

Army Operational Doctrine: Too Much LSCO and Not Enough Bellum Ligula

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Army Operational Doctrine: Too Much LSCO and Not Enough Bellum Ligula, by MAJ James M. Gibbs, Jr., 50 pages.

For much of history war was straight forward: armies clashed on the battlefield, a victor emerged, and a settlement, albeit fleeting, meant an end to hostilities. True, doctrine, tactics, and weaponry evolved, and overtime armies grew larger and war more destructive, but for the most part war was easily distinguishable within a continuum that moved from peace to war.

The nuclear age undermined this binary peace-war construct. The reality of nuclear deterrence and mutually assured destruction soon emerged, limiting the ability of states to achieve political objectives using conventional force. But states adapted, harnessing other aspects of national power and updating unconventional methods of warfare for the modern age.

When the Soviet Union dissolved soon after America demonstrated its military prowess in the deserts of Iraq, an interwar period similar to that following World War I began. The Army concluded that a revolution in military affairs had occurred, with its status in a unipolar world dependent on maintaining technological overmatch in conventional arms. Her adversaries reached a different conclusion.

Over the past thirty years terms such as hybrid, gray zone, and unrestricted, warfare, or what the author calls “bellum ligula,” the Latin term for unconventional war, rose to prominence. These age-old concepts were developed and tested in response to US power in the post-Cold War era. When the US emerged from eighteen-plus years of conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, the threat environment had changed significantly, marking the “return” of great power competition.

The Army’s response was the publication of FM 3-0, *Operations*. Although it filled a gap in Army doctrine, FM 3-0 emphasized large scale combat operations in a high intensity conflict at the expense of operations that take place during the competition phase of war. However, the threat environment continues to evolve. Peer competitors, though modernizing their armies, had largely moved beyond conventional war as a means to achieve political objectives. Instead, they seek to exploit seams in the American Way of War using all military and non-military aspects of national power. The result is that Army operational doctrine is unbalanced, preparing the force for a war that is as unlikely in the future as it was during the Cold War.

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Abbreviations

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ALB	Air Land Battle
BTG	Battalion Tactical Group
CFT	Cross Functional Team
CIV-MIL	Civilian and Military
FM	Field Manual
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBOLC	Infantry Basic Officer Leaders Course
LSCO	Large Scale Combat Operations
MCCC	Maneuver Captain's Career Course
MDO-2028	Multi-Domain Operations 2028
MDO	Multi-Domain Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBA	National Basketball Association
NSS	National Security Strategy
OOTW	Operations Other Than War
PME	Professional Military Education
POI	Program of Instruction
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs

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Introduction

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks marked the end of an era. Since the end of the Cold War the US had enjoyed a “unipolar moment.”¹ For more than a decade, the US dominated diplomatically, culturally, militarily, and economically, all while seeking a solution for a problem unique to the US: how to balance the Wilsonian ideals of “consultation, cooperation, and collective action” with the realpolitik required to enforce them.² The initial response to the terrorists attacks was overwhelming force, albeit with the infamous “horse soldiers” leading the charge early in Afghanistan. Next came the Second Gulf War, where the relative ease in which US forces overthrew the Hussein regime seemed to confirm the primacy of the “American Way of War.”³ When President George W. Bush said “bring ‘em on” following the first insurgent attacks on US forces, little did he or many military leaders realize that the character of war had changed, and this change was about to erupt in full view of a digital and social media revolution.⁴

What erupted in full view was the response to American power that had been building since the end of the Cold War. In Iraq this took the form of an insurgency using homemade bombs to kill soldiers carrying sophisticated weapons while maneuvering in multi-million-dollar armored vehicles. Using social media, al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi attracted fighters from all corners of the world to expel the “infidels” from the holy land and restore the Caliphate. What followed was an insurgency that tore at the moral fabric of American society and

¹ Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Washington Post*, July 20, 1990, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1991-02-01/unipolar-moment>.

² Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 804-806.

³ Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1973). Weigley’s book describes an “American Way of War.” From the American Revolution to the Civil War, it was attrition based, given the limited resources of the young republic. From the Civil War to Vietnam, given American economic, political, and cultural growth, it evolved to a war of annihilation. Some author’s added additional characteristics, such as a reliance on technology, decisive battle, and the hesitancy to sustain a high number of casualties. For the author’s purposes, the idea is that each state has a unique way of fighting that generally aligns with its history, culture, and political institutions.

⁴ Sean Loughlin, “Bush Warns Militants who Attack US Troops in Iraq,” *CNN*, July 3, 2003, accessed February 19, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/07/02/sprj.nitop.bush/>.

arguably contributed to the political partisanship experienced today. The insurgency in Iraq and America's inability to reach a political end state were a microcosm of the changes that had taken place since the end of the Cold War. State and non-state actors alike studied the American Way of War, identifying weaknesses and developing capabilities to exploit them. Overall, America's enemies concluded that the character of war changed, presenting opportunities to challenge the US led international order.

With the most to gain, the Chinese recognized the paradigm shift. Two Chinese Colonels, Qiao Lian and Wang Xiangsui, captured the shift in a document titled *Unrestricted Warfare*, published in 1999. Lian and Xiangsui believed warfare had broken out of its traditional domain, defined largely by interstate conflict with large armies engaging each other on the battlefield, to encompass all means, "military and non-military, lethal and non-lethal to compel the enemy to accept one's interests."⁵ For Lian and Xiangsui, the binary peace-war construct favored in the West described an outdated mode of war. Instead, modern war was multi-domain, though not in the sense that the Army currently defines the term. For the Chinese, it went beyond air, land, maritime, space, and cyberspace, to include humanitarian and economic intervention, the use of international organizations, the law, "material resources, nationalities, religion, culture, networks, geography, and the environment."⁶ In sum, there was no delineation between peace and war--- states were always at war, whether they realized it or not.

Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov added to these concepts with what has since become known as the Gerasimov Doctrine. The Gerasimov Doctrine rose to prominence soon after Russia seized the Crimea and Eastern Donbas regions from Ukraine in 2014. Like the Chinese, Gerasimov believed the lines between war and peace had blurred. As a result, "wars are

⁵ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, ed. and trans. Ian Straus (Brattleboro, VT: Echo Point Books, 1999), 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

no longer declared and having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template.”⁷ This template includes harnessing social media to spread propaganda and the merger of state and terrorist, or in the case of Ukraine, proxy forces. Further, the Gerasimov doctrine shrinks the distance between the strategic and tactical levels of war as capabilities and authorities are pushed to lower tactical formations.⁸ Given the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) uneven response, Gerasimov might have added the cloak of deniability, for Russian’s actions in Crimea were executed in such a way that the status quo changed before Russia was officially linked to the conflict. Although international relations scholar Bettina Renz believes the hype surrounding “hybrid warfare” is an oversimplification of Russia’s strategic approach, the Gerasimov Doctrine highlights a major theme in the changing character of war.⁹

This theme is the slow demise of industrial age warfare, which started with the explosion of the first nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. According to Gen. (Ret.) Rupert Smith, industrial age warfare is defined as “conflict between states, the maneuver of forces en masse, and the total support of the state’s manpower and industrial base, at the expense of all other interests, for the purpose of an absolute victory.”¹⁰ However, absolute victory in the nuclear age, using conventional force, is a chimera, as the Cold War bore out. Instead, Smith described a paradigm shift to a “war amongst the people” that is characterized by the “continuous crisscrossing between confrontation and conflict” with little differentiation between war and

⁷ Mark Galeotti, “The ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’ and Russian Non-Linear War,” In *Moscow’s Shadows*, July 6, 2014, accessed August 8, 2019, <https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>. Galeotti provides a translation, with comments, of a speech given by General Valery Gerasimov, then Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation, to the Russian War College.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bettina Renz, “Russia and Hybrid Warfare,” *Journal of Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 283-300, accessed September 3, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201316>.

¹⁰ Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Random House, 2008), 19.

peace, and “no predefined sequence” to describe its start point or its end point.¹¹ Smith’s analysis of modern conflict describes the Gerasimov doctrine (hybrid war), China’s model for conflict (unrestricted war), and other unconventional methods. Together, the Gerasimov doctrine and Chinese unrestricted war illustrate a non-linear, whole-of-government approach to war, defined by its ambiguity and the ability to package information operations, diplomacy, economic coercion, and on occasion military force in unique ways to achieve affects at all levels of war. Given events over the past thirty-years, it appears adversaries incorporated many of these concepts into their doctrine.

Contemporary Army operational doctrine, represented by Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, is designed to prepare the force for large-scale combat operations (LSCO) in a high intensity conflict. As Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Michael Lundy pointed out, “large-scale combat operations are more lethal, and more likely, than they have been in a generation.”¹² After the Army’s struggle in Afghanistan and Iraq, Russia’s re-emergence as a great power and China’s growing influence in the world, the publication of FM 3-0 in October 2017 drew mixed reviews.

On the one side are those who view the threat environment through an unconventional war lens, believing the era of industrial age war reached its zenith during World War II. This camp includes Rupert Smith and Frank Hoffman, both leading scholars on unconventional methods of war. Although acknowledging the destructiveness of industrial age warfare and its impact on world history, Smith and Hoffman point to the numerous challenges that emerged in the post-Cold War era to highlight the unlikelihood of a twenty-first century Battle of Kursk. Overall, they believe “Western military thinkers have been reluctant and thus slow to address the

¹¹ Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, 21.

¹² US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), i.

implications of the increasingly blurred character of modern wars.”¹³ Thus, those who continue to hold a conventional war mind set are reluctant to embrace the changes necessary to compete across the conflict continuum.¹⁴

On the other side of the debate are those who view the threat environment through a conventional war lens. They trace its origins to the Napoleonic Era, if not earlier, and tend to focus on the most dangerous course of action: LSCO in a high intensity conflict. According to this world view, the US is challenged across all domains by peer competitors “actively seeking to gain strategic positional advantage.”¹⁵ When combined with the proliferation of advanced technologies, the US faces greater threats today than at any time since the end of Cold War.¹⁶ Although the debate is more nuanced than indicated above, it highlights the difficulty of anticipating the future. According to Carl von Clausewitz, the “aims a belligerent adopts, and the resources he employs, must be governed by the particular characteristics of his own position” and “conform to the spirit of the age.”¹⁷ What is the spirit of our age and how will it impact the future battlefield? That is a question states have been asking themselves for millennia, none more so than after World War I.

