

# A FORCE ORIENTATION FOR THE CONTINUUM OF CONFLICT

A Monograph

by

MAJ Daniel J. Squyres

United States Army



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

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Daniel J. Squyres

Monograph Title: A Force Orientation for the Continuum of Conflict

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Monograph Director  
Christopher Marsh, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Seminar Leader  
Michael R. Anderson, LTC(P)

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies  
Hank A. Arnold III, COL

Accepted this 22rd day of May 2014 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

A FORCE ORIENTATION FOR THE CONTINUUM OF CONFLICT,  
by MAJ Daniel J. Squyres, 44 pages.

The leadership of the U.S. Army is often criticized for its failure to anticipate the next conflict and structure itself accordingly. Recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan serve to many as examples of conflicts for which the U.S. Army was woefully unprepared and forced to pay a steep price in terms of blood and treasure for that unpreparedness. Additionally, many assert that we are at an historical inflection point and the U.S. Army should divorce itself from Cold War thinking and organize to meet these new threats.

Are such claims valid or are they merely the flavor of the day? This paper explores recent scholarship on the future of conflict to attempt to discern if the character of warfare is indeed changing and what those changes mean. It then continues to consider how those charged with providing for our nation's defense view future threats to U.S. security. Lastly, based on this exploration, it considers various threat orientations upon which to base the structure of the U.S. Army and some of their implications.

This paper is written during a time of budgetary austerity and decreased funding for our nation's military. This austerity requires important decisions on the part of our military and national leaders. However, as resources remain finite under all economic circumstances, this paper seeks to address questions of capability as opposed to those of capacity. The capacity of the U.S. Army can and will fluctuate with the strategic and economic times. But capabilities are the important question here. Can the army of the most powerful nation in the world afford to seek efficiencies of cost and scale by eliminating its ability to conduct certain kinds of conflict? Or is it required instead to maintain the ability to act across the entire continuum of conflict?

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## ACRONYMS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
CCJO	Combined Concept for Joint Operations
COIN	Counterinsurgency
DSCA	Defense Support to Civil Authorities
DoD	Department of Defense
LOAC	Law of Armed Conflict
SOF	Special Operations Forces
ULO	Unified Land Operations
USC	United States Code

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## INTRODUCTION

When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right. From Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iraq and more – we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged.

— Hon. Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense<sup>1</sup>

There has never been any shortage of futurists that speculate on the future of warfare and what the next war for the United States will look like. The current environment is no exception. Scholars, practitioners, and pundits all prognosticate regularly on what types of future conflicts the U.S. Army is most likely to face. Some contend that wars against non-state actors and other asymmetric threats represent the future of conflict and that the U.S. Army should focus its efforts accordingly. Others assert that while low-intensity combat operations may be the flavor of the day, defense planners are wise to take a broader view of history and accept that the threats posed by states and their more traditional combat forces still matter. Further, some contend that preparing for state threats represents the highest form of military preparedness and that forces so trained can easily adapt to lesser forms of hostilities. Indeed, some say the same thing about non-state threats. Regardless of what views the prognosticators advocate, however, most agree that the future of armed conflict is increasingly characterized by deepened complexity engendered by globalization, information technology, and potential resource scarcity.

It is against this backdrop that this monograph considers whether or not the current structure of the U.S. Army is appropriate to the future threats it is most likely to face. Building a military is not as simple as arming men and sending them on their way. Important decisions are made regularly with regard to what the army should look like, from recruitment to retention. In just the last year, the U.S. Army has announced not one, but two Brigade Combat Team

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Gates, “Address to West Point Cadets” (United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, February 2011), quoted in Micah Zenko, “100% Right 0% of the Time,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 16, 2012.

reorganizations and sweeping reforms to its Aviation fleet. Do these changes support a broader strategy focused on likely threats?

Manning levels, equipment fielding and maintenance, and readiness of forces based on training are the three primary variables the U.S. Army must juggle against time and money. Regardless of whether the U.S. Army is in a period of growth or contraction, decisions remain as to what threats to structure the force against for the simple reason that resources are always finite. Is the Army better served by orienting itself to confront non-state, or, for the purposes of this paper, “irregular” threats that consist of amorphous armed groups of varying levels of sophistication that are unlikely to adhere to existing borders? Or is the Army better served by organizing against a traditional state threat as these conflicts, though rare, are difficult to prepare for in terms of training and equipping and, after all, are the battles that determine the fates of nations. Perhaps a more moderate path is preferable. These decisions will directly determine whether or not the U.S. Army is postured to fight and win the next war.

Warfare must be treated as a continuum of armed conflict grounded in history and drawing from recent trends. This continuum spans all armed human conflict; from as low-order as terrorist criminal activity to as high-order as peer-state threats with robust conventional forces. While the U.S. Army can, and will, be optimized by military planners in various ways to enhance its ability to address threats concentrated at certain points along the spectrum that are deemed more likely, the Army must continue to retain the ability to fight and win against threats from across the continuum of conflict.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Considerable controversy exists within recent scholarship on the future of conflict. Some who have written on the matter, such as John Mueller and Joseph Nye, contend that there is a distinct trend in armed warfare characterized by decreases in both its scale and frequency. However, some such as Andreas Wimmer suggest that only the character of warfare is changing.

Conflicts brought about by nationalism and other factors internal to the ever-expanding nation-state system are as prevalent as ever. Both of these viewpoints have important implications for the utility of military force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

John Mueller is perhaps the primary proponent of the idea that warfare is decreasing in intensity and frequency (see Figure 1). Expanding on the work of David Singer and Melvin Small, whose statistical analysis of warfare from 1816 to 1965 represents a seminal text in the field<sup>2</sup>, Mueller asserts that warfare as mankind has known it throughout history is potentially approaching an end. Citing primarily changes in attitudes amongst developed nations beginning around World War I, Mueller asserts that much like dueling or slavery, warfare is a human institution whose time is coming to a close.<sup>3</sup> These assertions are supported primarily by the frequency in occurrence of a definition of war carried over from Singer and Small; an armed conflict between governments (in the case of international wars) or between a government and a somewhat organized domestic armed group (for civil wars) in which at least 1,000 people are killed.<sup>4</sup> While this rather broad definition includes conflicts of virtually every scale, everything from the World Wars to the Falklands War for instance, it has the obvious weakness of not including low intensity conflicts that do not reach the casualty threshold or civil conflicts among loosely organized groups. That said, while he clearly identifies the phenomenon of a pronounced decrease in war as he and others have defined it, he concludes with no assurances that this trend will continue into the future and extols the need for effective governance as mankind's principal tool for preventing war's reemergence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War, 1816-1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972).

<sup>3</sup>John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>John Mueller, "War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2009): 298.

<sup>5</sup>Mueller, *The Remnants of War*.

