholders in learning activities, modernization, and future force design.

TRADOC Publication 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Winning in a Complex World*

for learning around the 20 first-order capabilities the Army must possess to win in a complex world. Lessons from recent armed conflicts, such as the need to put politics at the center of security force assistance, the growing importance of counterthreat finance, the increased overlaps between military and law enforcement operations, or the criticality of mobile protected firepower and combined arms capabilities in urban operations, can now inform interim solutions to warfighting challenges.<sup>37</sup>

### Defining the Future Army: Force 2025 and Beyond

As historians Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox observed in a seminal book on military innovation, militaries that prepared successfully for the demands of future war took professional military education seriously. They cultivated in their leaders the ability to think clearly about war, considering continuities and changes.

“The military institutions that successfully innovated between 1919 and 1940 without exception examined recent military events in careful, thorough, and realistic fashion. Analysis of the past was the basis of successful innovation. The key technique of innovation was open-ended experiment and exercises that tested systems to breakdown rather than

aiming at the validation of hopes or theories. Simple honesty and the free flow of ideas between superiors and subordinates—key components of all successful military cultures—were centrally important to the ability to learn from experience. And the overriding purpose of experiments and exercises was to improve the effectiveness of units and of the service as a whole, rather than singling out commanders who had allegedly failed.”<sup>38</sup>

Our Army is innovating under Force 2025 Maneuvers, “the physical (experimentation, evaluations, exercises, modeling, simulations, and war games) and intellectual (studies, analysis, concept, and capabilities development) activities that help leaders integrate future capabilities and develop interim solutions to warfighting challenges.”<sup>39</sup> Successful innovation will require focused and sustained collaboration among Army professionals committed to reading, thinking, and learning about the problem of future armed conflict, and determining what capabilities our Army and joint force must develop to win in a complex world. ■

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## Notes

**Epigraph.** U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 2014), 8.

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# Win in a Complex World

2020-2040

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