Only in hindsight did the period between World War I and World War II become known as the interwar years. During that time the French concluded that firepower and the defense was superior to maneuver and the offense. Their solution, drawing on the defensive nature of World War I, was the Maginot Line.¹⁸ The Germans, on the other hand, determined that the internal

¹³ Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), accessed March 3, 2020, https://www.potomacinstitute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ US Army, FM 3-0, i.

¹⁶ Ibid., ix.

¹⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 594.

¹⁸ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

combustion engine, nascent wireless communications, and air power restored maneuver to the battlefield, hence “blitzkrieg” concepts and accompanying doctrinal changes that dominated on the battlefield early in World War II. The US is in the midst of another interwar era, only in this case it is less about emergent technology, as revolutionary as it will likely turn out to be, and more about how states learn to “wage war without waging war.”¹⁹ Russia and China have both broadened the lens through which they view war. Russia’s actions in the Ukraine and meddling in the 2016 Presidential election are but recent examples, while China, with its mercantilist trade policies, island building campaign, and cyber-attacks on American government and industry, is another. Both states are seeking ways to exploit seams in the US-led international order to achieve political objectives without triggering an American military response. In short, they are waging war without waging war. Unfortunately, it appears the Army is moving in a different direction. Given post-Cold War trends in the threat environment, it is important that doctrine achieve some sort of balance if the Army hopes to compete across the conflict continuum.

The central argument of this paper is that current Army operational doctrine underestimates those types of conflict that take place during the competition phase. These are hybrid, gray zone, and unrestricted methods of war, among others, hereafter referred to as “bellum ligula,” the Latin term for unconventional war. The result is doctrinal imbalance, with LSCO weighted more heavily than bellum ligula. This does not imply that conventional war is obsolete. Indeed, as a global power with global interests, the Army must support US interests across the full spectrum of operations, but doing so requires an honest assessment of the threat environment and a broader lens through which warfare is viewed.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first examines how the threat environment evolved over the past seventy-five years. It is anchored by the military historian’s Williamson

¹⁹ Elinor Sloan, *Hegemony, Power, and Hybrid War* (Berlin, Germany: DOC Research Institute, 2018), accessed September 10, 2019, <https://doc-research.org/2018/11/hegemony-power-hybrid-war/>.

Murray and Allan Millet's study of the interwar period, arguing that the political and ideological struggle between the US and Soviet Union, combined with the advent of nuclear weapons, disrupted a similar assessment to the one the British, French, and Germans conducted after World War I. In sum, although doctrine evolved and technology advanced, conventional war remained the lens in which states viewed conflict. When the Cold War ended states regained the autonomy to evaluate the threat environment and adjust accordingly. For the United States, the adjustments were minimal, with LSCO remaining the lens through which warfare was framed. Adversaries adopted a different approach---bellum ligula.

The second section of this paper examines the contemporary threat environment through the lens of the Russo-Ukrainian War. First, it uses the Russo-Ukrainian War as an example of how states adapted to America power in the post-Cold War era. Second, it examines how bellum ligula challenges the Army's current operational framework. As Frank Hoffman points out, the tendency for the military to ignore certain types of conflict "has impeded US strategic performance in the past, and will continue to do so until we grasp the full range of conflict types."²⁰ Lastly, the second section examines why it is so difficult for the Army to embrace bellum ligula methods of war. Borrowing from the social scientists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, this paper argues that America's primary and secondary socialization reinforce traditional notions of warfare, making it difficult to incorporate non-military actions into its framework of war.

Definitions

Definitions of hybrid, gray zone, and unrestricted methods of war are a major point of contention within military academia. This paper will not add clarity to the debate. For instance,

²⁰ Frank G. Hoffman, "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges," *PRISM* 7, no. 4, November 8, 2018, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/1680696/examining-complex-forms-of-conflict-gray-zone-and-hybrid-challenges/>.

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations*, recently defined a hybrid threat as a “diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorists, or criminal elements acting in concert to achieve mutually benefitting effects.”²¹ Hoffman, on the other hand, defines a hybrid threat as the “purposeful and tailored violent application of advanced conventional military capabilities with irregular tactics, with terrorism and criminal activities, or a combination of regular and irregular forces, operating as part of a common design in the same battlespace.”²² Whether or not hybrid warfare includes “advanced conventional military capabilities,” as Hoffman argues, is irrelevant to this paper. Instead, as Colin Gray at the Center for Strategic Studies posited, internal debates are more likely to confuse rather than enlighten.²³ As Figure 1 illustrates, there are more commonalities between these terms than differences, and focusing on one at the expense of the other creates more confusion than clarity. Rather, Army planners are better served by viewing them as a menu of available options, with an endless combination for their employment on (or off) the battlefield.

Conflict Type / Characteristics	Hybrid	Gray Zone	Unrestricted
Ambiguous / Plausible Deniability	✓	✓	✓
Political Warfare (Disrupt Elections)	✓	✓	✓
Lawfare (Undermine Legal / International Order)	✓	✓	✓
Economic Coercion	✓	✓	✓
Information Operations (Use of Bots, Troll Farms, etc.)	✓	✓	✓
Electronic Warfare	✓	✓	✓
Remain Below High Intensity Conflict	—	✓	—
Whole of Government Approach	✓	✓	✓
Use of Criminal Gangs	✓	✓	✓

Figure 1. Bellum Ligula Commonalities. Created by author.

²¹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 1-19.

²² Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges,” 40.

²³ Colin S. Gray, *Categorical Confusion?: The Strategic Implications of Recognizing Challenges Either as Irregular or Traditional* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 16.

Review of Literature

This monograph is mainly empirical and inductive, though it will include a brief examination of Russian actions in the Ukraine to guide the narrative of the threat environment in Section 2. With access to the Combined Arms Research Library at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the author examined numerous publications, including journal articles, books, white papers, and policy documents. Of special note, Army doctrine, the writings of Frank Hoffman, and Williamson Murray and Allan Millet's study of the interwar period were indispensable to the author's understanding of this topic.

FM 3-0, *Operations*, provided the inspiration for this paper due to its emphasis on LSCO at the expense of operations that take place during the competition phase of war. As the Army's operational doctrine, it provides the organizing principle for all doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) solutions. This is evident in the "materiel" acquisitions represented by the Army's Cross Functional Teams (CFT), all of which are focused on ensuring over match in a LSCO environment.²⁴ If the trajectory of the threat environment is toward bellum ligula then weighting LSCO significantly more heavily will not adequately prepare the force for the future battlefield.

Frank Hoffman is a Distinguished Research Fellow at the National Defense University. His articles on gray zone, hybrid, and unrestricted methods of war date to the early 2000s, when he retired from the Marine Corps Reserves as a Lieutenant Colonel. Through Hoffman's numerous writings, the author learned the intricacies of the hybrid and gray zone debate and the

²⁴ Daniel Roper and Jessica Grassetti, "Seizing the High Ground: United States Army Futures Command," Institute of Land Warfare, October 2018, accessed February 19, 2020, <https://www.ausa.org/sites/default/files/publications/SL-18-4-Seizing-the-High-Ground-United-States-Army-Futures-Command.pdf>. There are six CFTs: Long Range Precision Fires, Next Generation Combat Vehicle, Future Vertical Lift, the Army Network, Air and Missile Defense, and Soldier Lethality. With the exception of the Army Network, this modernization effort is focused on replacing conventional warfighting technologies developed during the 1970s-1980s (PATRIOT air defense system, the Abrams main battle tank, Black Hawk helicopter, Apache attack helicopter, and the Bradley fighting vehicle).

difficulty the Joint Force and Army have in describing and maneuvering within those environments.

The interwar period is fascinating. How did Germany recover from World War I, the Treaty of Versailles, and the ensuing economic depression, when the value of money was measured by the size of the wheel barrel that carried it, rebuild its military, and then conquer more of Europe than Napoleon?²⁵ Why did France and Britain fail in their efforts to prepare for another war that most believed inevitable? In *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, Allan Millett and Williamson Murray examine these questions. They explore the “problems involved in doctrinal, technological, and weapons innovation in a period of severe budget constraint and revolutionary technological change,” a period that resembles our own.²⁶ Does the US, and by extension the Army, resemble France and Britain, or Germany? The answer to that question might not decide who wins the next battle, but it will likely determine who prevails in the next war.

Section I: Evolution of the Threat Environment

On October 4, 2019, Daryl Morey, General Manager of the National Basketball Association’s (NBA) Houston Rockets, posted a message on Twitter in support of protestors in Hong Kong. Although just one of five-hundred million daily tweets, Morey’s drew an immediate response from the Chinese government that led to the cancellation of NBA pre-season games in China and put the NBA’s multi-billion-dollar contract to televise games at risk.²⁷ Over the next

²⁵ Caitlin Kenney, “The Economic Depression that Germany Can’t Forget,” National Public Radio, September 14, 2011, accessed January 19, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2011/09/14/140419140/the-economic-catastrophe-that-germany-cant-forget>.

²⁶ Murray and Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 3.

²⁷ Rosie Perper, “China and the NBA are coming to blows over a pro-Hong Kong tweet. Here’s why,” *Business Insider*, October 22, 2019, accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/nba-china-feud-timeline-daryl-morey-tweet-hong-kong-protests-2019-10#the-nba-issued-another-statement-on-october-8-this-time-nba-commissioner-adam-silver-said-the-league-would-not-censor-players-or-team-owners-8>.

several weeks the NBA and many of its superstars issued mea culpas while a debate raged within the US about China's growing influence over American culture. Even Vice President Mike Pence weighed in, criticizing the NBA's capitulation to Chinese sensors and calling it a "wholly owned subsidiary of the authoritarian Chinese government."²⁸ Although the uproar over the tweet passed, it is yet another example of how the line between war and peace has blurred.

