Searching for a Different Understanding of Operational Art

A Monograph

by

MAJ Sean C. Chang
United States Army

School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Many think that operational art is about connecting strategic objectives to tactical actions or a creative process that enhances the effectiveness of military operations. This monograph seeks to explore a deeper understanding of operational art beyond the existing debate and investigates operational art from an alternative perspective. Through a post-positivist approach, this monograph applies Jacques Derrida's deconstruction in its analysis of operational art and searches for a new understanding. Analyzing the US Army and Joint Forces' doctrines produces an interesting finding that challenges the notion that operational art is a rigid and consistent concept. This monograph argues that time, environment, and perspective are three elements that shape the meaning of operational art in different eras. Military practitioners must first study and understand these three elements before deciding whether the existing interpretation of operational art is an applicable concept.

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Sean C. Chang

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Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
G. Scott Gorman, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
David W. Gardner, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Henry A. Arnold III, COL

Accepted this 26th day of May 2016 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

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Abstract

Searching for a Different Understanding of Operational Art, by MAJ Sean C Chang, 40 pages.

Many think that operational art is about connecting strategic objectives to tactical actions or a creative process that enhances the effectiveness of military operations. This monograph seeks to explore a deeper understanding of operational art beyond the existing debate and investigates operational art from an alternative perspective. Through a post-positivist approach, this monograph applies Jacques Derrida's deconstruction in its analysis of operational art and searches for a new understanding. Analyzing the US Army and Joint Forces' doctrines produces an interesting finding that challenges the notion that operational art is a rigid and consistent concept. This monograph argues that time, environment, and perspective are three elements that shape the meaning of operational art in different eras. Military practitioners must first study and understand these three elements before deciding whether the existing interpretation of operational art is an applicable concept.

Content

Acknowledgement

Acronyms

ADP   Army Doctrine Publication

ADRP   Army Doctrine Reference Publication

FM   Field Manual

JP   Joint Publication

NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OED   Oxford English Dictionary

OTRI   Operational Theory Research Institute

SOD   Systemic Operational Design

Chapter 1

Beyond the Debate

Military practitioners have studied, analyzed, and re-invented operational art from many different perspectives, producing a broad range of interpretations. Since its official recognition in the 1986 edition of Field Manual (FM) 100-5, operational art has become a vital concept to the US Army and Joint Forces in the planning and execution of military operations. Despite its popularity, operational art is not a concept without controversy. On the one hand, some have advocated that operational art should remain within the levels of war framework.[1] On the other hand, others have championed operational art as a cognitive process that can optimize the military decision-making process.[2] Each argument has its own assumptions, interpretation, and understanding of operational art. More importantly, this tension presents a salient point that one has to recognize and understand about the nature and meaning of operational art. Does this tension necessitate a search for a different understanding of operational art?

To look beyond the current debate, it is perhaps beneficial to examine operational art from a different perspective. While different academic publications and professional journals provide insightful information that enhanced our understanding of operational art, these studies, however, often describe and define operational art largely through historical case studies.[3] Although one cannot truly understand operational art without a keen awareness of military

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[1] Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," *Joint Force Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (January 2010): 109-116.

[2] Huba Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is not a Level of War," *Small Wars Journal* (March 14, 2011): 1-6, accessed September 19, 2015, http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/710-deczege.pdf.

[3] Robert Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1994); James Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1994).

history, history represents only one academic discipline within this multi-disciplinary field. Therefore, it is worthwhile to employ an alternative method, exploring operational art with a different focus, and determine whether a new approach can enrich our knowledge and understanding.

This monograph analyzes operational art from a post-positivist approach. It proposes the research question: Can critical approaches contribute to a more thorough understanding of operational art? Based on this research question, the working hypothesis is that critical approaches – such as poststructuralism and the concept of deconstruction – can serve as a logical and viable analytical framework that offers an alternative understanding of operational art.

To validate the working hypothesis from a post-positivist approach, qualitative research is the preferred methodology since operational art is not a measurable and tangible object like artillery cannons or battleships. Rather, analyzing operational art as a concept requires a method that focuses on those intangible aspects. Underneath this qualitative research approach, discourse analysis is the main research method. Discourse analysis is a research methodology that concentrates on analyzing written texts and narratives.[4] Moreover, discourse analysis provides a level of focus to this research because discourse analysis concentrates on written works and the meaning of operational art expressed in texts. Discourse analysis' ability to examine written works – to include official publications, academic papers, and professional journals – provides an opportunity to evaluate our interpretation and understanding of operational art. In addition, discourse analysis can explain how different texts create different meanings of operational art. In doing so, this analysis has the potential to foster additional dialogues that can offer a different understanding of operational art.

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[4] Mark Salter, "Research Design: Introduction," in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction,* ed. Mark Salter and Can Mutlu (New York: Routledge, 2013), 19.

In this research design, several key components are instrumental to demonstrate the proposed hypothesis' validity.[5] First, operational art's linguistic origin and evolution in American military doctrine are pivotal because language is a fundamental element in this type of research. Understanding how language has evolved is an essential element because it provides an opportunity to examine why and how operational art has changed since its inception. Since language is the key component, this monograph focuses on the examination of official military doctrines in two particular periods: post-Vietnam and post-9/11. Although it would be optimal to examine operational art in its entirety, comparing the concept of operational art in these periods offers a concise analysis with sufficient depth. More specifically, this monograph examines and analyzes the 1982 and 1986 editions of FM 100-5, the 2011 edition of Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 and JP 5-0, and the 2011 edition of Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0 as primary sources. Each of these publications has dedicated a section that describes and defines the concept of operational art through its own lens and context. Thus, it is essential to use these documents as the foundation for further research and analysis.

In addition to a clear methodology, two secondary questions are also relevant. The first question: What are critical approaches? To explain it, it is essential to discuss the meaning and purpose of critical approaches because it is an immense theoretical and philosophical field that requires a thoughtful analysis. The literature review chapter addresses this issue and provides an analytical framework.

Another key question: What is operational art? Operational art has many different perspectives and definitions. The meaning of operational art is the question to which this

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[5] Can Mutlu and Mark Salter, "The Discursive Turn: Introduction," in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction,* ed. Mark Salter and Can Mutlu (New York: Routledge, 2013), 113.

monograph attempts to provide a reasonably argued response. Furthermore, one has to explain and describe operational art beyond the official definition because a pure doctrinal definition provides only a quickly digestible answer that offers insufficient explanation.[6] A level of clarification is inevitable because each officially approved definition of operational art has incorporated theoretical concepts from other academic fields. Thus, it is important to review and examine each version of operational art with a microscopic focus as to identify the intended, sometimes hidden, meaning of operational art. In doing so, one can develop a richer and deeper understanding of operational art.