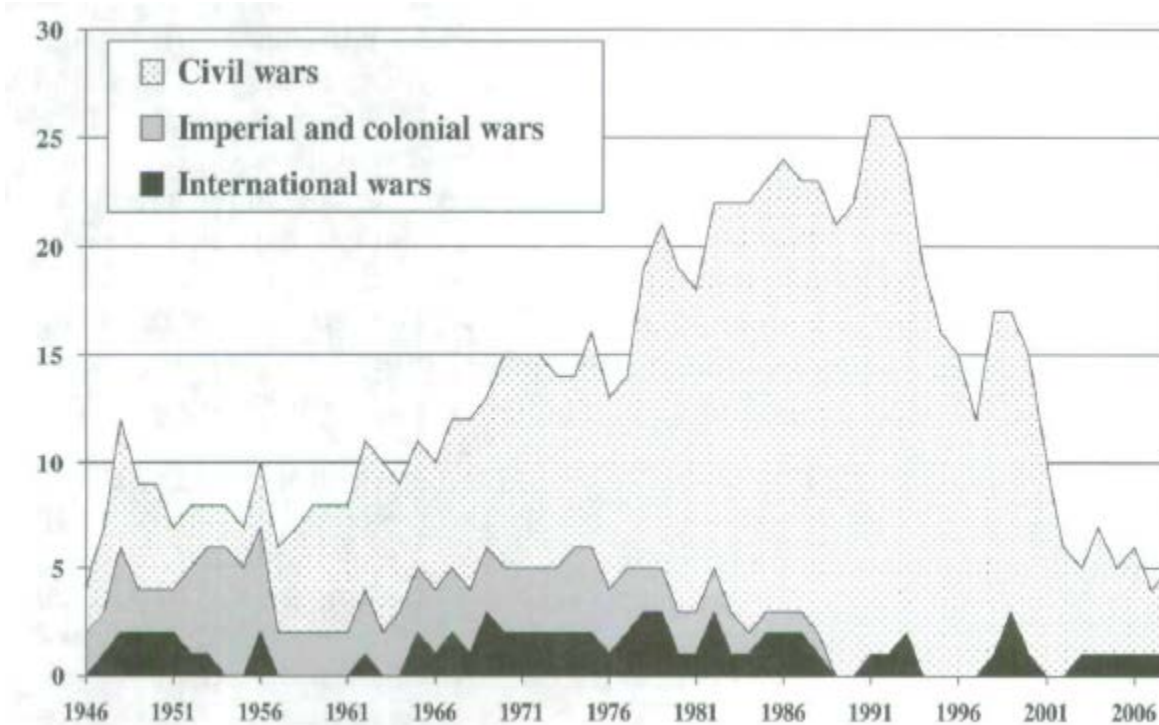


Figure 1: Ongoing Wars by Year, 1946 to 2008.

Source: John Mueller, “War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 124, no. 2 (2009): 301.

Joseph Nye is another important author in this field who generally supports the idea of warfare’s obsolescence, though not nearly as optimistically as Mueller. Known primarily for his articulation of concepts of soft power, he also clearly highlights the phenomenon of reduction in high-intensity state-on-state conflict based on the post-industrial world-order of liberal democracies. Writing about power in the international system generally, and the functions of specific levers such as economic and military force within it, Nye focuses on the diffusion of power from nation-states to non-state groups and potential conflicts that may arise from this asymmetry. Interestingly, and perhaps counter-intuitively, he goes on to assert that while there are fewer calls for military force in an international system of liberalizing nation-states, it is a fallacy to think that there is no longer a call for military force as the military is the only state entity capable of exerting influence across all elements of national power. Stopping short of Mueller’s

prediction of governance as the world's stabilizing influence going forward, Nye asserts that diffusion of power made possible by information technology will be the defining characteristic of the international environment in the near future.<sup>6</sup>

Andreas Wimmer, particularly in his work *Waves of War: Nationalism, State Formation, and Ethnic Exclusion in the Modern World*, represents an interesting contrast to the work of both Nye and Mueller.<sup>7</sup> While he ultimately arrives at similar conclusions, at least regarding the decrease in state-on-state conflict, he gets there along a much different path and draws much less optimistic conclusions. Arguing that the changes in the interstate system are much more a function of the influence of nationalism than is generally appreciated, he portrays a future characterized primarily by intra-state conflict brought about by internal ethnic and national divisions within the established boundaries of states as defined by the prevailing international system basis of nation-states. He points out that as larger and larger areas have been organized as autonomous nation-states, wars of conquest and inter-state wars have dramatically decreased while ethnic and nationalist wars have proportionally increased. Additionally, he highlights the changes in the frequency and types of conflict a given nation-state engages in as it moves closer to and beyond formal incorporation. Unfortunately, Wimmer fails to aggregate the data. He neglects to provide raw information regarding the overall state of incorporation of the world into the nation-state system and draw conclusions from the aggregated information. That aside, his work does generally support the idea of a reduction in state-on-state conflict, just in a somewhat different way than Mueller or Nye. Wimmer, however, cautions that inter-state and non-secessionist civil wars are likely to continue for some time.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

<sup>7</sup>Andreas Wimmer, *Waves of War: Nationalism, State Formation, and Ethnic Exclusion in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

### A Different Perspective

While there are many authors today who recognize a trend of decreasing frequency and intensity in armed conflict, particularly as it relates to the historical convention of state-on-state warfare, Colin S. Gray stands nearly alone as an author and strategist who argues in opposition to those views. Over the course of several works, he consistently cautions contemporary readers against historical trend spotting and concluding that any reduction in large-scale, armed hostilities is likely but a historical blip. Three of his works in particular prove illustrative and eloquent with regard to this paper's purposes.

First, Gray's *Another Bloody Century*, published in 2005, sets the basis of his argument against historical "trendspotters."<sup>9</sup> In this text he effectively argues that, given the unpredictable and non-linear nature of human events, historical perspective is the only defense afforded the contemporary scholar and strategist.<sup>10</sup> Further highlighting that trends historically come in bunches and interact unpredictably, Gray asserts defense planners are better served by distilling general themes from human history rather than attempting to project recent trends into an unknowable future.<sup>11</sup> To that end, he offers that war is a permanent feature of the human condition that, while it is ever-changing in character, remains fixed in nature and thus provides us some idea of what to reasonably expect. While irregular warfare may well be the flavor of the day, there is ample historical evidence to support that this trend could quickly reverse and state-on-state conflict could reassume primacy in the near future.<sup>12</sup> Based on this, he goes on to assert

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<sup>9</sup>Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (New Haven, CT: Phoenix, 2005), 33.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 13-22.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 24-35, 171.

that defense analysts and policymakers, particularly those in the U.S., are best served in retaining a broad array of capabilities to deal with the complex phenomenon of warfare.<sup>13</sup>

To further underscore his ideas regarding the utility of military force given the unpredictable nature of human conflict, Gray, in his work titled *Hard and Soft Power: The Utility of Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, expands his argument to take on those who assert “soft power” as a humanitarian (and less costly) means of expanding and protecting U.S. national interests. Conceding that budgetary realities and the increased difficulty in employing hard, or military, power in the contemporary operating environment diminishes hard power’s utility to an extent, he nevertheless goes on to assert that hard power has by no means lost its place as an instrument of foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, he goes on to attack the only alternative, soft power, on the grounds that it is deeply problematic and unpredictable to employ, is by no means co-equal in utility with hard power, and is really only understandable as a concept with respect to what it is not – hard power.<sup>15</sup> Based on this, he reemphasizes his stance that despite its costs and requirements for strong justification in today’s operating environment, hard power retains much of the utility it has ever had and to suggest that it is somehow being replaced by the problematic concept of soft power is historically near-sighted and likely irresponsible.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, in his work *Categorical Confusion? The Strategic Implications of Recognizing Challenges Either as Irregular or Traditional*, Gray challenges whether or not our continued insistence on categorizing conflicts as “irregular” or “traditional,” or any number of sub-components thereof, is intellectually paralyzing and degrades our ability to address them effectively. As he continues to assert that the future is unknowable – made so by the multitude of

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<sup>13</sup>Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 42-187.