For much of human history that was not the case. States declared war, armies clashed on the battlefield, a victor emerged, and a settlement, albeit fleeting, meant an end to hostilities. True, doctrine, tactics, and weaponry evolved, and overtime armies grew larger and war more destructive, but for the most part war was easily distinguishable within a conflict continuum that moved from peace to war. Nuclear weapons undermined this simple and binary peace-war construct because they eliminated the number of counterpoises, to borrow from Clausewitz, that an adversary could take before reciprocal actions became meaningless.²⁹

To state it in contemporary Army doctrine, before the advent of nuclear weapons conventional force was decisive, as evidenced by the victor in nearly every major war since the Napoleonic era. *Bellum ligula*, in contrast, was a shaping operation, often taking place as a precursor to or during war but rarely as a replacement for war all together. The nuclear age reversed these roles. The threat of nuclear annihilation limited the number of reciprocal actions a nuclear armed state could take. In hindsight, it was *bellum ligula* that proved decisive during the Cold War, while conventional force, to include the technological and doctrinal evolution therein, were shaping operations. Military strategist and the architect of early deterrence theory, Bernard Brodie, was one of the first to understand this paradox.

The paradox Brodie discovered was that before August 6, 1945, "the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars." In the nuclear age "its chief purpose must be to

²⁸ Julia Horowitz, "Mike Pence blasts the NBA and Nike," CNN, accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/25/business/pence-nike-nba/index.html>.

²⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

avert” war between nuclear powers.³⁰ Unfortunately, both policymakers and military leaders were slow to grasp the change. Whether one can attribute this to historical anchoring, wherein the past becomes prologue, or recency bias, wherein both World War I and World War II serve as examples of the utility of conventional force, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is clear that policy makers and military leaders believed conventional force would be as decisive in the future as it was in the past. National Security Council Paper-68, approved by President Harry Truman in 1950, supports this assessment. According to international relations scholar Walter LaFeber, it argued that the Soviet Union was not only an existential threat but also that its power and influence could only be stopped with military power, hence the necessity of a large conventional force through increased military spending.³¹ Although the debate over the strategic approach was much more nuanced during the formative years of the Cold War, as evidenced by George F. Kennan’s “Long Telegram” and the subsequent embrace of containment theory, the end result was an emphasis on both nuclear and conventional capabilities, with the expectation that victory would come on the battlefield. The Army’s Pentomic Division during the 1950s serves as a prominent example. As a result, a thorough assessment of the threat environment was disrupted.

In hindsight, the surrender of the Axis Powers at the end of World War II should have brought about another interwar era, whereby the winners and losers conducted an assessment of their wartime performance and made adjustments that would determine their fate in the next war. This happened in nearly every war in history, most recently following World War I. Then, the British, French, and Germans accessed that four years of war had brought about immense technological change, but each reached different conclusions on how such change would impact the future battlefield. The horrors of trench warfare taught the British that another land war on the

³⁰ Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon* (New York: Harcourt Press, 1946), 52.

³¹ Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: US Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 504-507.

European continent was to be avoided at all costs. Consequently, British defense strategy focused on protecting the empire at the expense of modernizing the army or adopting new doctrinal concepts then under development by B.H. Liddell Hart and J.F.C. Fuller.³² Like the British, the French feared another war, but their geographical position in Europe made a strategy that ignored one untenable. Disagreements within the military on the best path forward coupled and a breakdown in civilian-military (CIV-MIL) relations led to a stalemate in defense strategy and inadequate military funding.³³ The result was the infamous Maginot Line and the doctrine of methodical battle.³⁴

Germany reached a far different conclusion. Both political and military leaders believed another war was inevitable given the harsh punishment handed down in the Treaty of Versailles and the inability to accept defeat. After a thorough assessment of its wartime performance, Germany determined that emergent technologies had the potential to restore maneuver to the battlefield. By World War II, the character of war had changed so much that an officer from 1918 “could have understood the underlying concepts governing warfare in 1940” more so than an officer who marched off to war in 1914.³⁵

The same could be said for an officer who observed Japan’s surrender on the USS Missouri and a similar officer who was on the last helicopter out of Vietnam in 1975. Only in this

³² Macgregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6-19. In late 1918, Fuller planned to execute a large tank attack to destroy German command and control systems. However, the war ended before his plan came to fruition. Liddell Hart experimented with tank formations during the interwar period. However, his concepts were not adopted by the British military.

³³ Murray and Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 14-15.

³⁴ “The French Army Between the Wars,” Global Security Organization, accessed November 20, 2018, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/fr-armee-inter-war.html>. “Methodical battle is a carefully orchestrated form of the offense that insists on the primacy of the infantry, careful organization of artillery, and the methodical advance of all elements in accordance with a highly detailed plan.” It was firepower centric and allowed for little control to subordinate commanders, the polar opposite of the German conception of Auftragstaktik, similar to the US Army’s concept of Mission Command.

³⁵ Knox and Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050*, 11.

case it was less about new technology and doctrinal change, though both had progressed significantly, than the ability of states to achieve political objectives using conventional force in the nuclear age. That is not to say that the armies of the US and the Soviet Union lay dormant throughout the Cold War or to underestimate the utility of conventional force for deterrence and other national security priorities. Instead, it is meant to illustrate how nuclear weapons undermined the utility of conventional force. Unfortunately, the Cold War disrupted a similar assessment to the one conducted by the British, French, and Germans. As a result, the superpowers continued to believe conventional force was decisive, despite relying on *bellum ligula* to achieve political objectives, and in the case of the US, win.

As the Cold War never turned hot, one will never know if the Pentomic Division, Active Defense, or Air Land Battle could have defeated Soviet forces and avoided nuclear escalation. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union coming so soon after a quick and stunning victory over Iraqi forces during the First Gulf War, the US learned different lessons during this interwar era.

At the national level many policy makers believed that great power conflict ended. As President Bill Clinton's first National Security Strategy (NSS) noted, "the threat of a war among great powers and the specter of nuclear annihilation" receded dramatically and the United States stood as the "world's preeminent power."³⁶ In keeping with American military tradition, the Clinton Administration preceded to demobilize a large portion of the armed forces in what is commonly referred to as a "peace dividend."³⁷ At the same time, it expanded its commitments

³⁶ William J. Clinton, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 1993), 7.

³⁷ David R. Henderson, *US Federal Budget Restraint in the 1990s: A Success Story* (Arlington, VA: Mercatus Center, 2015), accessed December 5, 2019, <https://www.mercatus.org/system/files/Henderson-Federal-Budget-Restraint-Research.pdf>. According to the Mercatus Center, the "peace dividend" refers to cuts in military spending following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. From 1990 until 2000, military spending fell in nominal terms, from \$299.3 billion to \$294.5 billion. Overall, it decreased from 5.2 percent of GDP to 3.0 percent of GDP and accounted for 61.2 percent of the overall reduction in federal spending during the 1990s. Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1992). The "end of history"

throughout the world. Again, as the NSS points out, America will “exercise global leadership” to resolve conflicts, spread democracy, expand markets, and deter traditional threats, among other priorities.³⁸ The disconnect between budget cuts and new mission sets is striking. During the 1990s the US conducted humanitarian operations in Somalia and Haiti, intervened to stop ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and enforced a no-fly zone in Iraq. When combined with the dot.com boom of the 1990s, it is easy to see how the United States lost focus, ushering in a period of strategic drift. Perhaps George Kennan was right when he said Americans, “accustomed to taking on the Nazis and Soviets were unused to inhabiting a world with no such great and all-absorbing focal points for American policy.”³⁹

Uncertainty at the policy level led to uncertainty within the military. Victory in the Cold War and dominance in the deserts of Iraq appeared to validate the Army’s operational doctrine of Air Land Battle (ALB). When paired with modernization efforts of the Reagan Administration, which emphasized high technology, precision weapons, stealth, and satellite communications (the M1 Abrams, PATRIOT Missile System, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and Apache and Blackhawk Helicopters were all outputs of the era), many Army leaders believed “a paradigm shift in the conduct of war and a revolution in military affairs (RMA)” had occurred.⁴⁰ As former Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work pointed out in his description of the second offset strategy, “the US Joint Force had a powerful conventional warfighting advantage that would be hard to duplicate, much less match in scope and scale.”⁴¹ This chain of thought led many to believe that a

refers to Fukuyama’s belief that the end of the Cold War meant liberal democracy and other Enlightenment values constituted the final form of government.

³⁸ Clinton, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 5.

³⁹ George F. Kennan, “The Failure in Our Success,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/14/opinion/the-failure-in-our-success.html>.

⁴⁰ Warren Chin, “Technology, War, and the State: Past, Present, and Future,” *International Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July 2019): 768, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz106>.

⁴¹ Robert O. Work and Greg Grant, *Beating the Americans at their Own Game* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2019), accessed November 5, 2019, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/ beating-the-americans-at-their-own-game>.

doctrinal holy grail was discovered and that to retain its military edge the Army had only to make minor refinements to doctrine while maintaining technological overmatch.