This monograph consists of two major sections. The first section is an overview of critical approaches. This monograph focuses on poststructuralism as the main theoretical concept. Moreover, this section focuses on Jacques Derrida's deconstruction as the primary analytical framework. In addition, the literature review surveys some recent academic works that have successfully analyzed security related issues, through the poststructuralist lens, to illustrate the utility and applicability of this theoretical approach.

The second section is the most important portion of this monograph. This section consists of multiple parts. The first part analyzes the 1982 and 1986 editions of FM 100-5, identifying the introduction of operational art and some of its associated concepts such as the levels of war framework. The next part looks at the most current military doctrinal definition of operational art, in both joint and army manuals. The purpose is to compare how the current version is different from the initial concept. The last part provides an explanation to the argument that operational art, as a concept, does not have a consistent meaning. More importantly, the recognition of this fluidity in operational art enhances our understanding of this concept.

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[6] ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012), 9-10; ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-1 to 4-9.

Finally, the concluding chapter wraps up the entire discussion by reviewing key elements from each chapter and proposes additional areas where one can continue this project in the future. This chapter provides a synthesis of the project and its utility in the current operational environment. Furthermore, the discussion also includes how this project positively influences our understanding of operational art.

Chapter 2

With an Alternative View

Critical approaches represent a collection of theories that are different from the positivist tradition. With a demand to produce detailed quantitative data, positivist research tends to focus on gaining a clear understanding of "the empiricist theory of knowledge [in which] sensory experience provides the only legitimate source of knowledge."[7] Although positivist research is a valuable and useful analytical method, this type of quantitative-focused analysis is insufficient and inadequate in many areas. For example, a positivist-oriented quantitative analysis is capable of analyzing the relative strength of two opposing military forces based on personnel and equipment. However, positivist analysis, using quantifiable and observable data, cannot measure factors such as trust, will, or morale in a military organization. Thus, this illustrates an important shortcoming in positivist research's inability to measure these intangible factors. In addition, post-positivist questions the possibility to achieve objective truth because post-positivism challenges "positivist approaches to knowledge generation."[8] From this approach, critical theory and poststructuralism are two dominant theories that have become quite popular in academic fields such as sociology, literature, and political science.[9] Many have categorized theories such as poststructuralism and critical theory as critical approaches to traditional positivist theories.[10]

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[7] Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 356.

[8] Ibid.

[9] For a general overview, see Fred Rush, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). To gain a deeper understanding, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Ken Booth, ed., *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London: Rienner Press, 2005).

[10] Karin Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 1-10.

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Within critical approaches, poststructuralism is a theory that provides an insightful perspective that rivals the conventional positivist methodology. More specifically, poststructuralism questions and challenges the modernist framework because it rejects many of its assumptions. In order to comprehend and appreciate the importance of poststructuralism, one has to understand structuralism, a modernist theory. A comparison of these two theories highlights some of the tensions and provides an explanation as to why poststructuralism is a useful analytical tool. Within poststructuralism, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are two of the most prominent thinkers.[11] More specifically, this monograph focuses on Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction as the primary lens because it is a widely known and accepted concept. In addition, works from David Campbell and Lene Hansen illustrate how some scholars have applied poststructuralism in their analysis on security related issues. Lastly, the Israeli Defense Force's attempt to apply the concept of deconstruction during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 illustrates the utility of poststructuralism and Derrida's concept of deconstruction in a real world military scenario.

The concept of structuralism began with Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, who examined language as a critical component that constructs meaning and knowledge. Using language, objects or concepts are associated with certain words and sounds. The process of matching an object with a word provides a defined meaning to that object. In explaining this relationship between an object and a word, Saussure coined two terms: signified and signifier.[12] Signified represents the concept or object while signifier represents the physical symbol and

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[11] Paul Allen Miller, "The Classical Roots of Poststructuralism: Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault," *International Journal of Classical Tradition* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 204-225; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1972); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

[12] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 65-78.

sound. Together, signified and signifier create a sign with a specific meaning. For example, the British military's invention of an armored vehicle during the First World War is a signified. The word "tank" is a signifier. Combining an armored-style vehicle with an actual word and sound, people recognize the sign of tank as a military equipment instead of a water tank. Of course, the decision to use the word tank was a military deception to confuse the German military to believe that tank as a water or liquid storage unit. This highlights how signifier and signified create a unique sign with a specific meaning. Tank, as a word with a specific sound, can be associated with multiple objects. Using signified and signifier to construct a sign, Saussure framed the foundation of structuralism in which the linguistic element plays a critical role.

After Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss is another key figure in structuralism. Levi-Strauss advanced the concept of structuralism by employing binary opposition as a tool in his anthropological studies.[13] Binary opposition provides an important framework that explains the structure of our environment. For example, good and evil, positive and negative, fast and slow, and inside and outside are examples of binary opposition that people regularly use. These binary oppositions create meaning because they highlight an object by emphasizing its opposite. For example, it is difficult to define and understand the word "fast" by itself because it is difficult to comprehend the meaning of fast without emphasizing slow. Juxtaposing fast with slow, fast derives its meaning from what it is not. Through this process, people understand the meaning of fast primarily through a relative comparison with its opposite. The application of binary opposition enables us to define and interpret ideas and concepts. In all, structuralism creates a framework in which "all human actions and social institutions are best viewed as symbolic systems of practice, and researchers in social sciences have deployed the methods of and

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[13] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology,* trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 159-162.

assumptions of structuralism to develop sophisticated conceptions of social formations, and to explain events such as revolutions and the actions of states."[14] In short, structuralism has made a vital contribution to our understanding of social systems with language as an instrumental component.[15] It is under this framework that poststructuralism challenges structuralism and its assumptions.

Emerging during the 1960s, poststructuralism began as a critique of structuralism. Poststructuralism argues that meaning is not as stable as structuralism's claim. This critique centers on poststructuralism's focus on "a critical attitude or ethos that explores the assumptions that make certain ways of being, acting, and knowing possible."[16] Challenging structuralism's assumptions, poststructuralism employs different methods to substantiate its argument on the inconsistent nature of knowledge and meaning in our society. Moreover, poststructuralism dissects "language, interpretation, and representation in the construction of notions of danger, threat, and identity."[17] From this endeavor, Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction occupies a pivotal role in debunking structuralism and its presumptions on the possibility to achieve and sustain objective knowledge and meaning in our society.

Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, a widely popular poststructuralist concept, is a powerful critique of the positivist tradition because it offers a viable and logical alternative perspective. Deconstruction is a philosophical concept that focuses on the inconsistent nature of meaning and the use of binary opposition in language. Deconstruction highlights Saussure's use of sign, matching signified and signifier to provide a defined meaning, as inconsistent and

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[14] David Howarth, *Discourse* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), 16.

[15] Ibid., 27.

[16] David Campbell, "Poststructuralism," in Dunne, Kurki, and Smith, 223.