<sup>14</sup>Colin S. Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, April 2011), vi.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 1-28.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 21-42.

potential players and competing interests – Gray contends it is unhealthy for the global superpower to be ready to fight irregular, regular and hybrid wars as these terms are intellectually porous and to orient our thinking on tactical as opposed to strategic considerations.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, he argues that attempts to theorize about sub-species of war, or “granular conceptualization”, are only effective in situations in which we can be crystal clear about all facets of the threat we face – an exceptionally rare occurrence.<sup>18</sup> By over-intellectualizing challenges and privileging disaggregation through categorical exclusivity, the big picture is chronically relegated to the background; in effect, the forest is lost for the trees.<sup>19</sup> Instead, policymakers and defense practitioners are far better served theorizing generally about potential threats and warfare in sum as, to his mind, “different wars may be perceived to be of different kinds, but they are *all* of them different kinds.”<sup>20</sup> The thrust of his argument, that irregular, traditional or hybrid challenges must first be approached as political, *then* as grand strategic challenges, before they are ever treated as military threats, has deep significance for this paper’s purposes. If defense planners accept, as Gray contends, that the detail of strategic history is always in motion but its larger narratives are not, they are forced to conclude (as he does) that warfare should be treated as a unified body of phenomena with a single defining concept.<sup>21</sup>

The implications of Gray’s work are far-reaching and meaningful with regard to the force structure and potential uses of the U.S. Army. If the trend toward reduction in large-scale hostilities constitutes an historical anomaly, then there is no choice but to prepare for state-on-state conflict. Since soft power has not even begun to supplant, and can never replace, hard power

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<sup>17</sup>Colin S. Gray, *Categorical Confusion? The Strategic Implications of Recognizing Challenges Either as Irregular or Traditional* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, February 2012), 22-26.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 42, 56.



as a tool of foreign policy, then military force maintains its relevance and should be retained. Additionally, over-categorization of conflict is a potentially lethal distraction that could conceivably force defense planners to create a military that can deal with an impossibly broad spectrum of possible threats and scenarios. Thus, in accordance with Gray's logic, defense planners should create and maintain an Army that is not all that different from the one of today.

#### A Quantative Review of Conflict

In considering the future of conflict, it is perhaps worthwhile to examine its recent past more critically. Seeking to quantitatively analyze military conflict as conducted by major nation-states since World War II, Patricia Sullivan and Michael Koch provide an eminently useful evaluation of just that topic in their co-authored article "Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003."<sup>22</sup> Their work provides an informative analysis of what military intervention by major actors has looked like during the time considered and whether or not that intervention has been effective.

Limiting their analysis to the military activities of the nation-states of the U.S., Great Britain, France, Russia and China, Sullivan and Koch apply a definition of military intervention as a use of armed force that involves the official deployment of at least 500 regular military personnel (ground, air, or naval) to attain immediate-term political objectives through action against a foreign adversary.<sup>23</sup> Based on this definition, the authors assert that the five states in question have conducted 126 military interventions in the period described. The U.S. in particular is responsible for 35 such interventions or 28% of the total, the most among states examined (see table 1). France is the second most active power accounting for 29 operations or 23 percent, and

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<sup>22</sup>Patricia L. Sullivan and Michael T. Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003," *Journal of Peace Research*, 46, no. 5 (September 2009): 707-718.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 709.

China is the least active with only 17 reflected in the data.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, based on an average of just over one intervention every two years, the U.S. is utilizing its hard power at a much greater rate than the other states considered.

Table 1. Military Interventions by Powerful States 1945-2003

	U.S.	Britain	France	Russia	China	Totals
No. of Interventions	35	25	28	18	17	126
Percent of Total	27.77%	19.84%	22.22%	14.28%	13.49%	

*Source: Data adapted from Patricia L. Sullivan and Michael T. Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003," Journal of Peace Research, 46, no. 5 (September 2009): 709.*

Considering more than the number of military interventions conducted, the authors also examine the purposes for which the interventions were undertaken. Conceiving of interventions in Clausewitzian terms, the study makes a point of considering the political objectives for which military action was utilized. By defining the term political objective as “the allocation of a valued good (e.g., territory, political authority, or resources) sought by the political leaders of a state or of a non-state organization,” an interesting pattern emerges.<sup>25</sup> Of the 126 total conflicts considered, the highest frequency, 36 or 29 percent, was to maintain the authority of a foreign regime (see table 2). A very close second at 35 instances accounting for 28 percent is the acquisition or defense of territory. Rounding out the remaining approximately 40 percent are, in order: maintenance of empire; compelling a governmental policy change; removal of a foreign

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<sup>24</sup>Sullivan and Koch, “Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003,” 709.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 710.

regime; and to provide social protection and order.<sup>26</sup> What is striking about these data is the wide distribution between what are generally considered to be different types of conflict. When thinking of armed conflict since 1945 one does not expect conflicts conducted to “acquire or defend territory,” a classic nation-state *casus belli*, to be the second most frequent political objective. In fact, the study reports that a non-state actor was the primary target of military interventions in 61, or just under 50 percent, of the cases analyzed. This fact, of course, contrasts with a non-state actor having been the target of just over 50 percent of interventions.<sup>27</sup>

Table 2. Political Objective and Type of Target

	Number	State Target	Non-State Target
Maintain Regime Authority	34	5	29
Remove Foreign Regime	12	12	
Policy Change	16	14	2
Acquire or Defend Territory	35	28	7
Maintain Empire	16		16
Protection and Order	10	2	8
% Totals		49.59%	50.4%

*Source: Data adapted from Sullivan and Koch, “Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003,” 711-715.*

<sup>26</sup>Sullivan and Koch, “Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003,” 711.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 709.

As the authors established an almost even split in the principle actors between nation-state and non-state actor, they then moved to the question of the effectiveness of the interventions examined; a difficult topic as results on the world's stage are not often static (see table 3). The authors chose to define success as the attainment of the political objective, then used a sliding temporal scale to determine the duration of the desired conditions. For instance, in 69 percent of military interventions the authors reported the intervening state attains and maintains its political objective for at least six months; a significant majority that speaks to the efficacy of military intervention.<sup>28</sup> However, when more time is applied the results begin to change. At one year the percentage drops to 63 percent and, after three or more years, the percentage drops to 52 percent of cases.<sup>29</sup>

Of deepest significance is possibly how successful the major powers considered have been with regard to the different political objectives (see table 3). Since interventions are only lastingly successful in 52 percent of cases, what does this mean to a military or political audience? Defining their success criteria as achievement of the political objective plus one year, the authors offer some interesting conclusions with regard to what some consider different types of conflict. The political objectives most likely to meet with success are the defense of an allied government against a foreign state (100 percent) and the overthrow of a foreign regime (92 percent). The relevant objectives least likely to meet with success are forcing a governmental policy change (29 percent) and maintaining order against a non-state target (50%), a result confirmed by several recent U.S. actions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Sullivan and Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003," 713.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 713-14.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 715.

Military conflicts, despite the prognostications of some, are still very much with us. As the data provided by this study supports, conflicts of a state-on-state variety are nearly equally likely among the world’s major powers as are those oriented against a non-state actor. While whether or not the conflicts considered could have been resolved by other means is clearly beyond the present study’s scope, the fact that military interventions are successful in support of their political objectives up to and beyond three years in 52 percent of cases speaks to the utility of military or “hard” power. It may not be a glowing success rate, and it is clearly dimmer in some areas than others, but military force will likely remain the most effective tool in some scenarios.

Table 3. Achievement of Political Objective Plus Twelve Months

	Number	State Target	% Successful	Non-State Target	% Successful
Maintain Regime Authority	34	5	100%	29	69%
Remove Foreign Regime	12	12	92%	n/a	
Policy Change	16	14	25%	2	0%
Acquire or Defend Territory	35	28	71%	7	71%
Maintain Empire	16	n/a		16	44%
Protection and Order	10	2	50%	8	50%
% Totals		49.59%	67%	50.4%	59%

Source: Data adapted from Sullivan and Koch, “Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003,” 715.

## WHAT THE PRACTICIONERS THINK

Any attempt to determine whether or not the structure of the U.S. Army is appropriate to the contemporary and future international environment necessarily relies on the scholarship and commentary of many organizations and individuals. After all, the Army represents but a single arm of the larger U.S. military establishment, which itself is but a single tool of U.S. foreign policy. U.S. policymakers then expect this tool to be able to achieve objectives that are often impossible to know in advance and may, or may not, be connected in an obvious way to an enduring, over-arching national strategy. It is potentially useful in the pursuit of an answer, then, to ask what those tasked to provide that Army and ensure it is consonant with current and future U.S. strategic objectives have to say on the subject. In order to do this, it is perhaps illuminating to canvas some of the strategic documents the military uses to shape its organization and cognitive approaches to the attainment of national objectives. In this light, this paper will consider the following: *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*; *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*; *Strategic Landpower White Paper: Winning the Clash of Wills*; and *A Statement On the Posture of the United States Army 2013*.