At the same time many leaders understood that the lack of a unifying threat described by Kennan meant the Army was likely to take on a broader mission set. For example, as early as 1990 the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Carl Vuono, believed the force must prepare to operate across the conflict continuum.⁴² This pitted those who believed that doctrine had reached its apogee with ALB against those who believed the post-Cold War operational environment required the Army to prepare for a broader range of conflicts.⁴³ The result was FM 100-5, *Operations*, published in 1993. Although it was less revolutionary than evolutionary, it was a major step in acknowledging the importance of other methods of war.⁴⁴ For example, although doctrine writers received criticism for adding the term operations other than war (OOTW), events in Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, and elsewhere proved them right. Indeed, Army leaders were slowly realizing that the “shaping” operations executed during the Cold War (*bellum ligula*) were of growing importance in the post-Cold War era. As the 1990s drew to a close the Army adopted the term full spectrum operations to account for an expanded battlefield and it appeared further doctrinal revisions were underway to move the Army away, albeit modestly, from LSCO.⁴⁵ However, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks suspended further evolutions to Army doctrine. When the US emerged from nineteen years of counter insurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, it “embraced a narrow conventional conception of conflict,” leading to doctrinal imbalance across the force.⁴⁶

FM 3-0, *Operations*, is unbalanced. Although it states that the Army must be “organized, trained, and equipped to meet worldwide challenges against a full range of threats,” its primary

⁴² Walter E. Kretchik, *US Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 217.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 248-51.

⁴⁶ Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges,” 33.

focus is on peer competition that culminates in high intensity conflict.⁴⁷ For instance, a simple search of the terms “hybrid” and “gray zone” return one response, and that is in reference to the difficulty of collecting intelligence in both a LSCO and hybrid environment (though the term “hybrid” is not defined). The term “competition” fares little better, returning one search inquiry. That said, ADP 3-0, *Operations*, with a publication date of July 2019, defines hybrid warfare and mentions the difficulty of operating across the competition continuum.⁴⁸ However, hybrid warfare is defined in terms of the range of threats Army forces might encounter, while offering little beyond the Army’s operational concept of Unified Land Operations as a counterpoise.⁴⁹

To be fair, an argument can be made that the Army’s Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) concept fills this gap. For instance, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (MDO-2028), emphasizes the importance of deterring conflict and if deterrence fails, fighting and winning. Further, it argues that adversaries of the US seek to “achieve their strategic aims short of conflict by the use of layered stand-off in the political, military, and economic realms.” Its central idea is the “rapid and continuous integration of all domains of warfare to deter and prevail as we compete short of armed conflict.”⁵⁰ On the surface, it appears MDO-2028 is bellum ligula focused. However, its “core tenets” of calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence are weighted toward LSCO. First, with the exception of “national-level capabilities,” presumably those that reside outside the operational Army and Joint Force, calibrated force posture is defined in terms of strategic or operational reach rather than the MDO concept it appears China and Russia have adopted. Second, multi-domain formations are

⁴⁷ US Army, FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 1-5.

⁴⁸ US Army, ADP 3-0, *Operations*, 1-19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-1. Unified land operations is the simultaneous execution of offense, defense, stability, and defense support of civil authorities across multiple domains to shape operational environments, prevent conflict, prevail in large-scale ground combat, and consolidate gains as part of unified action.

⁵⁰ US Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), iii.

centered on maneuver, cross-domain fires, and human potential.⁵¹ Of the three, only human potential, despite the vagueness of the term and depending on how it is employed, take place during the competition phase. Lastly, convergence denotes the “rapid and continuous integration of all domains across time, space, and capabilities to overmatch the enemy.”⁵² However, MDO-2028 goes on to describe convergence in terms of combined arms maneuver.⁵³ To repeat, all of the MDO “core tenets” appear to include bellum ligula methods of war. That said, it appears is tension between the broad approach the Army desires (bellum ligula) and what it is authorized under Title 10 of the US Code. On the one hand, the Army wants to “win” during the competition phase, as evidenced by MDO-2028 and other strategic documents. On the other, a combination of legal traditions, CIV-MIL relations, and as will be explained later, primary and secondary socialization, prevent it from doing so; hence, the cognitive dissonance within both the document and the MDO concept itself.

Another example of this imbalance is found in the Army’s strategic role within the Joint Force, also known as its phasing construct: Shape, Prevent, Conduct LSCO, and Consolidate Gains. According to FM 3-0, *Operations*, shaping operations include security cooperation activities and forward positioning of Army units and pre-positioned stocks, whereas prevent operations are meant to deter adversarial actions. They include Flexible Deterrence Operations, force tailoring, and other pre-deployment activities. The purpose of LSCO is straightforward, while consolidating gains is meant to take place during and/or after high intensity conflict to “set the conditions for a sustainable environment” and enable the transition to civil control.⁵⁴ The commonality is that these activities are focused on preparing the force for and then “winning” a high intensity conflict. They generally take place just to the left of “boom,” and largely ignore

⁵¹ US Army, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, 17-19.

⁵² US Army, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, iii.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁴ US Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, 1-63 to 1-66.

bellum ligula activities. For instance, security cooperation and the forward positioning of forces send a message; however, given Russian actions in the Ukraine and China's island building campaign in the South China Sea, it appears their effectiveness is waning.

Overall, FM 3-0, *Operations*, is narrowly focused on LSCO. Although it mentions the need to respond to "worldwide challenges against a full range of threats," it fails to clearly describe what these threats are and then assumes that the ability to execute LSCO against a peer threat also enables the Army to "win" during the competition phase. In a recent article in *Task and Purpose*, Col. Rich Creed argued that the Army is not ignoring these types of conflict, pointing to the continued relevance of counter insurgency doctrine. He also emphasizes the gap which the current version of FM 3-0 fills: doctrine for Army forces in a LSCO environment. Creed then pointed to guidance from the Secretary of Defense and Army Chief of Staff highlighting the "possibility (not probability)" of LSCO against a peer threat.⁵⁵ These arguments are convincing. The Army does not set policy and there was a gap in doctrine due to the recension of the previous version of FM 3-0 in 2011.⁵⁶ However, conflating the ability to execute LSCO with the ability to "win" at bellum ligula paints a misleading picture of the threat environment, a picture that resembles the type of war the Army wants to fight rather than the one it will likely fight.

While the US focused on perfecting advanced technologies in preparation for LSCO, with a detour toward counter insurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, competitors embraced the paradigm shift. The lessons they learned were much different than those embraced by Headquarters, Department of the Army. These lessons were not universal, and some were born of necessity rather than foresight, such as improvised explosive devices, but they all share a

⁵⁵ Rich Creed, "What's Wrong with FM 3-0? Well, Most People Haven't Actually Read it," *Task and Purpose*, May 17, 2018, accessed May 17, 2018, <https://taskandpurpose.com/thelongmarch/whats-wrong-withfm-3-0>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

unifying theme: a move away from industrial age warfare. The major causes of this shift were twofold.

First, nuclear weapons and the risk of escalation meant states were “best served by pursuing their objectives without triggering a major conflict or waging conventional war.”⁵⁷ In other words, nuclear deterrence is effective. With the advent of hypersonic weapons, which temporarily render conventional missile defense systems obsolete, it does not appear the threat of nuclear annihilation will change strategic calculations or the desire for states to acquire nuclear weapons (the author suggests the deceased Muammar al-Gaddafi would have kept his nuclear program intact if he had anticipated the Obama Administrations support for the Arab Spring and his subsequent removal from power).

Second, as Colonel (Ret.) Thomas Hammes posited, the US has too great a lead and modern weapons systems cost too much for peer states to compete.⁵⁸ This was first observed by adversaries during the First Gulf War yet is better described by comparing and contrasting the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the military spending of the great powers. For instance, in 2018 Russia’s economy was just one-fifth the size of the US, with a GDP of \$2 trillion.⁵⁹ Its estimated defense spending is just \$60 billion annually, compared to the \$640 billion appropriated by the US Congress.⁶⁰ To put this in context, the new Ford class aircraft carrier costs \$13 billion, and that does not include the seventy-five planes on its deck.⁶¹ One Ford class carrier equates to

⁵⁷ Elinor Sloan, “Hegemony, Power, and Hybrid War,” *DOC Research Institute*, November 22, 2018, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://doc-research.org/2018/11/hegemony-power-hybrid-war/>.

⁵⁸ Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*” (Minneapolis, MN: MBI Publishing Co., 2006), 227.

⁵⁹ The World Bank, “GDP: All Countries and Economies,” accessed February 25, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>.

⁶⁰ The World Factbook 2020, Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

⁶¹ Jurica Dujmovic, “The US Navy’s New \$13 billion Aircraft Carrier will Dominate the Seas,” *Market Watch*, March 12, 2016, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-us-navys-new-13-billion-aircraft-carrier-will-dominate-the-seas-2016-03-09>.

roughly one-fifth of Russia's defense budget. China, on the other hand, with a GDP of \$13.6 trillion, spends \$145 billion on national defense.⁶² Despite the long-term impact of the "baby boomer" generation on the US budget, it is unlikely that spending will decrease significantly over the next several decades.⁶³ In response, competitors, both state and non-state, were forced to find other ways in which to counter America's overwhelming power in conventional arms.

According to Isaac Newton's third law of motion, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Rather than compete with America on a conventional battlefield, adversaries exploited gaps---bellum ligula. As early as Somalia in 1993, they learned that America's technological advantage could be mitigated by irregular warfare.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, state actors such as Russia and China, despite modernizing their armed forces within budget constraints (the Armata tank and Anti-Access, Aerial-Denial capabilities serve as examples), developed alternatives to exploit seams in the American Way of War. Modern digital technology, globalization, and the rise of social media lowered the bar to entry and expanded the battlefield. The result, as evidenced during the Russo-Ukrainian War suggests, is a battlefield that includes all facets of life, what Hammes calls Fourth-Generation warfare, to include "political, economic, social, and military---to convince the enemy's political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit."⁶⁵

⁶² The World Bank, "GDP: All Countries and Economies," accessed February 25, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN> and The World Factbook 2020, Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

⁶³ Laurence J. Kotlikoff and Scott Burns, *The Coming Generational Storm: What You Need to Know about America's Economic Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), xx-xxiii.

⁶⁴ Mike Fowler, "The Rise of the Present Unconventional Character of Warfare," *Real Clear Defense*, accessed November 4, 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/11/04/the_rise_of_the_present_unconventional_character_of_warfare_114828.html.

⁶⁵ Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, 2.