[17] Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 62.

arbitrary because it is a subjective process. Furthermore, deconstruction also challenges the use of binary opposition because this process often privileges one part and undermines the other. This preferential treatment distorts the potential to understand a concept without any bias. Through different writings, Derrida's deconstruction attempts to reshape our understanding of knowledge and meaning. Lastly, it is important to clarify the meaning of deconstruction because many people have misused and abused the term. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction does not mean to break an item or concept apart to its basic elements and analyze each component individually. For example, some argue that deconstruction is "to take [complex concepts] apart and isolate what we mean in detail [which] brings clarity."[18] This is an example of an inaccurate understanding of deconstruction.

Derrida first introduced the concept of deconstruction in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in which he challenged Levi-Strauss' proposition of structuralism.[19] In "Structure, Sign, and Play," Derrida discusses structure and its association with the idea of "freeplay."[20] The idea here is that an "organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the freeplay of the structure."[21] The structure itself limits the possibility in how we can understand, see, and define an idea or concept. The structure permits freeplay to occur within, meaning that it is possible to understand a concept within a certain parameter. Outside of this parameter, freeplay is not possible because the establishment of structure prohibits this from happening. For example, the passing of the colors in a military ceremony has a clear and defined meaning since it symbolizes the transition of authority from one commander to

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[18] Dietrich Dörner, *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1996), 54.

[19] Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1967), 278-294.

[20] Ibid., 278.

[21] Ibid., 279.

another. Although there might be different ways for the passing of the colors to occur in a ceremony, the act itself has a specific meaning in this particular context. Outside of this context, the act of passing on the colors from one person to another does not have the same meaning as during the change of command ceremony.

Derrida formally introduced the concept of deconstruction in *Of Grammatology* in which he highlighted the tendency of emphasizing speech over writing in constructing and defining meaning.[22] More specifically, one has to understand that the emphasis on speech over writing can also translate to the emphasis on the attempt to privilege what is present over what is absent. In short, this binary structure, in which one aspect is more important than another, is at the heart of deconstruction. Of course, any particular emphasis of a text can change because meaning is inherently unstable and elusive. Therefore, it is not possible to have a stable and consistent meaning because of constant changes. Deconstruction provides a useful tool for people to understand the difference between a written or spoken concept versus the concept itself. The former receives a more privileged status than the latter because the act of written or verbal communication has provided an emphasis. Thus, one has to be cognizant of the act of writing and speaking about a concept that can create an artificial structure. This artificial structure creates a boundary that limits the potential to understand a concept in its entirety, without any constraint. Meaning changes in different times under different contexts, giving it an elusive and unpredictable nature. More specifically, Derrida offered a critique of structuralism through the discussion of "signifier" and "signified". For example, the previous discussion on the word "tank" highlights a fundamental poststructuralist claim that meaning is fragile and unstable because a word can have multiple meanings and interpretations.

In practice, poststructuralism has become a popular concept because of its ability to

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[22] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

decipher and analyze different relationships. Intellectually, poststructuralism has proven its utility in the realm of foreign affairs as a powerful lens that provides an alternative perspective. First, David Campbell's work, *Writing Security,* offers an interesting and insightful observation on our understanding of US foreign policy.[23] Campbell's work addresses why Washington perceived Saddam's regime in Iraq as a more dangerous threat than other dictatorial countries. Through the process of identifying the concept of "self" and "other", Campbell's work argues, "the identity of the United States involves a deconstruction of conventional political discourse and its self-presentation."[24] Through the lens of binary opposition, one can clearly see how the employment of "self and other" argument highlights the dichotomy between the United States and its allies against their potential adversaries. Campbell's work is an illustration of how poststructuralism can provide a unique perspective that assesses American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War.

Expanding from Campbell's poststructuralist theme, Lene Hansen's *Security as Practice* further refines the poststructuralist argument through her analysis of the Bosnian War.[25] Using discourse analysis, Hansen attempted to describe how different war narratives shaped American foreign policy. On the one hand, the Balkan discourse portrayed a narrative to Western policymakers that the Balkan is a region mired in a protracted cycle of conflict as "incapable of change."[26] On the other hand, the Genocide discourse painted a political and ethical obligation to the same policymakers to stop the atrocity.[27] Hansen described two competing war narratives

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[23] David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[24] Ibid., 8.

[25] Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnia War* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[26] Ibid., 109.

[27] Ibid., 113.

between the Balkan discourse and the Genocide discourse heavily influenced and shaped the behavior of international community. Hansen's use of competing narratives through discourse analysis illustrates how poststructuralism is a useful tool in understanding and analyzing security related issues.

Lastly, the Israeli military employed poststructuralism and the concept of deconstruction in 2002. In an attempt to rearrange space in an urban environment, Israeli military commanders tried to conduct military operations from a deconstructionist perspective, questioning "the relationship between conflict and space."[28] More specifically, this was an attempt to apply Derrida's deconstruction concept by seeing and understanding the relationship of urban battlefield from a different lens. For example, an Israeli commander commented that "defining inside as outside and interiors of homes as thoroughfare [with] soldiers used none of streets, roads, alleys and courtyards that make up the order of the city."[29] In Operation Defensive Shield, the Israeli military demonstrated that poststructuralism and deconstruction are more than just some ivory tower intellectual ideas. These concepts have tangible applicability in real world security and military operations because they offer a credible alternative perspective.

Poststructuralism offers an alternative viewpoint that rivals the traditional positivist methodology. Structuralism, for all its usefulness as a theory that offers an insightful explanation on how we give certain things meaning, is insufficient in many areas. Initially, as a critique, poststructuralism questions not only structuralism's assumptions but also provides a powerful argument claiming that it is not possible for a concept or idea to have a permanent definition. Through scholars such as Jacques Derrida, the concept of deconstruction has become a common analytical framework that challenges many existing assumptions about our understanding of our

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[28] Eyal Weizman, "Walking through the Wall: Soldiers as Architects in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Radical Philosophy* 136, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2006): 8.

[29] Ibid., 9.

environment. Deconstruction provides a framework for us to analyze discourse, texts, speeches, and even a single word in order to discover many of the hidden meanings. In all, deconstruction is a tool for the military practitioners to examine operational art to gain a better and more thorough understanding.

Chapter 3

Searching for a Different Understanding

The focus of this chapter concentrates on the examination of operational art through Derrida's deconstruction. This chapter looks at how operational art has manifested itself in American military doctrinal publications, focusing on two specific periods. This section starts with the 1980s' concept of operational art. The discussion of the AirLand Battle concept provides the overall context and explains how the first definition of operational art has influenced how we interpret and understand operational art today. Following this analysis, the next section focuses on an examination of current joint and army definitions. Throughout this process, Derrida's deconstruction shows that different interpretations of operational art have created different understanding and meaning. More specifically, this section looks at the tension between various definitions and their approaches. After analyzing different texts, it is clear that it is not possible to maintain a consistent definition because each definition has its own interpretation. Moreover, this analysis shows that each version of operational art cannot adequately define the true meaning of operational art because each perspective represents only a partial and parochial interpretation. Finally, this chapter highlights the inherent instability and inconsistency in our understanding of operational art. As a result, military practitioners must have a keen understanding and awareness of the environment to employ operational art to its full potential.