While by no means meant to constitute a comprehensive examination of the strategic documents that govern the composition and likely uses of the U.S. Army, this review provides an understanding of the current and future operating environment projected by defense officials, an answer to the question of what the Army is for, and rough guidelines that can be interpreted to articulate the defense professional's vision of an appropriate army structure. Additionally, the documents describe where that Army is today and how it can best transform to meet potential future requirements.

### *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*

*Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense* is currently the most important strategic document with regard to the role of U.S. military power in the larger

context of U.S national strategy.<sup>31</sup> Authored by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and signed by both the President and Secretary of Defense, the document attempts to describe the DoD's vision of the future operating environment, articulates the rationale behind a strategic pivot to the Pacific, and orients the military on retaining the ability to defeat an enemy in a large-scale operation and deny success in a second. Apparent in the title, the document acknowledges that the U.S. has played a leading role in shaping the international system over the last sixty years and asserts that the U.S. will work to ensure continued U.S. global leadership.<sup>32</sup>

The document's projection of the future describes an environment characterized by uncertainty and complexity. Describing changes brought about by the diffusion of destructive technologies to non-state actors, the proliferation of communications technology, and increasingly complex economic interactions, the document directs a comprehensive U.S. governmental approach to international issues in which all elements of U.S. power are applied.<sup>33</sup> While clearly projecting a future in which military force is required, the document paints the picture of a murky, deeply interconnected future that is host to threats multitudinous in both number and variety. It is the combination of rise of non-state actor power and the increased availability of "destructive technologies" that makes the future both so dangerous and so difficult to project.

The document additionally makes the assertion that the U.S. must rebalance strategically toward the Pacific. This shift is based largely on the document's projections of increased interconnectedness and rising threats, the imminent conclusion of combat operations in Afghanistan, and the understanding that fiscal realities will compel a reduction in U.S. military

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<sup>31</sup>Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2012), 1-4.

<sup>32</sup>Secretary of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, foreward.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-4.

force size that necessitates reprioritization.<sup>34</sup> The document does maintain that the U.S. will remain globally engaged, particularly in the Middle East. However, the document contends that interests of economics, peace, and stability depend largely on an underlying balance of military power.<sup>35</sup> While the document never explicitly states that the military power required to produce this foundation is American by definition, the implication of that fact is clear enough.

Perhaps the most significant idea contained in this document is its prescription of the aggregate capability of the U.S. military. To wit: “As a nation with important interests in multiple regions, our forces must be capable of deterring and defeating aggression by an opportunistic adversary in one region even when our forces are committed to a large-scale operation elsewhere.”<sup>36</sup> It is important to attempt to derive logical conclusions from this statement as the document does not go into much more detail on the matter. The first in significance, but last in order of presentation, is a logical interpretation of the idea of “large-scale”. As U.S. troop presence remains unabated in the Korean peninsula, as opposed to Europe, and nowhere does the document renounce the idea of future U.S. state-on-state conflict, a full-scale conflict with a state such as North Korea seems a logical reference point for this idea.

Also, the document is ambiguous with regard to its descriptions of “an opportunistic adversary in one region.” The document does later go on to clarify that the objectives in a lesser theater would be less than total defeat – i.e., denying objectives or imposing unacceptable cost – however the make-up of the potential adversary is absent. While this is understandable given the unpredictability of future events, the statement has serious implications as the capabilities of a state such as Iran are far in excess of those of a powerful warlord in Africa. While the reality is

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Secretary of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, 2.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 4.



likely somewhere in between, as the document offers no more guidance on the issue, it creates serious ambiguity for those charged with shaping military forces.

The document does provide other force composition guidance such as being able to guarantee the global commons and that U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations, although omitting any other prescriptive guidance.<sup>37</sup> That said, this fact may be considered entirely appropriate for strategic guidance at the highest levels. The predominant theme of the document is that global stability is America's primary security interest and that we will remain globally engaged militarily despite reductions in the military's size.

*Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*

*Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*<sup>38</sup> (CCJO) echoes many of the ideas contained in *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, but also provides some much-needed fidelity, particularly with regard to how the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs sees the Joint Force reorienting in an era of decreasing budgets. Significant to this document is the Chairman's vision of the future operating environment, his conception of the role of the U.S. military, and the means he feels the military will require to carry out his vision.

The CCJO opens by describing a security paradox that asserts that while the world is trending toward greater stability, destructive technologies are proliferating to a wider array of potential adversaries resulting in a world that is more dangerous to U.S. interests than ever before.<sup>39</sup> The CCJO further contends that while war remains a clash between hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, the new global political environment distinguished by worldwide flows of capital, material, people, and information highly complicates the geography

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<sup>37</sup>Secretary of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, 5.

<sup>38</sup>The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 10 September 2012).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

of threats.<sup>40</sup> All combined, the future will be defined by a security environment that is more unpredictable, complex, and dangerous than today.<sup>41</sup> Troubling for defense planners, this projected complexity can likely be expected to engender conflicts that are more difficult to anticipate, not only with regard to their physical locations, but also their characteristics and implications.

Critical to the CCJO is the Chairman's assertion of the purpose of the U.S. military. Specifically, the CCJO contends that it is the role of the U.S. military to keep America immune from coercion.<sup>42</sup> This is a simple yet enormously powerful idea that can only be uttered seriously in the United States. The extent to which anyone can prove such a statement would be a highly theoretical exercise well beyond the scope of this paper. However, the intent of the statement is clear enough. The Chairman intends the U.S. military to retain such material overmatch as to not be seriously challenged by any potential adversary. Acknowledging that fiscal austerity brought about by reducing budgets requires a reexamination of U.S. force structure in order to adapt to the changing operating environment the document describes, the Chairman suggests that a concept he terms *globally integrated operations* is the best path to maintaining the immunity the document describes.<sup>43</sup> He envisions a U.S. Joint Force characterized by global presence that is able to quickly aggregate to overwhelmingly address worldwide contingencies regardless of domain or organizational affiliation.

In continuing to describe the concept of *globally integrated operations*, the CCJO makes certain assumptions that are critical to future force structure. Acknowledging that budgetary realities will have significant bearing on the future force, the document describes the challenge

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>42</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*, 3.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

for the U.S. as determining how the Joint Force with constrained resources will protect U.S. national interests against increasingly capable enemies in an uncertain, complex, rapidly changing, and increasingly transparent world.<sup>44</sup> Further, that the aforementioned resource constraint coupled with advances in adversary capabilities brought about by the proliferation of information technologies and possibly weapons of mass destruction will result in a narrowing capability gap between the U.S. and its future adversaries.<sup>45</sup> Also, that increased transparency brought about by those same information technologies will compel future U.S. forces to be much more precise in their application of force. As a result, massed combat formations will remain a military option, but increasingly not the option of choice.<sup>46</sup>

In sum, the document asserts that the future operating environment for U.S. military force is characterized by increased complexity, budgetary limitations that compel reductions in force structure, increased transparency that limits military options, and increasingly capable enemies. This said, how do U.S. strategic land forces, particularly the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Special Operations Forces, and the U.S. Army see themselves addressing threats from such an environment?