Section II: Threat Environment

Russia's actions in the Ukraine provide a contemporary example of how states adapted to American power in the post-Cold War world. In Ukraine, Russia used a mix of conventional and unconventional forces, cyber and electronic warfare, information operations, diplomacy, and economic coercion to quickly seize and maintain the initiative before either the Ukrainian government or the international community could mount an effective response. What follows is a description of Russia's actions in the Ukraine, a brief summary of their characteristics, the challenges they pose for the Army, and finally the theoretical underpinnings of the Army's (and America's) resistance to change.

After Ukraine gained its independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a political struggle began over whether to draw closer to the West or maintain historical ties with Russia. This debate dominated Ukrainian politics until February 2014, when protestors who favored closer relations with the West marched on Kiev's main square, the Maidan, forcing the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich, to abdicate.⁶⁶ What became known as the Euromaidan movement was the culmination of this struggle. The Ukrainian Parliament then voted to remove Yanukovich from power. Although it appeared the West had won, Russia had different objectives.

Russia's political objectives in Ukraine were straight forward: protect its near-abroad by preventing Ukraine from formalizing closer ties with the West.⁶⁷ Russian operations formally began soon after Yanukovich abdicated. In the Crimea, Russia executed an information campaign to solidify the large ethnic Russian population against the "hostile" Western leaning

⁶⁶ Serhy Yekelchuk, *The Conflict in Ukraine* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 102-104.

⁶⁷ Tatiana Stanovaya, "What the West Gets Wrong About Russia's Intentions in Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, December 6, 2019, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/06/what-the-west-gets-wrong-about-russias-intentions-in-ukraine/>.

government in Kiev.⁶⁸ This included the use of the internet, television, radio, and local partisans.⁶⁹ Additionally, they used the Internet Research Agency, recently famous for its interference in the 2016 American presidential election, to conduct denial of service attacks, employ “troll farms,” and spread false information (fake news).⁷⁰ Simultaneously, under the pretense of military training, Russia infiltrated Spetsnaz forces to organize a proxy force in the Crimea. These forces, to include private contractors and pro-Russian separatists, quickly seized government buildings, secured the Port at Sevastopol, and spearheaded parliamentary elections in support of a vote for Crimean independence.⁷¹

During this time Russia also used diplomatic and economic coercion to increase pressure on the government in Kiev. Economically, it withdrew from a natural gas contract negotiated with the Yanukovich regime, causing gas prices to rise by forty percent. Russia also limited access to its domestic markets. Together, these actions sent the Ukrainian economy into recession.⁷² Diplomatically, it first denied involvement in the crisis. This was possible due to targeted cyber-attacks and the inability of the foreign press to access the Crimea. As a result, the international community was unable to formulate an adequate response. When that response came, Russia vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution that declared Crimean independence

⁶⁸ US Army Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) G-2, *Threat Tactics Report: Russia* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: TRADOC G-2 ACE Threat Integration, 2015), 20, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-RussiaTactics.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Phillip Karber, “The Russia Military Forum, Russia’s Hybrid Warfare Campaign: Implications for Ukraine and Beyond” (Lecture, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, March 10, 2015), accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/events/russian-military-forum-russias-hybrid-war-campaign-implications-ukraine-and-beyond>.

⁷⁰ US Army, TRADOC G-2, *Threat Tactics Report: Russia*, 39.

⁷¹ Christopher Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations: Russia’s Spetsnaz, SOF, and Special Operations Command* (Ottawa, ON: 17 Wing Winnipeg Publishing Office, 2017), 21-23.

⁷² US Army, TRADOC G-2, *Threat Tactics Report: Russia*, 21-22.

invalid.⁷³ By March 20, 2014, Ukraine ceded the Crimea to Russian forces “often without firing a shot.”⁷⁴

Russia’s actions in the Donbas Region of Ukraine followed quickly on the heels of its success in the Crimea and unfolded along similar lines. According to Christopher Marsh at the Joint Special Operations University, “the goal was to use unconventional warfare methods in the region to mobilize the ethnic Russian population, train, arm, and equip them, and guide them in a war of liberation...while maintaining persistent (if not plausible) deniability” of Russian involvement.⁷⁵ Deniability was critical to Russia’s strategic objective because it makes it difficult to mount a coordinated response.⁷⁶ In the Donbas, however, Ukraine mounted a more forceful military response and the war quickly transitioned into a more conventional military effort, whereupon Russia tested new battlefield concepts.

It was in the Donbas that Russia combined electronic and cyber warfare with reconnaissance-strike operations in novel ways.⁷⁷ In July 2014 at the battle of Zeleopillya, Russian forces used unmanned aerial drones to locate three Ukrainian mechanized brigades. After launching cyber and electronic attacks to disrupt their communications, Ukrainian forces were forced to rely on cellular devices.⁷⁸ This allowed Russian forces to pinpoint their location and

⁷³ United Nations Security Council Resolution S/2014/189 (2014), https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_189.pdf. The resolution states that “Ukraine has not authorized the referendum” in Crimea and declares that the referendum “can have no validity and cannot form the basis for any alteration of the status of Crimea.”

⁷⁴ US Army, TRADOC G-2, *Threat Tactics Report: Russia*, 31.

⁷⁵ Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations: Russia’s Spetsnaz, SOF, and Special Operations Command*, 24.

⁷⁶ R. Reed Anderson, Patrick J. Ellis, Antonio M. Paz, Kyle A. Reed, Lendy Renegar, and John T. Vaughn, *Strategic Landpower and a Resurgent Russia: An Operational Approach to Deterrence* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College Press, 2016), 13.

⁷⁷ Karber, “The Russia Military Forum, Russia’s Hybrid Warfare Campaign: Implications for Ukraine and Beyond.”

⁷⁸ “ATO Troops near Zelenopillya Burnt to the Ground by Russian Grads,” *Ukrainian Independent Information Agency of News*, July 11, 2015, accessed February 27, 2020,

launch a rocket attack, killing approximately thirty soldiers and destroying nearly two battalions' worth of equipment.⁷⁹

It was also in the Donbas that Russia appears to have developed a more robust tactical formation, the Battalion Tactical Group (BTG). According to Dr. Phillip Karber and Joshua Thibeault, it consists of one tank company, three mechanized infantry companies, an antiarmor company, two to three self-propelled artillery batteries, a multiple-launch rocket battery, and two air defense batteries.⁸⁰ Although this type of firepower at the battalion level is impressive, especially compared to that of an Army Armor Brigade Combat Team, it is its ability to employ capabilities typically found at higher echelons that make it unique. For instance, the BTG can employ cyber and electronic warfare, as it did on numerous occasions in the Donbas.⁸¹ This decreases the distance between the tactical and strategic levels of war, allowing the BTG to have strategic affects, though in different ways than the “strategic corporal” popularized during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸² Overall, Russia’s actions in the Ukraine are an example of bellum ligula, a mixture of hybrid, gray zone, and unrestricted methods of war. Before moving on to the challenge’s bellum ligula pose to the Army, a brief summary of its characteristics follows.

Bellum ligula, as mentioned earlier, is less about definitions than a menu of options. These range from information warfare (or propaganda), economic coercion, cyber and electronic warfare to the exploitation of historical and ethnic grievances, religion, and the political process itself. This list is not all inclusive. In fact, the hallmark of bellum ligula is that its only limiting

<http://www.unian.info/war/1099656-ukrainian-troops-near-zelenopillya-burnt-to-the-ground-by-russian-grads-year-ago.html>.

⁷⁹ Atalia Zinets and Maria Tsvetkova, “Ukraine says Rebels will Pay as Missiles Kill 23 Soldiers,” *Reuters*, July 11, 2014, accessed February 27, 2020, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSKBN0FG1A920140711>.

⁸⁰ Phillip Karber and Joshua Thibeault, “Russia’s New-Generation Warfare,” Association of the United States Army, May 20, 2016, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.ausa.org/articles/russia's-new-generation-warfare>.

⁸¹ Karber, “The Russia Military Forum, Russia’s Hybrid Warfare Campaign: Implications for Ukraine and Beyond.”

⁸² *Ibid.*

factor is imagination. That said, it has broad characteristics that differentiate it from industrial age warfare.

First, it unfolds gradually, sometimes over many years, like the Ukraine case above, where Russia used bribes and below market gas contracts to secure fealty from pro-Russia political actors. Second, *bellum ligula* is characterized by a lack of attribution. Actions here might include cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, or the use of proxy forces. With a lack of attribution comes ambiguity. It is here where gaps in an alliance, the law, and ethnic and political loyalties are exploited. Together, the lack of attribution and the importance of ambiguity highlight another characteristic: the importance of avoiding outright conflict. In the Ukraine, this meant avoiding actions that might draw a military response from the US or its NATO allies. Either way, the goal is to achieve political objectives without triggering conventional war. Lastly, *bellum ligula* is non-linear and those who practice it operate under the assumption that conflict is ongoing. It is non-linear because there is no construct that determines when conflict begins or ends. For instance, FM 3-0 *Operations*, provides a phasing model to help leaders conceptualize the battlefield. It starts with operations to shape and prevent and ends with operations to conduct large scale combat operations and ultimately consolidate gains. It presumes a progression across time and space. *Bellum ligula*, in contrast, is an “unending process that can never lead to conclusion” because “continuation is the goal, not culmination.”⁸³ Needless to say, *bellum ligula* challenges the Army across all levels of war.

Bellum ligula challenges the Army across all levels of war. At the strategic level, it undermines the dominant culture that guides decision making. Put differently, Army strategic leaders, like a company commander at the tactical level, set the tone of the formation, or in this case the strategic culture of the force. This culture is dominated by a “big war” mindset that

⁸³ Everett C. Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 4. Dolman was referring to strategy, which he defines as an unending process. The contemporary threat environment is similar in nature.

overemphasizes preferred mission sets (conventional war) and often times obscures the complexity of warfare.⁸⁴ Terms such as decisive battle, lethality, and combined arms and maneuver come to mind. Consequently, big war thinking often translates into big war solutions. For instance, the 2017 NSS points to the return of great power competition. At the same time, it highlights how adversaries are “operating below the threshold of open military conflict and at the edges of international law...to achieve maximum effect without provoking a direct military response.”⁸⁵ Through a conventional war lens, this policy guidance was translated into contemporary operational doctrine. Broadening the lens in which senior leaders, and by extension the force, views warfare is the biggest challenge at the strategic level of war. It is this mindset that permeates the other levels of war.