1982/1986 Operational Art

In the shadows of the Vietnam War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Army developed new fighting concepts for a different type of operational environment. More specifically, the Army introduced two major concepts: Active Defense and AirLand Battle. Beginning with the 1976 edition of FM 100-5 and the concept of Active Defense, the Army was actively searching

for a solution to address its numerical disadvantage in Europe against Warsaw Pact forces.[30] After much thought and careful consideration, the Army replaced the Active Defense concept with the AirLand Battle doctrine in 1982 as its primary fighting concept.[31] AirLand Battle is a concept that integrates and maximizes different elements of military power to employ deep attacks and decisive maneuvers to destroy the opponent's ability to fight.[32] Furthermore, the AirLand Battle doctrine introduced the levels of war framework with tactical, operational, and strategic levels as the three different echelons of war. Following the 1982 edition of FM 100-5, the Army continued to revise and improve the AirLand Battle concept with the publication of an updated FM 100-5 in 1986. In this revised edition, operational art appeared for the first time in American military doctrine.

The operational level of war, introduced in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5, represents just one part of a three-level warfare concept that "coordinates from the highest levels of policymaking to the basic levels of execution."[33] Each level of warfare reflects a particular aspect of war. For example, the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 defines the operational level of war as "using available military resources to attain strategic goals within a theater of war . . . it also involves planning and conducting campaigns."[34] From this perspective, the operational level of war concentrates on the planning and executing military operations to accomplish strategic objectives. The levels of war concept, heavily influenced by the principles of structuralism, arranged the

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[30] Paul Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. Depuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institutes Press, 1988), 8-9.

[31] Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), i.

[32] Ibid., 1-5.

[33] Ibid., 2-3.

[34] Ibid.

entire framework in the ways in which it was not possible to understand each level without understanding the overall structure. Within the tradition of structuralism, the levels of war concept inherited a unique reflection and interpretation of war. From this distinct identification, the levels of war framework created an artificial boundary that confined the interpretation of warfare. To understand the operational level of war, one has to investigate its origin.

Russian military thinkers pioneered the concept of the operational level of war.[35] Many have attributed the operational level of war to Soviet military thinkers and their development of the Deep Battle concept prior to the Second World War. More specifically, Soviet military theorists Aleksandr Svechin and Georgii Isserson provided the initial terminology and clarification to this term. From Svechin's perspective, the operation "sets forth a whole series of tactical missions [and] dictates the basic line of conduct of an operation."[36] Moreover, Svechin provided a framework that structured the art of war from strategy down to tactics, with strategy as the pre-eminent focus and operational art as a discipline that shapes the understanding of strategy.[37] Similar to Svechin's concept, Georgii Isserson presented operational art as "instruction for the conduct of operations."[38] Believing in the importance of the operational level of war, Isserson provided a historical analysis explaining how wars evolved from the Napoleonic Era to his current setting. In his analysis of this historical evolution, Isserson argued that "hampered by

[35] Bruce Menning, "Operational Art's Origins," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art,* ed. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History Press, 2010), 3.

[36] Aleksandr Svechin, *Strategy,* ed. and trans. Kent Lee (Minneapolis: East View Publication, 1927), 69.

[37] Jacob Kipp, "The Tsarist and Soviet Operational Art, 1853-1991," in *The Evolution of Operational Art,* ed. John A. Olsen and Martin Van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 65-66.

[38] Georgii Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art,* trans. Bruce Menning (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 7.

conservation military theory, the new phenomena and new conditions during the second half of the nineteenth century required some time to penetrate into the realm of cognition."[39] The environment in which military operations conducted "lateral dispersion and distribution in depth" necessitated the need for a different kind of military thinking.[40] The operational level of war concept became an integral part of a larger framework that transcended beyond the linear form of warfare. Svechin and Isserson became an important part of the intellectual foundation that developed the Deep Battle concept, a Soviet style of warfare developed during the Second World War. The operational level of war was an instrumental component of the Deep Battle concept that enabled the Soviet military to achieve success on the Eastern Front.

Echoing those Russian military thinkers, American strategist Edward Luttwak recommended that the American military to adopt the operational level of war. In his article in *International Security,* Luttwak argued for the use of the operational level of war in American military doctrine. Luttwak's article was one of the earlier scholarly works that ignited the discussion of operational level of war within the American security establishment.[41] In his analysis, Luttwak argued that the context of the Cold War and the NATO structure required "some relational-maneuver operational method based on principles of avoidance, deception, elusiveness, and momentum would offer some hope of victory."[42] Luttwak's advocacy for the operational level of war had to do with NATO's attempt to confront the Soviet military threat and formulate an adequate solution to address this problem. As result, operational art became

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[39] Ibid., 22.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Edward Luttwak, "The Operational Level of War," *International Security* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1980-1981): 61-79.

[42] Ibid., 79.

synonymous with the operational level of war.[43] Luttwak's advocacy for the operational level of war succeeded when the Army adopted this concept into its doctrine, as reflected in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 and the adoption of levels of war framework. This framework, through the lens of critical theory, created a superficial structure in defining the concept of warfare.

The levels of war framework created an artificially constructed structure that limited the possibility of "freeplay", as defined in Derrida's deconstruction. Through the lens of deconstruction, the levels of war framework created a specified boundary, limiting the understanding of war through the perspective of strategic, operational, and tactical levels. This artificially constructed box limited the possibility and potential to define and understand warfare. By officially defining the levels of war concept, the Army formalized the process in a specified manner, requiring people within its organization to subscribe to this idea. Furthermore, the Army also indirectly shaped and influenced other organizations, such as other American military services and higher organizations. This concept shaped their understanding of war because the Army played an integral role in the realm of warfare. For example, as part of the AirLand Battle concept, the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 would inevitably have an influence in the way in which the US Air Force and NATO allies thought about warfare. In short, the levels of war framework restricted any attempt to define and analyze war outside of this superficially constructed concept because it would be difficult for those who accepted this framework to reconcile with a definition outside of this particular structure. From this framework, the next edition of FM 100-5 ushered the first usage of operational art in the Army doctrinal lexicon.

After the 1982 edition of FM 100-5, the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 defined operational art as "the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of

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[43] Clayton Newell, "Introduction," in *On Operational Art,* ed. Clayton Newell and Michael Krause (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History Press, 1994), 3.

operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations."[44]

This definition of operational art reflected its association with the levels of war concept

established in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5. More specifically, intellectual masterminds such as

Huba Wass de Czege and Don Holder, the creators of 1982 and 1986 FM 100-5, wanted to

"redefine the operational level of war."[45] Furthermore, this doctrine was an "elaboration of

theater-level warfare."[46] The close linkage between these two doctrines illustrates the importance

of the AirLand Battle concept during this period and the Army's attempt to employ a new concept

in order to meet the challenge of a conventional threat in Europe. In all, operational art was a

critical part of the AirLand Battle concept. Operational art elevated its value and standing as a

necessary concept that played an essential role in modern warfighting and military operations

because it filled "a significant void in U.S. military thought [and] provided a concept to relate

tactical events to strategic outcomes."[47] Nevertheless, one can see that the 1982 edition of FM

100-5 and the levels of war concept established the parameter in the ways in which people

understood the concept of operational art.