*Strategic Landpower White Paper: Winning the Clash of Wills*

To address this question, the three U.S. land components formed the Strategic Landpower Task Force in January of 2013 and charged it with critically examining the role of U.S. landpower in the context of the future the CCJO describes. Acknowledging that U.S. material overmatch is not sufficient to produce conflict outcomes that are consonant with U.S. policy objectives, the Landpower Task Force set about work in determining what strategic and operational approaches with regard to strategic landpower are likely to produce desired results. Or, in their words, “this

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>45</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*, 5.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 4.

intellectual journey will help inform the Defense establishment's thinking on better integrating human factors into the planning and execution of military operations to achieve enduring outcomes."<sup>47</sup> While still early in their work, the Landpower Task Force has already produced interesting insights into the future of U.S. warfare. These insights, to date, are recorded in their *Strategic Landpower White Paper: Winning the Clash of Wills* and endorsed by the Army Chief of Staff, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.<sup>48</sup> The central tenets endorsed by this committee and contained in the document are the description of and focus on the "human domain" in military operations, the continued relevance of landpower in disaster relief missions, and the necessity of maintaining both the capacity and capability of all U.S. landpower components in order to achieve strategic success in future operations.

The concept of a "human domain" in conflict provides the basis for meaningful conclusions in the paper. The document defines armed conflict in Clausewitzian terms, specifically as a "violent clash of competing interests between or among organized groups, each attempting to impose their will on the opposition."<sup>49</sup> The document offers the supporting contentions that conflict is a fundamentally human endeavor and that technology alone is not sufficient to produce lasting outcomes in such an environment. Further, the document contends that strategic landpower is the force best able to create the conditions for lasting strategic outcomes due to landpower's ability to more directly, persistently, and comprehensively influence the human aspect of current and future conflicts. While the document clearly appreciates that increasing complexity characterizes the future of conflict, it argues that resolution

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<sup>47</sup>General Raymond Odierno, General James Amos, and Admiral William McRaven, *Strategic Landpower White Paper: Winning the Clash of Wills* (Fort Eustis, VA: Army Capabilities Integration Center, 2013), Foreward.

<sup>48</sup>*Strategic Landpower White Paper*, 2013.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

of conflict on terms that are favorable to U.S. strategic objectives takes place in the “human domain” and that this fact will become increasingly true over time.<sup>50</sup>

Another important tenet of the *Strategic Landpower White Paper* is its advocacy of American Landpower’s role in operations outside of the traditional combat paradigm. Specifically, the document references the role of U.S. landpower in maintaining international order outside of direct conflict and providing disaster relief. The document is unclear, however, in exactly how it is that U.S. strategic landpower serves to maintain international order. The nearest example of such a justification in the document is a brief and related allusion to the Cold War, which is most likely a subtle attempt to refer to a deterrent effect produced by a sizable land force.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, little indication is made of which potential adversaries present a threat credible enough to warrant such a considerable strategic deterrent. This is particularly problematic as the document does go to lengths to highlight the threats posed by non-state actors and other diffuse and complex potential adversaries. Also highlighted are humanitarian and disaster relief missions that the document contends are certain to increase in frequency and intensity.<sup>52</sup> This concept of future uses of the America’s strategic landpower correlates well with Joseph Nye’s observation that military power is the only tool available to the U.S. Government that is capable of operating across the entire spectrum of power and is a compelling justification for strategic landpower.<sup>53</sup> While the goodwill engendered by such uses of American power are difficult to measure, employment of strategic landpower for purposes of humanitarian or disaster relief are much more palatable to U.S. decision-makers than are combat operations.

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>51</sup>*Strategic Landpower White Paper*, 7.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>53</sup>Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 42.

Lastly, the document points to what its authors consider the necessity of maintaining the capability and capacity of U.S. landpower. The document argues that the world has shifted from the bipolar world of the Cold War to a multi-polar world of diffuse power and low barriers to entry to potential threats who seek access to information and destructive technologies. Further, the paper argues increasing complexity, rapidity of operations, and public sensitivity due to the widespread access to information characterize this evolving international climate. It is entirely logical in such a climate that military professionals would advocate for maintaining the capacity of U.S. landpower, particularly when one considers the historical U.S. tendency to downsize in post-conflict environments. That part of the intent of the *Strategic Landpower White Paper* is to justify the existence of a considerable, standing U.S. landpower force is beyond question and entirely reasonable when considered from the perspective of those officials responsible for ensuring continued U.S. national defense in the face of an uncertain and ever-evolving future.

Thus, the *Strategic Landpower White Paper* makes several insightful points with regard to the human element of conflict and the utility and uniqueness of strategic landpower. The old saw that land is where the people are is clearly evident in the underlying logic of this paper. Further, the document is a welcome call for U.S. strategies that go beyond the battlefield and attempt to connect military strategies to the grand strategy of the U.S. Government. However, the document also reads like much of its intent is to articulate a case to maintain U.S. strategic landpower forces at their current manning levels without providing much substance to support this idea. The document projects a future in which it explains how strategic landpower can “achieve enduring outcomes,” but in failing to articulate and substantiate the threats to these outcomes the document is guilty of advocating capability for its own sake. While it is certainly true that an argument can be made that in the face of an uncertain future, military planners in particular can and should advocate maintaining as many options as possible. But in so doing, and as is certainly done in the context of the *Strategic Landpower White Paper*, potential military

threats are the only threats to U.S. strategic objectives considered. In choosing so narrow a view, the authors of the *Strategic Landpower White Paper* are guilty of committing the strategic error they are trying to prevent: failing to think beyond the battlefield.

*A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2013*

If the previous documents under consideration can be interpreted as being more conceptual in nature, the U.S. Army's annual *Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2013* is a much more pragmatic document.<sup>54</sup> While it is clearly a bit of an advertisement for some of the capabilities the U.S. Army feels it possesses uniquely, the *Statement* is also tempered with the reserve of a force facing a mandated drawdown.

The document wastes little time in referring to the fiscal constraints placed upon the Army by the Budget Control Act of 2011, more commonly referred to as "sequestration," and the possible implications of budgetary short-falls. In fact, the document's second paragraph states that the "Army's ability to perform" its vital role in support of Afghanistan and other contingencies and "field a ready and capable force that meets missions requirements, has been placed at risk by fiscal challenges in FY13."<sup>55</sup> This budgetary austerity is commonly considered to manifest itself as a requirement to re-balance force structure, readiness, and modernization in an effort to accomplish current missions as well as posture for future ones. In simple language, budget reductions are forcing decision makers to prioritize between numbers of soldiers and organizations, training for those forces, and efforts to acquire new or modernize existing equipment. The *Statement* revisits this theme several times, both in the document's opening pages as well as when it states that the Army's ability to perform its missions will "inevitably be

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<sup>54</sup>The Honorable John M. McHugh and General Raymond T. Odierno, *A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2013* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army, 2013), 1.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

degraded.”<sup>56</sup> With regard to Army end-strength, the *Statement* indicates a requirement to reduce up to 200,000 personnel across the active, guard, and reserve components over the next ten years, a loss of the ability to perform its missions, and threats to acquisition priorities.<sup>57</sup>

While it is perhaps not the purpose of the *Statement* to specify a plan for reductions in force, it is just as notable for what it does not say as it is for what it does. The *Statement* clearly acknowledges that a reduction in force is underway, but it makes no mention of what this reduction means with regard to the structure of the force or the missions it can carry out. The same can be said with regard to readiness or modernization impacts. In short, *A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2013* is mostly a cautionary document for law-makers as to what continued budgetary reduction might mean for the U.S. Army.

#### Conclusions

Common to all of these documents is the idea of increasing complexity in world affairs in general and military operations in particular. Diffusion of power, globalization, the spread of information technologies, and the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are all conspiring to create an operating environment in which threats are more numerous and conflicts much more difficult to anticipate. Each of these documents represents an attempt to address these factors in an environment of decreasing budgetary resources and prioritization challenges. When considered together, these documents provide a framework upon which to orient the U.S. Army. The *Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense* specifies the requirement to be able to fight a war and a half and pivot resources toward the Pacific. The CCJO provides a philosophy for carrying out the orientation outlined in *Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. The *Strategic Landpower White Paper*, with its emphasis of the idea of a “human domain,” provides a cognitive approach as to how

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>57</sup>McHugh and Odierno, *A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2013*, 5.



strategic success is achieved with landpower. And, lastly, the *Army Posture Statement* provides stark warnings that all of these might be under threat due to precipitous budgetary shortfalls.