Within the operational and tactical levels, *bellum ligula* shrinks the distance between the strategic and tactical levels of war. In Ukraine, Russian BTGs had access to cyber and electronic warfare capabilities typically held at much higher echelons, allowing the BTG to place strategic affects quickly. As Maj. Amos Fox noted, Russia’s multi-domain approach combines conventional and unconventional, cyber, information, and electronic warfare in a “synergistic effort to overwhelm an opponent’s capacity to handle the quantity of presented dilemmas.”⁸⁶ The result: Russian forces exercised operational art at unconventional levels of command.⁸⁷ The solution, as Russia concluded, was that the pace of the modern battlefield across all domains, both military and non-military, required lower level commanders to access greater non-nuclear capabilities than before.

⁸⁴ Al Palazzo, “Forging Australian Land Power: A Primer,” Army Research Papers, accessed March 1, 2020, https://www.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2015_12_flw_palazzo_web.pdf?acsf_files_redirect.

⁸⁵ Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), 28-29.

⁸⁶ Amos C. Fox, “Hybrid Warfare: The 21st Century Russian Way of Warfare” (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2017), 53.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

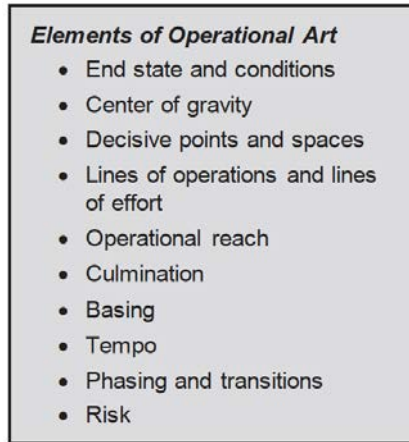


Figure 2. Elements of Operational Art, US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 1-88.

Bellum ligula presents additional challenges not mentioned above, such as Russia’s (and China’s) concept of MDO, which extends well beyond the military domain. As David Maxwell at the Center for Security Studies suggests, political, economic, diplomatic, and subversive activities are part of Russia’s operational art.⁸⁸ These deficiencies are also found in current Army doctrine, specifically those that the operational artist has at their disposal. Army doctrine lists ten elements of operational art, as seen in Figure 2. Although planners often apply them to bellum ligula, there origins are linked to conventional war. For instance, what is the end state of an operation that never formerly begins? Lastly, democratic norms prevent the US from taking similar actions to those of authoritarian type regimes. True, the US practiced bellum ligula during the Cold War, as suggested by the Central Intelligence Agency’s overthrow of the governments of Iran and Guatemala in 1953 and 1954, respectively.⁸⁹ In fact, the use of proxy forces against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, interference in upwards of sixty foreign elections, and access to institutions, both economic and security, were often used to change state behavior.⁹⁰ Conversely,

⁸⁸ David Maxwell, “Taking a Spoon to a Gunfight,” *War on the Rocks*, April 2, 2014, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2014/04/taking-a-spoon-to-a-gunfight/>.

⁸⁹ William Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 148-167.

the contemporary media environment makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the Executive Branch to take similar actions today due to the political fallout when, not if, such actions are discovered. Figure 3 compares and contrasts the tools that are acceptable to authoritarian regimes but difficult, if not illegal, for democratic countries to execute. However, as Hoffman points out, it is less about using the legally questionable tools listed below than accepting them as part of modern warfare and adjusting accordingly.⁹¹ These challenges point to a simple question: why is it so difficult for the US, and by extension the Army, to broaden the lens in which it views warfare?

Traditional/Legitimate	Non-traditional/Illegitimate
Security cooperation and foreign military sales	Political subversion by penetration or false-front organizations
Economic sanctions	Economic corruption
Public diplomacy and support for IGO/NGO	Propaganda/psychological operations/disinformation
Military presence/engagements/exercises	Cyber intrusions/cyber corruption/disruption
Foreign internal defense	Sponsored criminal activity
Freedom of navigation exercise (maritime or aerospace domains)	Electoral interference

Figure 3. Methods of Statecraft and Influence. Frank G. Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges,” *PRISM* 7, no. 4 (November 2018), 35.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann provided an explanation of the Army’s limited vision of warfare in *The Social Construction of Reality*. Berger and Luckmann argue that society exists “only and in so far as human activity continues to produce it.”⁹² In other words, one’s reality, to include beliefs, values, and norms are products of society.⁹³ Berger and Luckmann went on to describe the process by which social orders are created. There are three steps: first,

⁹⁰ Peter Beinart, “The US Needs to Face Up to Its Long History of Election Meddling,” *The Atlantic*, July 22, 2018, accessed March 8, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/07/the-us-has-a-long-history-of-election-meddling/565538/>.

⁹¹ Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges,” 35.

⁹² Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Books, 1966), 69-70.

⁹³ Dennis Hiebert, “The Social Construction of Reality” (Lecture, Providence University, Otterburne, Canada, December 19, 2014), accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.youtube.co/watch?v=SqFhd-Igs6w>.

externalization, which describes how individuals create social orders by their interaction with others and nature. Next, objectification, which describes how products created during the first stage (i.e. democracy) become independent of those who created it. Lastly, internalization, which describes how the social order becomes legitimate, or is viewed as an objective, as opposed to a subjective, reality.⁹⁴ The third stage is where values, beliefs, and norms are learned and handed down to later generations. Berger and Luckmann call this “socialization,” or how one learns the “ways of society.”⁹⁵ In turn, there are two types of socialization: primary and secondary. It is here where the Army’s construct of war is first created (primary socialization) in the public education system and later reinforced (secondary socialization) as soldiers progress through the ranks.

According to Berger and Luckmann, a person is “not born a member of society” but becomes one through primary socialization.⁹⁶ This begins early in childhood, when children learn norms and rules from their parents (the shame in nudity) and extends into elementary, middle, and high school, where the foundations of civic duty are first laid.⁹⁷ The former is fairly straight forward. Children learn the difference between right and wrong, such as a distaste for bullying, respect for the elderly, and the importance of fairness, among other values and social norms. The latter lay the foundation of civic duty and, for one’s purposes, early conceptions of war. It is here where both the binary peace-war construct and the first concepts of war are introduced.

How the American Revolution is taught in elementary, middle, and high school paints a picture of how American’s are socialized to view warfare. From an early age, the American Revolution is portrayed in terms of George Washington leading the Continental Army to Yorktown, where he defeats Charles Cornwallis and ends the war. In middle school more nuance

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 80.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 149.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 167.

is added. Students are taught about the Stamp Act, the Boston Tea Party, and Paul Revere's "midnight ride." By High School, the French and Indian War and overall political context leading up to the revolution are added to the curriculum.⁹⁸ The common theme throughout is twofold. First, there is a precise point in time where peace ends and war begins. In this case, April 18, 1775, with Paul Revere's warning about the approach of British soldiers. Second, war is portrayed in conventional terms. For example, little is mentioned about the guerilla war campaign in New Jersey prior to Washington's audacious attacks at Trenton and Princeton, or about the unconventional methods used during the Carolina Campaign later in the war, at least outside of the Carolinas. Lessons about the Civil War, World War I, and World War II are similar.⁹⁹ In context, bellum ligula is largely reserved for the college level, if taught at all to the general public at lower grade levels. As a result, from an early age American's are socialized to believe that there is an exact day when peace ends and war begins (Pearl Harbor) and that once war begins soldiers on the battlefield are the sole determinant of victory. These ideas are reinforced when soldiers raise their right hand to take the oath of service.

Primary socialization comes first whereas secondary socialization is typically associated with a career field.¹⁰⁰ This involves the inculcation of what Berger and Luckmann call "special knowledge," such as joining the profession of arms.¹⁰¹ In the Army, it is where the binary peace-war construct and the emphasis on LSCO at the expense of bellum ligula is ingrained. For instance, during Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC) young officer's learn about

⁹⁸ Kansas Department of Education, *Kansas History, Government, and Social Studies Standards* (Kansas, 2020), 120-166, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=s6aaq11LZjY%3d&tabid=472&portalid=0&mid=4744>. The author acknowledges that educational standards vary by state given the federal structure of the US Government. Instead, the point is to show how students from the earliest age are taught to view war through a peace-war lens and to think of war in terms of large-scale combat operations as opposed to bellum ligula methods of war.

⁹⁹ Kansas Department of Education, *Kansas History, Government, and Social Studies Standards*.