Despite their similarities, there are two noticeable differences between the 1982 and 1986

editions of FM 100-5. First, the 1986 editions of FM 100-5 replaced the levels of war framework

with "the Structure of Modern Warfare."[48] This is perhaps a more explicit pronouncement than

the previous edition of FM 100-5 in accepting the principles of structuralism. By specifying the

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[44] FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), 10.

[45] Richard Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army," in *Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War,* ed. B.J.C. McKercher and Michael Hennessy (London: Praeger, 1996), 163.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 166.

[48] FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), 9.

word "structure" in the revised framework, there was no doubt that this new framework was trying to establish a certain outlook. In "the Structure of Modern Warfare":

> Successful strategy achieves national and alliance political aims at the lowest possible cost in lives and treasure. Operational art translates those aims into effective military operations and campaigns. Sound tactics win the battles and engagements, which produce successful campaigns and operations. While the principles of war apply equally to strategy, operational art, and tactics, they apply differently to each level of war.[49]

This section provided a refinement to the levels of war concept first introduced in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5. The revised edition of FM 100-5 provided many details to the ways in which military practitioners should apply the structure of modern warfare in wars. More importantly, this revised edition reshaped the structure established in the previous edition. For example, the structure of modern warfare provided a specific definition of operational art, translating military strategy and strategic aims into military operations and campaigns. It was within this revised structure that one could understand the meaning of operational art in the context of the 1980s operational environment.

Another key difference is the introduction of the term "operational art" as a replacement for "the operational level of war". The operational level of war, as a term, disappeared in the revised edition of FM 100-5. Instead, the term operational art replaced the operational level of war as a part of "the structure of modern warfare."[50] From this change, the structure of modern warfare consisted of strategic, operational art, and tactical levels. More specifically, the concept of operational art became more than just a simple replacement for the operational level of war. More than just the middle level of a three-part framework, operational art took on an additional dimension. The concept of operational art now added a special section that stated:

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 10.

Operational art thus involves fundamental decisions about when and where to fight and whether to accept or decline battle. Its essence is the identification of the enemy's operational center-of-gravity - his source of strength or balance - and the concentration of superior combat power against that point to achieve a decisive success.[51]

This passage illustrates a different facet of operational art from the operational level of war concept because the mental aspect became an additional component of operational art in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5. The element of making decisions about when and where to fight illustrates that operational art was more than just a structure linking strategic and tactical levels of war. This concept now introduced the human factor in warfare. By describing the decision-making process required in a military campaign, operation, or battle, operational art required military commanders to make decisions and constantly evaluate their surroundings. In short, this section ushered the discussion on the mental aspect of warfare.

The mental aspect of war is an area many have discussed and analyzed. Most famously, Clausewitz's concept of coup d'œil describes the innate qualities of a military genius. More specifically, Clausewitz described it as "degree of virtuosity . . . of intellect and temperament . . . is called a genius."[52] During his time, Clausewitz described what he witnessed during the Napoleonic Wars and actions of Napoleon Bonaparte. Clausewitz's description of a military genius certainly reflected the mental element of an individual in warfare and its importance in achieving success on the battlefield. More specifically, military genius is not "something paranormal or God-given, but simply a very highly developed mental aptitude for a particular occupation."[53] More recently, Huba Wass de Czege also recommended that military practitioners

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 100.

[53] Michael Howard, *Clausewitz: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27.

devote additional emphasis on the mental aspect of war.[54] From this approach, operational art reflects a way of thinking because it can help military planners to develop and generate better approaches in confronting complex systems. This kind of thinking echoes many of the current ideas about the contemporary operational environment in which one can increasingly view the world as a complex system that requires a more methodical approach in developing adequate solutions for many existing issues.

Although the mental component was a new addition in the revised interpretation of operational art, the Army still defined operational art within the existing framework previously established in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5. The revised manual made two structural adjustments: it removed the levels of war framework and replaced it with the structure of modern warfare; and erased the operational level of war and switched it with operational art.[55] These changes ushered the introduction of operational art into the American military's lexicon. By replacing the operational level of war with operational art, the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 advocated a key tenet that operational art is the link connecting the strategic and tactical levels of warfare. In this structure, one can argue that operational art became subservient to strategic and tactical levels of warfare because operational art had no agency or the ability to act on its own accord. If this framework meant that the sole purpose of operational art was to connect the strategic and tactical levels, then operational art, as a concept, has very little meaning because operational art cannot exist by itself without the strategic and tactical levels of war.

Through an analysis of signifier and signified, the initial explanation of operational art appears to be somewhat confusing. In this case, signs are "operational" and "art" that combined into a single concept, operational art. The words "operational", "art", and "operational art" have

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[54] Wass de Czege, 1.

[55] FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), 9.

different meanings in the dictionary than the definitions provided in doctrine. For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines operational as "of or relating to operation or operations; engaged in or connected with active operations, as distinct from being under training, in reserve, etc."; or "in a condition of readiness to perform some intended function; able and ready to function."[56] Furthermore, OED defines art as "a skill in doing something, without as the result of knowledge or practice."[57] Combining these two definitions, one can define operational art as a skill of conducting military operations or campaigns through study, practice, or observation. This interpretation of operational art reflects only a small part of the doctrinal definition of operational art in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5. In light of these differences, one can determine that operational art is an arbitrary term that requires some sort of intertextuality, defining the concept itself by understanding other texts. Thus, the comparison between the dictionary and doctrinal definitions illustrates the fluid nature of operational art. To know the term operational art requires an understanding and knowledge of other terms such as strategy and tactics. Operational art is not a simple military term such as attack or defend that requires a minimal understanding of other terms because each is self-explanatory. In short, operational art, as manifested in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5, created a term that actually had very little meaning on its own. Thus, the concept of operational art relied an understanding of other military terms to derive its intended meaning.

Analyzing operational art through the lens of critical approaches reveals two important discoveries about the 1982 and 1986 editions of FM 100-5. First, applying the principles of structuralism, the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 established a framework that limited the discussion

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[56] *Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd ed., s.v. "operational," accessed February 4, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/131750.