What these documents do not consider is the type of force required to meet their objectives. There is much discussion of end-strength and modernization, but none of the Army's design. What type of Army will best meet these challenges of complexity and globalization?

## ARMY STRUCTURE

Having considered what scholars and practitioners project for the future of conflict, it is important now to apply those viewpoints in a practical way. That is, defense planners must consider the implications of those viewpoints relative to the structure of the U.S. Army in order to assess whether or not the current structure is appropriate to the environment in which it is likely to be employed by political leaders. As Frank G. Hoffman argues, in a perfect world the U.S. Army would have robust forces optimized to fight in every discernibly different mission across the spectrum of conflict.<sup>58</sup> Since this is unrealistic in a time of decreasing budgets and waning support for current U.S. military obligations, however, defense planners must consider the merits of a force of compromise. In other words, planners must consider an Army structure oriented on likely future threats and optimized to defeat them and produce favorable strategic outcomes.

The remainder of this monograph will consider three basic primary orientations for force structure: irregular threat focus; traditional threat focus; and hybrid threat focus. While the various structures are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the differences inherent in placing the weight of effort and resources against each of these threats are sufficiently varied in each case to produce forces structures that vary considerably. Each section will consider the theoretical justification and a description of the character of the conflict each orientation is best suited to, a

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<sup>58</sup>Frank G. Hoffman "Future Threats and Strategic Thinking", *Infinity Journal*, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 18, accessed October 3, 2013, [https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/34/Future\\_Threats\\_and\\_Strategic\\_Thinking/](https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/34/Future_Threats_and_Strategic_Thinking/).

brief overview of the general Army structure appropriate to each orientation and, lastly, some of the more significant benefits and weaknesses of each.

### Irregular Threat Focused Force

In order to evaluate the efficacy of a given force orientation, it becomes necessary to bound the language used to describe the emphasis of each force structure. Joint Publication 1-02 defines irregular warfare as a “violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s).”<sup>59</sup> The definition of “irregular warfare” published by the Department of Defense in JP 1-02 is sufficiently broad, yet specific enough, to serve as the theme for the initial force orientation.

There is simply no shortage of theoretical justification for force structures oriented on irregular wars. Popular works as widely known as Barnett’s “The Pentagon’s New Map”<sup>60</sup> and Robert Kaplan’s “The Coming Anarchy”<sup>61</sup> are clear projections of increased conflict between states and irregular or non-state forces based on increasing resource scarcity, demographic forces, and under-governed spaces. Other ideas that support the concept of the emerging primacy of irregular-type threats are Joseph Nye’s description of the expanding diffusion of power from states to non-state actors in the international system as well as the recently popular idea of the increasing frequency of nation-states participating in what David Betz terms “Wars Amongst The People.”<sup>62</sup> Further, the experiences of U.S. and Coalition partners in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have served to underscore these projections of states being required to conduct

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<sup>59</sup>The Joint Staff, Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington DC: The Department of Defense, January 2014), 137.

<sup>60</sup>Thomas P. M. Barnett, “The Pentagon’s New Map,” *Esquire* (March 1, 2003), accessed October 3, 2013, [http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0303-MAR\\_WARPRIMER](http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0303-MAR_WARPRIMER).

<sup>61</sup>Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease Are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 273, no. 2 (February 1994): 44-76.

<sup>62</sup>Nye, *The Future of Power*; David Betz, “Redesigning Land Forces for Wars Amongst the People,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, 28, no. 2 (August 2007): 221-43.

military operations against informal or loose networks that operate among the populations of what effectively become host nations to conflict. In sharp contrast to more traditional conflicts fought by post-Westphalia nation-states governed (generally) by the law of armed conflict (LOAC), irregular wars are best described as messy, decentralized, rapidly evolving affairs waged by foes that are certain to leverage asymmetric means.

So what type of force is appropriate to address this threat? Robert Scales, author of “The Past and Present as Prologue: A View of Future Warfare through the Lens of Contemporary Conflict,” contends that the future “high ground” for American forces, particularly the U.S. Army, will be to capture the perceptions of populations, as opposed to the seizure of terrain.<sup>63</sup> In order to do this, he goes on to assert that the roles of U.S. conventional and special operations of forces (SOF) have become so intertwined that the entirety of the Army must be adapted to be able to carry out combat operations as well as the training, advising, and equipping of host country forces on a long-term basis. Further, that this transition necessitates increased emphasis on rapidly deployable, intelligence-heavy, highly-educated soldiers organized in small units that are capable of independent operations.

David Betz supports this reconception of the Army’s orientation in his article entitled “Redesigning Land Forces for Wars Amongst the People.”<sup>64</sup> Stating simply that in order to fight a “war amongst the people” a force is necessarily required to “be” among the people, many of his conclusions echo those of Robert Scales. However, Betz takes things a step further when he not only advocates an increased emphasis on infantry, but also that the infantry in question divest itself of much of its armored troop transport capability in the interest of deployability and the

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<sup>63</sup>Robert H. Scales, *The Past and Present as Prologue: A View of Future Warfare through the Lens of Contemporary Conflicts* (Washington, DC: Center For a New American Security, 2009), 11.

<sup>64</sup>David Betz, “Redesigning Land Forces for Wars Amongst the People,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, 28, no. 2 (August 2007): 221-43.

necessity of interacting with the populace in a given conflict area. His optimal force would consist primarily of highly trained and educated light infantry augmented with civil affairs and psychological operations units who are armed with only light weapons, yet who still possess the ability to employ long-range, precision fires.

In sum, an Army that is oriented primarily on maintaining the ability to successfully conduct irregular war is an infantry dominated, light force. It is highly deployable in small units that are capable of operating in a relatively decentralized fashion for long periods of time in and among a local populace. A premium is placed on soldier education, intelligence capabilities, and precision fires while capabilities such as armor, non-precision fires, and air defense artillery would be largely obsolete, or required only in small numbers.

Of course, there are advantages to such a force. The divestment of large, expensive weapon systems would allow for either a larger force or a considerably less expensive one. Large scale deployment could theoretically take place much more quickly due to the decreased reliance on heavy combat systems that require slow seaborne transportation and extensive port facilities. Similarly, logistic requirements for items such as fuel and repair parts would be significantly reduced in accordance with the reductions in heavy combat systems, potentially reducing currently problematic tooth-to-tail ratios and making more soldiers available for combat arms service. Also, contemporary counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have had the desirable side-effect of continuing to inculcate hard won relationships and understandings between the conventional force and SOF. An effective blending of conventional force and special operations missions, leading to greater operational synergies, could reinforce these relationships.

Just as there are advantages to such a force, however, there are clearly disadvantages as well. Worthy of particular emphasis is that a focus on irregular war necessitates a de-emphasis on traditional or conventional state-on-state war to at least some degree. Some degradation in the Army's ability to wage a conventional conflict is necessarily inherent in organizing specifically to

conduct irregular warfare as described. Another potential drawback to such an organization is the increased difficulty in finding and attracting sufficient numbers of soldiers of the requisite quality to man such a force. Special operations forces are considered “special” for several reasons, not the least of which is their demanding selection processes. The more conventional force missions and those historically conducted by SOF merge the more capable the average soldier must be. A challenge for recruiters as well as the Army’s training base.

Considered in totality, there is ample warrant for some force structure devoted to irregular threats. Irregular threats are simply too pervasive in today’s operating environment and too potentially deadly to be neglected. To create a force without some specialized capability to fight and prevail against irregular threats would be strategically negligent. However, it would be equally irresponsible to premise the structure of the entire U.S. Army on irregular threats. Despite the fact that much of the U.S. Army’s combat experience in the last decade has been against threats that are irregular in nature, there remains some justification for the capacity to deal with traditional threats.