¹⁰⁰ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 150-158.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

offensive and defensive operations and conduct field training exercises such as team, squad, and platoon live fires exercises to reinforce their importance. They also prepare operations orders based on their role as a platoon leader in a high intensity conflict. What is clear, as the training program of instruction (POI) in Figure 4. shows, is that bellum ligula is rarely covered.¹⁰²

POI 5.0					
INDIVIDUAL/TEAM	WK 1	Inprocessing			
		HTWT	Initial ACFT	Intro to PRT	Entrance Exam
		ICOM In-Brief	Finance	(FM 7-22)	CIF Draw
	WK 2	Doctrinal Foundations			
		Initial SMR	Intro to ATP 3-21.8	Ethics Tng	Ldr Reaction Crs
	WK 3	M4 Weapons Qualification 1			
		TBL I, PM&E	TBL II, PLFS (EST2000)	4 mi FM	TBL III, Drills
				TBL IV, Basic (Zero)	TBL V, Practice
	WK 4	M4 Weapons Qualification 2			
		TBL VI, M4 Qual	Reflexive Fire	Buddy Tm LFX	
SMALL UNIT	WK 5	Land Navigation			
		Inst.	Land Nav Practice	Day Land Nav	Night Land Nav
				Transition Course	Retrain
	WK 6	Enablers			
		Cmbt Casualty Care	History of the Infantry	CEMA/Space Aviation	Engineers Logistics
				HPDTs	ARSOF
	WK 7	Pit Weapons Fam/Qual			
		MG Theory & PM&E	6 mi FM	M240 Qual	M249 Qual
					Hand Grenade M320/AT4
	WK 8	Squad Operations			
	Ethics Training	SQD FOOM	SQD BTL Drills	SQD STX (BD 1, 2A, 9)	
PLATOON	WK 9	Squad LFX			
		8 mi FM	SQD Blank/Live Fire	Fires TDE	MTR LFX
					Intro to Counsel/Evals
	WK 10	Basic Troop Leading Procedures			
		WARNO	OPORD Para 1&2	OPORD Para 3	OPORD Para 4&5
					OPORD Briefs
	WK 11	Intro to PLT Operations			
		Intro to PLT Tactics	10 mi FM	PLT STX (BD 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9)	
	WK 12	PLT Operations			
		Patrol Base OPS	ORP & LDR's Recon	PLT Attack Instruction	TLPs
				PLT ATK	
WK 13	Advanced Troop Leading Procedures				
	12 mi FM	OPORD 2 Production	OPORD 2 Grading	OPORD 2 Grading	
				Cmbt Lethality TEWT	
WK 14	Defensive Operations				
	EA DEV		EA DEV	CO Attack	
			CO TLPs	PLT Defend	
WK 15	Mounted Operations				
	SMR	BFV / ICV Fam BD 12, 13, 14	JCR Tng	CCTT Tng	
				Mntd FTX	
WK 16	Urban Operations (UO)				
	APFT	Intro to UO	PLT STX (BD 6)		
WK 17	Platoon LFX				
	ACFT	PLT Blank Day/Night	PLTs Live Day/Night	Ethics	
GRAD	WK 18	LEADER FORGE			
		TLPs	MTC	PLT ATK	EA Dev
					CO ATK
WK 19	Recovery & Graduation				
	Comp Exam	Iron Man Competition	RGR School Prep	Grad Run Dining In	
				Graduation	

Figure 4. IBOLC Program of Instruction. US Department of the Army, “Course Curriculum: Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC),” accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Infantry/199th/IBOLC/content/pdf/IBOLC%20Course%20Curriculum.pdf?19NOV2019>.

The Maneuver Captain’s Career Course (MCCC) at Fort Benning is little better at expanding the lens through which the force views war. As Figure 5 illustrates, students are

¹⁰² US Department of the Army, “Course Curriculum: Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC),” accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Infantry/199th/IBOLC/content/pdf/IBOLC%20Course%20Curriculum.pdf?19NOV2019>. The author completed this course in October 2008. Despite graduating amidst the war in Iraq and just prior to the surge in Afghanistan, the POI in Figure 3. is very similar.

expected to arrive familiar with offensive and defensive tasks, forms of maneuver, and the fundamentals of reconnaissance and security operations, among other LSCO dominant topics.¹⁰³ Again, the overwhelming majority of topics emphasize LSCO; bellum ligula is not a prerequisite. Instead, and similar to IBOLC, war is assumed to take place within a simple binary construct, while LSCO guides the mental model in which officers are trained. Overall, primary and secondary socialization helps explain why the Army is hesitant to embrace bellum ligula.

LSCO/Non-LSCO	Doctrinal Concepts
Focused	
Neutral	a. Troop Leading Procedures (ATP 3-21.10, FM 6-0)
LSCO	b. Tenets and Foundations of Unified Land Operations (ADRP 3-0)
Neutral	c. Steps of IPB (ATP 2-01.3)
Neutral	d. The mission statement (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	e. Decisive Point (ATP 3-21.10, ADRP 1-02)
LSCO	f. Offensive Tasks (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	g. Defensive Tasks (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	h. Characteristics of the Offense (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	i. Characteristics of the Defense (ATP 3-21.10)
Neutral	j. Levels of War (ADP 1-01)
LSCO	k. Fundamentals of Reconnaissance (3-90-2)
LSCO	l. Fundamentals of Security (FM 3-90-2)
LSCO	m. Principles of Direct Fire Control (ATP 3-90.1)
LSCO	n. Direct fire control measures and weapons control status (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	o. Forms of Maneuver (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	p. Movement formations and techniques (ATP 3-21.10)
LSCO	q. Tenets of breaching operations (ATP 3-90.4)
LSCO	r. Fundamentals of breaching (ATP 3-21.10)
Neutral	s. Elements of Combat Power and the Warfighting Functions (ADRP 3-0)
Neutral	t. Military Aspects of Terrain/OAKOC (ATP 2-01.3, ATP 3-21.10)
Neutral	u. Five paragraph operations order format (FM 6-0, ATP 3-21.10)
Neutral	v. Commander's Critical Information Requirements (ATP 3-21.10)
Neutral	w. The Mission Variables of METT-TC (ATP 3-21.10)

Figure 5. MCCC Entrance Exam Guide. US Department of the Army, “Maneuver Captains Career Course (MCCC) Entrance Exam Guide,” accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Infantry/199th/CATD/MCCC/content/pdf/MCCC%20Entrance%20Exam%20Study%20Guide.pdf?01JUL2018>.

Recommendations

According to Clausewitz, “the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on

¹⁰³ US Department of the Army, “Maneuver Captains Career Course (MCCC) Entrance Exam Guide,” accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Infantry/199th/CATD/MCCC/content/pdf/MCCC%20Entrance%20Exam%20Study%20Guide.pdf?01JUL2018>. The author completed this course in December 2011. The doctrinal concepts officers are expected to know in 2020 are similar to the ones they were expected to know before starting class in 2011.

which they are embarking.”¹⁰⁴ As the twenty-first century reaches its third decade, it appears the US Army has reached a far different conclusion on what the future of war entails than many of its adversaries. Below are some recommendations on how the Army can restore balance to doctrine and expand the lens through which it views warfare.

The cliché is somewhat antiquated, but the first step in the recovery process is to acknowledge the problem. As mentioned earlier, the Army’s operational doctrine and emerging concepts, major acquisition programs, as represented by the CFTs, and military education system are all weighted toward LSCO. Thus, the first recommendation is to achieve balance. That said, the author does not mean balance as defined by *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*.¹⁰⁵ Rather, balance is defined in terms of meeting the full range of threats listed in the NSS. For example, the addition of the term OOTW to Army doctrine in the early 1990s was a step in the right direction.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to today, the terms competition, hybrid, and gray zone are largely absent from the current version of FM 3-0. The addition of a chapter that captures the complexity of modern warfare, similar to the one chapter on OOTW during the early 1990s, would be a first step in expanding the lens through which the Army views warfare.

Further, the CFTs are narrowly focused on achieving overmatch in a high intensity conflict; however, what if Army senior leaders created a CFT to solve equally troublesome problems that take place during the competition phase of war? Outputs might not lead to materiel acquisitions, though a universal translator would certainly help in any conflict, but they would at least provide an official forum in which these discussions could take place. In terms of the authorities, or lack thereof, mentioned in MDO-2028, it might also lead to unity of action in both the Army and throughout the Joint Force to acquire those capabilities that are necessary to

¹⁰⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 594.

¹⁰⁵ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “balance,” accessed April 23, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/balance>. Merriam-Webster defines “balance” as stability produced by even distribution of weight on each side of a vertical axis.

¹⁰⁶ Kretchik, *US Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror*, 248-251.

compete short of war. Lastly, the Army’s professional education system (PME) must increase the learning objectives and content dedicated to bellum ligula. IBOLC and MCCC narrowly focus on LSCO, as examined above, while the Command and General Staff Officer Course does little better.¹⁰⁷ A solution is to mandate at least fifteen percent of course instruction and content, with specific learning objectives, focus on bellum ligula.¹⁰⁸ Overall, the end state is not to make soldiers experts on bellum ligula but to broaden the lens through which they view warfare.

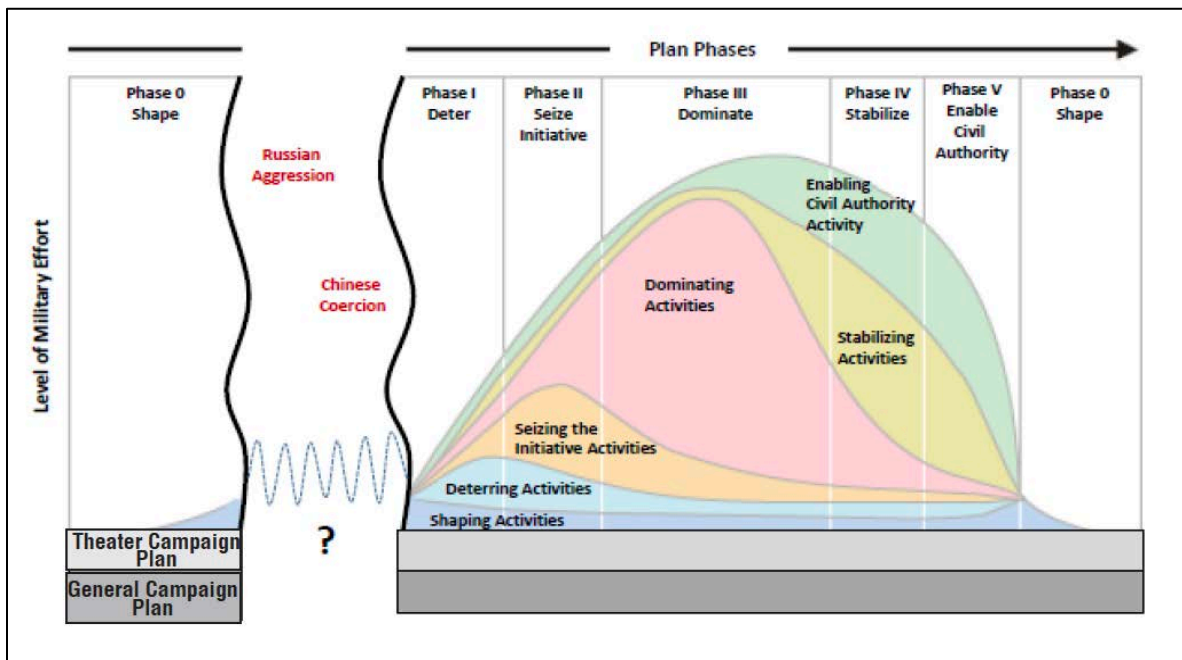


Figure 6. Notional Operation Plan Phases. Antulio J. Echevarria, *Operating in the Gray Zone: An Alternative Paradigm for US Military Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2016), 13.