[57] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "art," accessed February 4, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11125.

of warfare within a confined boundary. More specifically, the levels of war framework shaped the Army's thinking and understanding of war by emphasizing the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Within this framework, the Army first defined the concept of operational art. One of operation art's initial missions was to replace the operational level of war. In addition, the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 defined operational art as an action that connects military operations and campaigns with strategic goals.[58] The levels of war framework and the structure of modern warfare shaped the interpretation and meaning of operational art because it was not possible to understand operational art outside of these two frameworks. Thus, one has to recognize that the operational environment and different military concepts shaped the meaning and understanding of operational art.

Second, changes from the 1982 to 1986 edition of FM 100-5 are examples that demonstrate the fluid and arbitrary nature of operational art. Both editions of FM 100-5 supported the AirLand Battle doctrine. Yet, the adoption of the structure of modern warfare concept as a replacement for the levels of war framework shows instability in maintaining a consistent framework. Recognizing that there might be legitimate reasons to change the term from one to another, the key point is that this change proves the argument that it is not possible to maintain a consistent concept of warfare. Thus, it is not possible for operational art to have a consistent meaning because operational art relies on those larger concepts to shape its meaning. Operational art does not have a stand-alone definition because the environment shapes and determines the meaning of operational art. As a result, it is very difficult to have a consistent understanding and interpretation of operational art. This section, through a discussion of the 1982 and 1986 editions of FM 100-5, shows that different contexts and frameworks can form different understanding and interpretation of operational art. The theme of change continues in the next section and the next

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[58] FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), 10.

section shows that a different era and environment form a different interpretation and understanding of operational art.

2011 Joint Operational Art

In a different era and operational environment, JP 3-0 and JP 5-0 reflect a different interpretation of operational art. This section first describes how the environment has changed since the end of the Cold War. The next part analyzes operational art defined in the 2011 edition of JP 3-0 and JP 5-0, identifying important themes and ideas. Furthermore, this section examines those key ideas behind this revised interpretation of operational art. More specifically, it looks at operational design and its theoretical origin. Finally, this section concludes that the joint interpretation of operational art, like the 1980s version, is an unstable and fragile concept.

The world has become more complex in the post-Cold War era. Conventional military challenges became less threatening since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, the rise of non-state actors and intrastate conflicts presented different and new security challenges to the United States and its allies.[59] In this environment, the United States had to confront non-traditional threats such as terrorism and insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, joint doctrine began to explore new ideas to confront a different type of environment and new security challenges.[60] Learning and incorporating lessons from different military operations since the end of the Cold War, to include post-9/11 activities, joint doctrine expresses a different interpretation of operational art.

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[59] Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2006), vii-xiv; Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 3rd ed. (London: Polity, 2012), 1-14.

[60] JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), ix-xxvii.

The 2011 edition of JP 3-0 and JP 5-0 share a similar interpretation of operational art. JP 3-0 defines operational art as "the use of creative thinking by commanders and staffs to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces."[61] On the other hand, JP 5-0 defines operational art as "the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience."[62] Both definitions focus on a revised interpretation of operational art and this new interpretation poses an important question: Does this interpretation of operational art preserve some of the existing foundations established in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5? First, this interpretation of operation art retains the framework of strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. JP 3-0 and JP 5-0 reintroduced the operational level of war back to the levels of war framework after operational art temporarily replaced it in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5. In addition, JP 5-0's definition of operational art describes its purpose as integrating "ends, ways, and means". This phrase recognizes a specific form of strategy advocated by the US military in which "strategy" is defined through the application of the ends, ways, and means. Moreover, this form of strategy adopted the levels of war framework.[63] This is critical because JP 3-0 and JP 5-0's acceptance of this framework shows that old military concepts have continued to play an important role and shape the ways in which the military practitioners understand the meaning of operational art today.

In addition, JP 3-0 and JP 5-0 added new concepts that emphasize a particular interpretation of operational art. First, both publications recognize that mental agility is a vital component of operational art. Whether it is "the use of creative thinking" or "the application of

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[61] JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), xii.

[62] JP 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), III-1.

[63] Arthur F. Lykke, "Defining Military Strategy," *Military Review* 69, no. 5 (May 1989): 2-7.

creative imagination", both definitions highlight the same theme that the human mind is a powerful tool.[64] Furthermore, this emphasis centers on military commanders and staffs use of creativity, knowledge, experience or judgement. JP 3-0 and JP 5-0 clearly stress that mental agility is a key feature of operational art in the current operational environment. The discussion of individual skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment highlights a different emphasis and interpretation of operational art. This new emphasis centers on an assumption that individuals have the mental ability to incorporate past experiences with present situations to determine the most optimal option in a complex environment. The 1986 edition of FM 100-5 did mention the importance of decision-making, but it did not include any discussion on creativity or imagination in operational art's definition. Since 2006, JP 3-0 has explicitly emphasized creative or imagination in defining operational art.[65] This emphasis highlights an effort to focus on a particular aspect of warfare. Through Derrida's deconstruction, the analysis shows that the joint interpretation of operational art places a heavier focus on this element than others. This emphasis links to another new element of operational art introduced in the joint publications.

Operational design is a new concept that shapes how the military defines and thinks about operational art. Operational design is "the conception and construction of the intellectual framework that underpins joint operational plans and their subsequent execution."[66] Furthermore, operational design supports the military commander's practice of operational art through "a creative process that helps commanders and planners to answer the ends-ways-means-risk questions."[67] In short, operational design complements the practice of operational art with a

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[64] JP 3-0, xii; JP 5-0, x.

[65] JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), IV-3.

[66] JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), xiii.

[67] Ibid.

process that aids military commanders and staffs to plan and execute operations in an uncertain environment.

Operational design originated with the emergence of cybernetics, systems theory, and complexity theory. Cybernetics emerged as result of "the growing realization that non-linear and networked social relationships characterize much of the contemporary world."[68] Furthermore, some have argued that this emphasis on cybernetics emerged "from the unprecedented technological and industrial effort of World War II."[69] More specifically, the industrialization process contributed to a different type of warfare that emphasized cybernetics because warfare became more complex. From cybernetics, systems theory became an important theoretical foundation that explores and analyzes this field. Shimon Naveh, the founder and former head of Israel's Operational Theory Research Institute (OTRI), connected systems theory and operational art by explaining their complex dynamics and multifaceted interactions among different parts. More specifically, Naveh described general systems theory "as a heuristic framework . . . to clarify the substance of operational art."[70] In short, Naveh was an innovator who attempted to understand cybernetics and systems theory so he could redefine operational art.

Complexity and complex adaptive systems theories are also concepts that have gained a more influential role in the understanding of operational art and operational design. Military thinkers, such as Frans Osinga, have examined the utility of these theories to form a framework

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[68] Antoine Bousquet and Simon Curtis, "Beyond Models and Metaphors: Complexity Theory, Systems Thinking and International Relations," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (March 2011), 48.

[69] Antoine Bousquet, *Scientific War of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefield of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 33.