#### Traditional Threat Focused Force

The next force orientation for consideration is one focused on what is generally considered a “traditional” threat. A “traditional” threat, for the purposes of this paper, is primarily a state-actor fighting a largely conventional conflict, mostly along traditional lines of effort and with generally conventional means. These terms are hedged of necessity due to the reality that any given conflict rarely consists purely of some single “type.” In this construct, however, the predominant form of a conflict is that of a nation-state seeking to engage another in some traditional way.

While it has become fashionable recently to characterize armed conflict as shifting primarily into the provenance of amorphous non-state actors, there remains a real and credible threat from traditional states and significant scholarship that cautions us against following these

popular trends. One need only look at Iran, China, North Korea, and even Russia to find states with considerable land forces and tense relations with the United States. While it is certainly possible that the U.S. will never go to war with any of these states, it is also possible that the U.S. could find itself in an unanticipated situation in which armed conflict with any of these states is unavoidable. In his now famous work, *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington helps us reconcile the increasing significance of non-state actors with the traditional Westphalian state.<sup>65</sup> Huntington contends that future conflicts will be waged for reasons that are increasingly civilizational in nature while the most significant combatants will remain those actors with the Hobbesian monopoly on violence: states. As explored previously, Colin S. Gray similarly cautions us that historical perspective is the only protection we have against undue fascination with the fashionable ideas of today with regard to the characterization of warfare.<sup>66</sup> Lastly, as Sullivan and Koch point out, fully 51% of military interventions by the “big 5” since World War II were conducted against state actors.<sup>67</sup> Put bluntly, conventional state-on-state conflict continues to be relevant.

Is traditional conflict relevant enough to warrant basing the entire structure of the Army on its premise? State-on-state conflict is much more likely than its irregular counterpart to be spectacular in nature. As Clausewitz states, war is the continuation of policy by other means and tends to escalate toward its absolute form.<sup>68</sup> Or, in other words, traditional warfare is the realm of

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<sup>65</sup>Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

<sup>66</sup>Gray, *Another Bloody Century*, 13.

<sup>67</sup>Sullivan and Koch, “Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003.”

<sup>68</sup>This is a simplification of two Clausewitzian ideas. The first as stated above, that war is simply the extension of the political interaction of states. The second that the tendency of war is to escalate to its absolute form unless acted upon by an outside force. This outside force is generally characterized as the interplay between the government, the people, and the military. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 90-99, 537-637.

existential conflict. Any number of historical examples can be cited to support this conception. In just the previous century one could cite World War I, World War II, and the Cold War and its proxy conflicts (Korea, Vietnam, and 1980s Afghanistan) which all served to reorganize the world. All were high-order conflicts and largely traditional in character. Both Mueller, the primary advocate that war is becoming extinct, and Clausewitz, who is arguably considered to understand war more comprehensively than any other theorist, conceive of war as basically duels between states. Wars against irregular threats may be the flavor of the day, but traditional conflicts are what determine the fates of states.

An army built primarily to deal with such a threat consists of large formations of forces trained and equipped to fight those similar to themselves; formations of uniformed soldiers from another state. These forces would be necessarily, but not exclusively, heavy, as tanks, air defense and large artillery systems are some of the hallmarks of state-on-state warfare. However, it would not consist exclusively of these capabilities as defense planners are often no more able to choose the time or location of traditional conflicts than they are irregular ones. Some terrain, such as deserts of the Middle East, are more suited to maneuver warfare, whereas the jungles of Southeast Asia and mountains of the Hindu Kush require forces that can operate dismounted in difficult terrain. Additionally, the extensive periods of time and resources required to transport heavy formations over long distances necessitates a lighter force capable of bridging the temporal gap in an emergent crisis. Therefore, substantial infantry formations are required even in traditional conflict scenarios. Differing amounts of individual capabilities can be adjusted based on likely threats, or the total volume as the likelihood of conflict changes, but the basic requirements for a force oriented on a traditional threat remains generally constant.

There are two significant benefits to orienting the Army against a traditional threat. The primary advantage to such a force orientation is obviously that the U.S. is better prepared to wage spectacular, existential conflict if necessary. While these types of conflict do not often spring up

overnight, being prepared in advance is a logically preferable way to begin such a conflict as opposed to a rapid mobilization. The second, and more difficult to quantify, advantage is the deterrent effect a large standing force oriented on state-on-state conflict could provide. The idea of deterrence has a long history in U.S. military thought and is not without merit. In fact, Brian McAllister Linn describes deterrence as a cornerstone of traditional American military thought he characterizes as “guardians” who believe first and foremost in national defense.<sup>69</sup> That said, a large, traditional conflict oriented force compels a potential adversary to think long and hard about starting a war with the U.S. anywhere in the world.

Just as there are advantages, however, there are also disadvantages to a force oriented against a traditional adversary. Chief among them is the fact that big formations of large, technologically-advanced, and well-protected systems are expensive to procure, maintain, and operate. Similarly, those same formations are ponderously slow to deploy and additionally costly due to the vast numbers of ships and aircraft required to transport such forces. Just as deterrence can be a potential advantage of such a force, it can also be a drawback. As Everett Dolman points out, a large force can create a “deterrence paradox” in which the very actor one seeks to deter can feel threatened and attempt to increase his or her security through increased force.<sup>70</sup> Though Doleman contends that this paradox only exists as a result of flawed tactical-type thinking, this does not make the effect any less real. Lastly, and perhaps self-evidently, any orientation on a traditional threat represents resources that are not devoted to threats that are more irregular in nature. While some contend that traditional warfare represents the highest form of conflict and

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<sup>69</sup>Brian McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3-7.

<sup>70</sup>Everett Doleman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 107.



that soldiers can be quickly trained to transition to more irregular scenarios, any attempt to do so quickly and in a dynamic environment has proven historically to be very difficult indeed.<sup>71</sup>

The U.S. does not often get to choose the time, location, and type of conflict it engages in. The 1980s and 1990s provided a case study in training and organizing the Army primarily for high-intensity traditional combat. The Army achieved impressive results within those contexts, such as in the Persian Gulf War. More challenging, though, was the difficulty in retraining and reorienting the force quickly in Iraq and Afghanistan to deal with irregular threats. Given the increasing complexity in the contemporary environment, irregular threats are both more likely to require the attention of the U.S. Army and are sufficiently different from traditional conflicts to warrant devoted force structure. Any attempt to orient the structure of the Army on a purely traditional threat would ignore this fact.

#### Hybrid Threat Focused Force

The last force orientation for consideration is one focused on combatting a “hybrid” threat. Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: *Unified Land Operations* (ULO), one of the U.S. Army’s capstone publications, defines a “hybrid threat” as “the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effect.”<sup>72</sup> The same publication goes on to state that hybrid threats may involve nation-state adversaries, proxy forces, or non-state actors using high-end capabilities traditionally considered to be the provenance of state

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<sup>71</sup>Many have advocated this approach in the past, though this is true of fewer sources since the U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hoffman, in his “Future Threats and Strategic Thinking,” refers to a group of thinkers he terms “traditionalists” who advance this opinion, though he does so in the context of comparing this group to others who would not agree. Also, Gian P. Gentile, “Let’s Build an Army to Win All Wars,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 52 (2009): 27-33, presents perhaps the clearest recent example of organizing the Army around the idea of “fighting” and adapting to other tasks as required.

<sup>72</sup>Army Doctrine Publication 3-0: *Unified Land Operations* (Headquarters, Department of the Army, October 2011), III.

forces.<sup>73</sup> In other words, a hybrid threat utilizes a broad spectrum of capabilities and to achieve its goals. While there is always the question of the scale of such a threat, the key for the purposes of structure of the U.S. Army is a hybrid threat's ability to act with both irregular and traditional means in complementary ways.