The second recommendation is to revise the current phasing construct. As Antulio Echevarria argues, phasing “models should be based on actual practice, not ideals, that is on approximations rather than aspirations. Otherwise, they lead to cognitive dissonance between expectations and realities.”¹⁰⁹ The reality, as Echevarria indicates, is that Russia and China are

¹⁰⁷ The author graduated from the Command and General Staff Officer Course at Fort Leavenworth, KS, in June 2019. Overall, LSCO dominated the course content, with the exception of a reading assignment on the Gerasimov Doctrine and several readings on the Vietnam War.

¹⁰⁸ The author does not suggest that the Army’s PME system curriculum should be broken down in terms of percentages. Instead, the fifteen percent figure is a placeholder, with the expectation that further study is needed once Army Senior Leaders determine bellum ligula should be added to the coursework.

exploiting gaps in the West's conception of war.¹¹⁰ As argued earlier, the contemporary phasing construct is focused on preparing the force for and then "winning" in high intensity conflict. In other words, it does not facilitate the conceptual framework necessary to compete short of war. Figure 6, above, is the joint phasing model represented in FM 3-0, with the gaps Echevarria highlights annotated as "Russian Aggression" and "Chinese Coercion." Although Echevarria portrays them as taking place between Phase 0 and Phase 1, *bellum ligula* requires a more wholistic view. In short, to "make war without making war," the Army must adopt a phasing construct that expands rather than narrows the understanding of conflict. Figure 7, below, represents a different approach. Instead of a smooth transition from war to peace, with LSCO as a decisive event in the middle, it portrays LSCO as a spark in a sea of conflict. Rather than aspirations of how the Army would like to fight within a predetermined phasing construct, it includes the confusion and uncertainty of *bellum ligula*, while broadening the lens in which warfare is framed. At the same time, it overlays where FM 3-0, MDO, PME, and the CFTs fit within the Army's current framework. Lastly, it emphasizes the likelihood of each method of war, giving less credence to LSCO and more to those that take place "left of boom." The takeaway is that war is not bound by phasing constructs.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Antulio J. Echevarria, II, *Operating in the Gray Zone: An Alternative Paradigm for US Military Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2016), 12-15, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1013691.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

¹¹¹ Hoffman, "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges, 32."

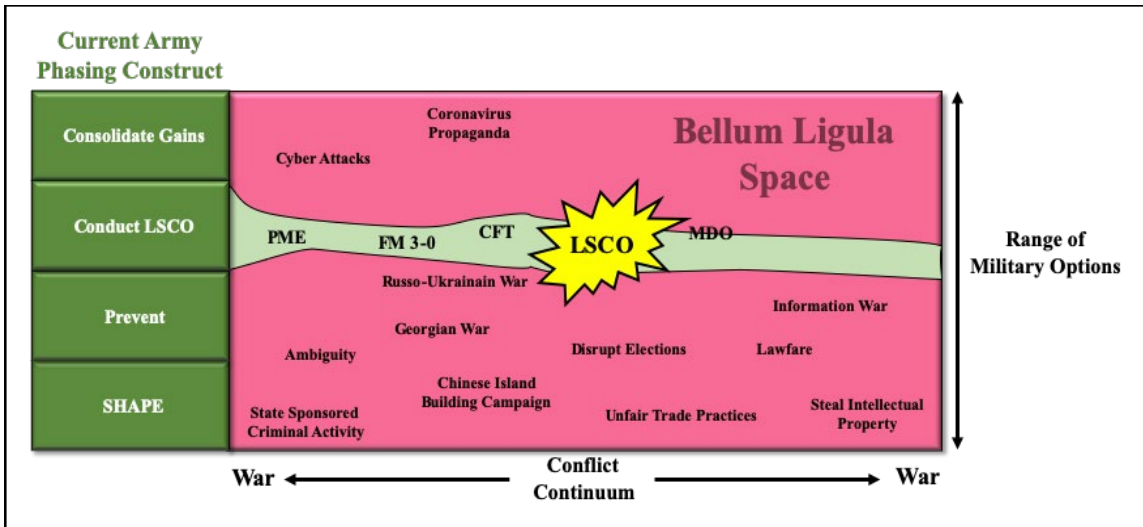


Figure 7. Notional Conflict Continuum with Army Phasing Construct. Created by author.

Conclusion

The interwar and post-Cold War eras are similar. Politically, the collapse of the Soviet Union was every bit as earth shattering as Germany’s surrender in late 1918. Technologically, continued advances in computing will likely be as life changing as airplanes, tanks, and radio communications were less than one-hundred years ago. Economically, the depression-laden 1930s serve as a stark reminder of how the economy is not only important to military readiness and innovation but also to global stability. Today, in contrast, a debt crisis over the next ten to twenty years is more likely than a depression, especially as the US Congress (and other nations) borrow trillions of dollars in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.¹¹² Doctrinally, the Army’s focus on LSCO resembles the British and French during the Interwar Period more so than the Germans. Together, as Williamson Murray succinctly points out, “we appear to be entering a time of political, strategic, and technological uncertainty; yet a period where the threats seem more

¹¹² Erica Werner, Mike DeBonis, Paul Kane, and Jeff Stein, “Congress, White House close in on \$2 trillion stimulus deal to blunt coronavirus fallout,” *Washington Post*, March 24, 2020, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2020/03/24/trump-coronavirus-congress-economic-stimulus/>.

indeterminate.”¹¹³ As Clausewitz presciently warned, what is the “spirit of our age” and how will we conform to it?¹¹⁴

Anticipating the future is difficult. Nostradamus got it right only because he got it wrong so many times. The Army does not have that luxury. As much as the author would like to speculate on the “spirit of our age” and how it might “predict” the future, it was not the purpose of this paper. Nor were idle prognostications on how advances in computing technology will upend the world---Ray Kurzweil’s “singularity” might happen or it might not.¹¹⁵ Either way, the future will unfold with an alacrity that will catch most of us off guard; just ask the day traders at the New York Stock Exchange on March, 2020.¹¹⁶ Instead, this paper is about balance and hedging bets. The future is less prediction or anticipation than maintaining freedom of action. To extrapolate from the military historian Michael Howard, it is not about getting it right but maintaining the ability to adjust once the shooting starts, which is why the current doctrinal imbalance within the Army is troubling.¹¹⁷

The central argument of this paper is that current Army operational doctrine underestimates those types of conflict that increasingly take place during the competition phase, what the author termed *bellum ligula* throughout. The result is doctrinal imbalance, with LSCO weighted more heavily than other types of conflict. The first section examined how the threat environment evolved over the past seventy-five years, arguing that the advent of nuclear weapons

¹¹³ Murray and Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 300.

¹¹⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 594.

¹¹⁵ Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (London, England: Penguin Books: 2005). Kurzweil argues that the “singularity,” what he describes as the fusion of humans and machines, will take place around 2045.

¹¹⁶ “Dow Jones Industrial Average: 1896-2020,” Trading Economics, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/stock-market>. The Dow Jones Industrial Average reached an all-time high of 29,068 on February 12, 2020. Over the next month it dropped 10,000 points, erasing all of the gains since the beginning of the Trump Administration.

¹¹⁷ Michael Howard, “Military Science in the Age of Peace,” *Royal United Services Institute* no. 3 (March 1974): 64.

and the ensuing Cold War disrupted a similar assessment to the one conducted by the British, French, and Germans after World War I. As a result, although doctrine evolved and technology advanced, conventional war remained the lens through states viewed conflict. When the Cold War ended states regained the autonomy to evaluate the threat environment and adjust accordingly. For the Army, the adjustments were minimal, with LSCO remaining the lens through which warfare was framed, while adversaries adopted a different approach---bellum ligula.

The second section examined the contemporary threat environment, using the Russo-Ukrainian War as a framework for how states adapted to American power in the post-Cold War era. It went on to suggest how bellum ligula challenges the Army's current operational framework at all levels of war. Lastly, it used Berger and Luckmann to explain why change is so difficult. In short, primary socialization early in life and secondary socialization as one transitions to the military make it difficult to broaden the lens through which warfare is framed.

Recommendations included revisions, if not removal altogether, of the strategic phasing construct and greater focus on bellum ligula throughout the Army PME system. Neither will solve the problem outright, but they are modest steps in the right direction. For further study, one might examine how to operationalize a whole-of-government approach. Peter Wilcox at the Modern War Institute offers a template in a recent article, though it was focused on the addition of an "information warfare directorate" to the National Security Council.¹¹⁸ Perhaps a similar directorate with accompanying authorities is needed to synchronize the Combatant Commands with the other aspects of national power. Ultimately, the Army (and America) must adapt to the changing character of war if it wants to continue its dominance over the international system.

¹¹⁸ Peter Wilcox, "The United States National Security Council Needs an Information Warfare Directorate," *Real Clear Defense*, December 12, 2019, accessed December 12, 2020, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/12/04/the_united_states_national_security_council_needs_an_information_warfare_directorate_114892.html.

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