[70] Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), xiii.

that enables military practitioners to confront a complex environment.[71] In addition, Antoine Bousquet tried to push this argument further with his work describing how today's environment has advanced even farther into the realm of "Chaoplexic Warfare . . . an outgrowth of cybernetics and information theory, but the focus on change, evolution, and positive feedback."[72] Many of these ideas have advocated for a focus on design as a way to confront a complex environment. This sentiment also translated to an increased level of awareness among military practitioners thinking and searching for a different method to confront a complex and uncertain environment.

The emphasis on complexity meant that many military practitioners have devoted time and energy to develop a new concept that connects complexity and operational art. Systemic Operational Design (SOD) is one of the earlier concepts that connect complexity and operational art.[73] Naveh was one of the pioneers who started SOD while serving as the director of OTRI and General James Mattis, as the commander of US Joint Forces Command in 2005, advocated for operational design to be included in the joint arena.[74] The 2006 edition of JP 3-0 became the first publication that incorporates operational design as a component of operational art.

These efforts resulted in the publication of *Art of Design*, a student text for the US Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, in which design is a key element in understanding operational art.[75] This link between complexity and operational art represents a different interpretation and understanding. In addition, this interpretation of operational art also reflects a

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[71] Frans Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 125-127.

[72] Bousquet, 34.

[73] Will Sorrells et al., *Systemic Operational Design: An Introduction* (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies Fort Leavenworth, 2004), 7-13.

[74] School of Advanced Military Studies, *Art of Design, Student Text Version 2.0* (Student Text, School of Advanced Military Studies Fort Leavenworth, 2009), 1.

[75] Ibid.

different kind of operational environment. Since then, operational design has become a vital part of the military planning process and it includes thirteen different elements. The purpose of these elements is to "help commanders and staffs think through challenges of understanding the operational environment, defining the problem, and developing [an operational] approach."[76] Furthermore, these elements provide an important and tangible tool that commanders and staffs use in the planning process. In short, operational design has become an invaluable process that enables military practitioners to deal with a complex environment.

Through Derrida's deconstruction, it is clear that the focus on operational design shows a different emphasis and interpretation of operational art. In other words, operational design has become the new framework that defines operational art. Different elements of operational design are the cornerstones of this framework. Furthermore, the elements of operational design have to accommodate the previous established concepts such as the levels of war framework. Through this process, operational design has attempted to shift operational art toward a humanistic dimension. This emphasis has resulted in the introduction of operational design as a practical method that links complexity with operational art. As a result, operational art inherits a different interpretation because the environment has changed.

The original definition of operational art, in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5, could not adequately serve today's joint force because the environment has changed. A revised version of operational art illustrates the inconsistency and fragility of operational art as a concept. Once again, this shows that operational art has no objective meaning because it often requires a superficial structure, the elements of operational design, to determine its identity and meaning. In the end, joint doctrine's interpretation reinforces the argument that operational art has no consistent meaning. Derrida's method of deconstruction shows that operational design has

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[76] JP 5-0, III-18.

become the new structure that shapes the meaning and interpretation of operational art. Furthermore, this newly created structure, overlapping with the previously constructed levels of war framework, further narrows how one can define operational art. In the end, the joint interpretation of operational art reflects the thinking that the world has become more complex.

US Army & Operational Art

An examination of previous joint and army doctrines shows that it is difficult to have a consistent interpretation of operational art across different periods because the environment never stays the same. If it is not possible to have a consistent interpretation of operational art in different eras and operational environments, then one has to question whether it is possible for operational art to have a consistent interpretation in the same era and operational environment. This section examines the Army's interpretation of operational art, defined in the 2011 edition of ADP 3-0 and ADRP 3-0. Both ADP 3-0 and ADRP 3-0 describe operational art as "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."[77] This definition is different from the 2011 JP 3-0's definition of operational art. However, this is not that first time that joint and army doctrines define a military term in different ways.[78] Rather, one has to take a closer look to decipher whether these two organizations share a similar view.

ADP 3-0 and ADRP 3-0's interpretation of operational art reflects the perspective of a sub-organization in a large enterprise. ADRP 3-0 first defines operational art through the lens of joint doctrine before providing its own refinement. This is not a surprise, since the Army operates as part of the joint force structure. Thus, it is natural for the joint interpretation of operational art

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[77] ADP 3-0, 9; ADRP 3-0, 4-1.

[78] Walter Piatt, *What is Operational Art?* (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies Fort Leavenworth, 1999), 4-5.

to precede the Army's interpretation. Furthermore, the Army relies on joint concepts, such as principles of joint operations, to "assist commanders in analyzing pending operations [and] analyze an operational environment."[79] In other words, the Army's approach to operational art has to work within joint concepts because the environment necessitates this dynamic to exist. Although ADRP 3-0's interpretation of operational art has a close association with the joint doctrine, one has to question whether this dynamic between joint and army doctrines produces a consistent interpretation of operational art.

There is a key difference between how joint and army doctrines interpret operational art. The joint definition of operational art emphasizes the elements of operational design.[80] On the other hand, the Army focuses on the elements of operational art.[81] Although there are many similarities between the elements of operational design and the elements of operational art, there are some differences as well. For example, end state and conditions, basing, tempo, phasing and transitions, and risk are five elements of operational art that are different from the elements of operational design. ADRP 3-0 explains that "some elements of operational design apply only to joint force commanders [and] the Army modifies the elements of operational design into elements of operational art, adding Army specific elements."[82] This is a reasonable explanation because each organization approaches military operations from a different perspective. Therefore, it is natural to have dissimilar views.

Within the context of operational art, different organizations have different perspectives and these differences reflect a divergent view between different organizations. The Army, responsible for the land component, has to fulfill its requirements and role as a part of the joint

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[79] ADRP 3-0, 4-1.

[80] JP 5-0, III-18.

[81] ADRP 3-0, 4-3.

[82] Ibid.

forces. To fulfill its duties, the Army has to concentrate on certain areas to win and succeed in a land war. As a result, the Army has a different emphasis in its interpretation of operational art. For example, tempo is an element of operational art that is not included in the elements of operational design. The Army defines tempo as "the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy."[83] Tempo is important because it "helps commander keep the initiative during combat operations or rapidly establish a sense of normalcy during humanitarian crises."[84] The Army values tempo because it enables its military commanders to maintain initiative. Although tempo is an important attribute, the joint doctrine did not include tempo in its thirteen elements of operational design. Tempo, along with other elements of operational art that are included in the elements of operational design, is an example that highlights the argument that different organizations have different perspectives with different interpretations of operational art.

The Army gives a considerable emphasis toward the tactical level of warfare in its interpretation of operational art. More specifically, ADRP 3-0 addresses the importance in the "arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."[85] The term "tactical" has never appeared in any previous doctrinal definition of operational art, until the 2011 edition of ADP 3-0 and ADRP 3-0. For example, the 1993 edition of FM 100-5 defines operational art as "the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives within a theater through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of theater strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles."[86] In addition, the 2001 edition of FM 3-0 defines operational art as "the

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[83] Ibid., 4-7.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 4-1.

[86] FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), 6-2.

use of military forces to achieve strategic goals through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of theater strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles."[87] The premise of operational art has been a link that connects different levels of war, but all previous definitions have largely focused on the strategic and operational levels. This is the first time that operational art specifically emphasizes the tactical level of warfare. This is also a recognition that the Army operates mostly at the tactical level. For example, the Army prefers corps or higher commands to be in command of joint task force.[88] This puts division and below units at the tactical level of warfare. For operational art to be an applicable concept for the whole organization, it has to be a relevant concept for everyone. Thus, it is natural for the Army to emphasize the tactical level of warfare in its interpretation of operational art. Yet, this does not mean that the tactical level of warfare is more important than other levels because it is about "bridging this continuum" from the overall strategic direction to tactical actions.[89] Nonetheless, ADP 3-0 and ADRP 3-0's interpretation of operational art clearly places an emphasis on the tactical level of warfare.

This section shows that operational art does not have a consistent interpretation between the joint and army doctrines, because each organization interprets operational art largely through its own perspective. This inconsistency reflects the reality that each organization has its own focus even though they operate in the same environment. It is not unusual for different organizations to have a different focuses. If so, then is it possible for operational art to have a consistent interpretation and understanding when each organization has a different focus? This issue confronts military practitioners in their pursuit to understand operational art.

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[87] FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), 2-3.

[88] FM 3-94, *Theater Army, Corps, and Division Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014).

[89] ADRP 3-0, 4-1.

In the end, military practitioners have to understand that each interpretation of operational art serves a specific purpose in a specific era. It is important to recognize that "theory is always for someone and for some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space, specifically social and political time and space."[90] Operational art is no different from other theories. It is natural to have a different interpretation and understanding in different time and space. This does not make operational art meaningless because time, environment, and perspective will always shape how different organizations interpret operational art in its own way.

Different factors determine how operational art would emerge in different times, environments, and perspectives. Operational art is most useful if it is an adaptive system. A rigid and inflexible concept has a very short lifespan in confronting today's operational environment and tomorrow's uncertainties. Thus, military practitioners have to recognize that operational art should not have a consistent meaning and interpretation. The meaning of operational art should be "an essentially contested concept."[91] Its meaning is never final and consistent because it is capable of change.

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[90] Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (June 1981), 128.

[91] W.B. Gailles, "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56, (1956), 167–198.

Conclusion

This monograph examines operational art using Derrida's deconstruction and asks how critical approaches can enhance our understanding of operational art. The analysis produces an interesting finding because it challenges the notion that operational art has a rigid and consistent interpretation. Different military manuals – from the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 to the current edition of JP 3-0 and ADP 3-0 – have different interpretations of operational art. The analysis shows that time, environment, and perspective are important factors that contributed to this divergent understanding of operational art. Time and environment are two variables that explain why the 1986 edition of FM 100-5, the 2011 edition of JP 3-0, and the 2011 edition of ADP 3-0 have divergent views. The Cold War versus post-Cold War dichotomy shows that each era has its distinct environment and challenges. Preparing for Soviet and Warsaw Pact offensives in the Fulda Gap was a different challenge than stabilizing and rebuilding failed states in Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore, operational art is partly a reflection of the environment. As a result, it is not possible for operational art to remain unchanged because environment always changes.

This monograph also shows that perspective is another factor. Perspective can shape our understanding of operational art in different ways. First, different frameworks – concepts such as the levels of war framework and the elements of operational design – have created different interpretations of operational art. Each framework interprets operational art differently because each framework has its particular view and emphasis. Together, these divergent views illustrate that it is difficult for operational art to remain as a rigid concept. Furthermore, a comparison of JP 3-0 and ADP 3-0 shows that organizations at different levels might have different interpretations of operational art because each organization has its own perspective. Derrida's deconstruction shows that people and organizations construct meaning by emphasizing or highlighting one area while de-emphasizing others. Thus, it is not a surprise that the Army highlights its interpretation of operational art while recognizing the joint interpretation of operational art in doctrine.

Military practitioners have to recognize that operational art is not a concept that has a rigid and consistent interpretation. Each version of operational art written in doctrine is unique because each version is a reflection of time, environment, and perspective. In addition, this awareness enables military practitioners to understand that operational art will manifest itself differently in a different era and environment. Yet, this does not mean that operational art will always go through a drastic change every time. This monograph shows that the US military has tried to refine or modify operational art largely within the existing context. For example, the US military still uses the levels of war concept as an important foundation to frame warfare and operation art. At the same time, military practitioners have to be bold and innovative when a drastic change is required to reinvent operational art.

Most importantly, military practitioners must understand the environment in order to determine whether the existing interpretation of operational art is suitable to support them in their planning and executing military operations. Clausewitz once described war as "more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case."[92] Operational art has to reflect this adaptability and flexibility as well. What is certain about the practice of operational art is its uncertainty because it is a direct reflection of war's ever-changing character.

There are two areas that other researchers can continue this project in the future. First, it would be interesting to analyze how other countries define and interpret operational art. For example, Australia and the United Kingdom both use the term "operational art" in their military services. Australia defines operational art as "the skilful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organisation, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major

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[92] Clausewitz, 89.

operations."[93] The United Kingdom defines operational art as "translating strategic direction into tactical execution . . . orchestration of a campaign, in concert with other agencies, to convert (at the operational level) strategic objectives into tactical activity and employment of forces, in order to achieve a desired outcome."[94] These interpretations of operational art share many similar themes with the American version. At the same time, one can also recognize some differences as well. A comparative analysis of operational art, from a doctrinal perspective, is a future research project that others can continue to explore this topic.

Beyond a comparative analysis of different militaries, cyber and space are two domains that can potentially challenge and change the current interpretation of operational art. Both domains broaden the current operational environment. For example, cyber activities have the potential to alter the gap between different levels of war. On the other hand, space is such a vast domain that the existing framework might be inadequate. These are all important questions that others can explore and research in the future.

In the end, this monograph offers a critical evaluation of operational art from an unconventional method. The finding produces a critique that is not unexpected because one cannot solely rely on a static definition or interpretation of military knowledge as the absolute truth. What is an acceptable interpretation of operational art in today's environment does not mean that it will be the same tomorrow. Each scenario presents its unique challenges and military practitioners have to understand the environment in order to identify the best approach or approaches. Military practitioners should never think that operational art will remain as a static concept because it denies military practitioners the opportunity to properly study and understand the environment. Operational art is not just about linking tactical actions to the accomplishment

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[93] Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 5.0, *Joint Planning* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2009), 3-1.

[94] Army Doctrine Publication, *Operations* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2011), 7-1.

of strategic ends. This might be a suitable interpretation today, but poststructuralism has clearly demonstrated that this definition is a reflection of today's environment. The meaning of operational art is endless and this recognition should encourage military practitioners to think more critically and creatively.

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