Perhaps most compelling, virtually any past armed conflict can be interpreted to serve as the justification for a hybrid force orientation as discreet conflicts only rarely exist in pure typologies. For instance, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 is generally considered to be a traditional conflict as large U.S. armored formations battled Iraqi forces with both maneuver and firepower. That conventional hostilities ultimately culminated with the seizure of Baghdad further supports this conception. What is considered less often, however, is the huge U.S. special operations mission undertaken in the northern portions of the country that prevented an Iraqi Corps from reinforcing to the south.<sup>74</sup> The Israeli campaign in Lebanon in 2006 against Hezbollah is an even clearer illustration of this idea. Typically conceived of as an irregular, non-state threat, Hezbollah employed numerous high-end capabilities and tactics typically associated with conventional forces to frustrate Israeli efforts. Their actions, in keeping with the thinking of U.S. military practitioners explored previously, suggest a future of less clarity and more diversity in military operations.<sup>75</sup>

Even a military operation as seemingly intellectually distinguishable as addressing a Maoist insurgency, the dominant blueprint for insurgent operations in the last century, highlights the desirability of orienting an Army against a hybrid threat. Mao specifies that an insurgency progresses through three phases; Phase I is organization and consolidation; Phase II is progressive

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<sup>73</sup>*Unified Land Operations*, 4.

<sup>74</sup>Charles H. Briscoe, et al., *All Roads Lead to Baghdad* (Fort Bragg, NC: USASOC History Office, 2006), 115-21.

<sup>75</sup>Stephen Biddle, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), xvii.

expansion; and Phase III is ultimate decision or destruction of the enemy.<sup>76</sup> As an insurgent force progresses through this construct, its capabilities and organization change from one extreme of the spectrum, irregular warfare, to the other extreme, a predominantly conventional force openly hostile to the existing government and its apparatus. Military operations from the American Revolution to the successful Communist insurgency in Vietnam fit neatly into Mao's methodology. It is also worth noting that Mao's phases are not necessarily mutually exclusive. An insurgent organization can, and often does, retain some capacity to act in an irregular fashion even after it has made the transition to Mao's Phase III. Clear parallels exist between the U.S. Army's understanding of hybrid threats and Mao's methodology, further underscoring the soundness of orienting the Army to respond to a hybrid threat.

A force oriented to deal with hybrid threats will necessarily be a hybrid in its composition. In fact, it may not look all that different than the Army of today. In order to be prepared to face hybrid threats, the U.S. Army would retain some ability to act across the full continuum ranging from pure irregular to pure traditional and all points in-between. Highly trained, small unit centric forces would be required to deal with emergent terrorist and criminal threats. Other highly-trained small units consisting of soldiers specially selected to train partner nation forces and conduct irregular warfare would also be required. Also, more conventional forces would be required to provide the ability to conduct stability and defense support to civil authorities (DSCA) missions as well as large scale combat operations in diverse terrain.

Advantages to this force orientation lie primarily in the Army's ability to address a broad array of contingencies quickly without having to mobilize or reconfigure extensively. While choices will always be required as to what portions of such a diverse force to privilege with regard to training, equipping, and manning a hybrid force orientation would always retain *some*

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<sup>76</sup>Department of the Navy, Fleet Marine Field Reference Publication 12-18: *Mao Tse-Tung On Guerilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 5 April 1989), 21.

capacity to address nearly any conceivable conflict. Further, such a force would prove easier to man as different missions require lower levels of specialization and can thus be performed by a broader range of people; not an insignificant fact considering some estimate as many as 75% of military-aged Americans are either unfit or undesirable for military service.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, such a force orientation mitigates the possibility of not possessing enough of the right type of forces to produce a credible deterrent.

As with any orientation, a focus on hybrid threats does have risks associated with it. Chief among them, a “jack of all trades, master of none” idea that does have some merit. As resources decrease of necessity, there will be increasing pressure to sacrifice some specialization in the name of savings. Betz is prominent among critics of such an approach as, in his words, “if we continue on this path, the risk is of ending up with the worst of all worlds: an army that is not just too few in number for sustaining low-intensity campaigns, but too light for high-intensity combat.”<sup>78</sup> His criticism is well founded and, if military decision makers do not ruthlessly adhere to a clearly defined hybrid force orientation, capability to deal with threats from various parts of the continuum will necessarily be watered down or lost altogether. Also, a risk exists that a force so oriented is more likely to be overwhelmed in one area or another. After all, in order to rebalance, capacity must be sacrificed in one area to provide for additional capacity in another. However, such threats can be acceptably mitigated by professional stewardship that appreciates that, while some potential military scenarios attract attention and thus funding, the Army is required to maintain the capability to act in a range of scenarios that may fall in and out of fashion.

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<sup>77</sup>Associated Press “Most Americans Not Fit to Join,” *Military.com*, March 13, 2006, 1, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,90736,00.html>.

<sup>78</sup>Betz, “Redesigning Land Forces for Wars Amongst the People,” 223.

Orienting the force against a hybrid threat is not without its drawbacks. Unfortunately for military planners and decision makers, however, there are rarely any optimal solutions. A hybrid force orientation represents a balance between a force tailored to deal with irregular threats and a force conceived to deal with traditional threats. The risks associated with lack of strategic depth and over homogenization are real and meaningful. But there can be little doubt that a force built to combat adversaries whose core competencies lie at varying points along the continuum of conflict is the best and possibly only option for the U.S. Army.

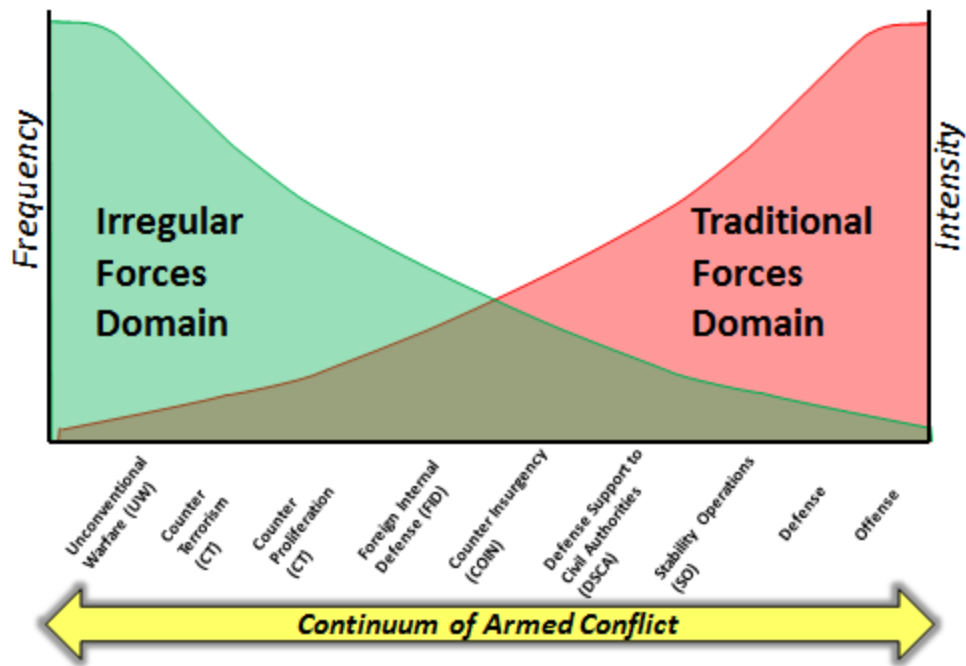
### CONCLUSIONS

A review of the literature on the subject reveals that, while there may be a recent trend toward low intensity conflict or non-state warfare, the threat of large-scale armed conflict still very much exists. It is possible that Mueller is correct when he compares warfare to slavery as an enduring human social convention that is falling out of favor. It is also possible that others who see no meaningful reductions in warfare are correct. Also, as Gray and Huntington contend, any reductions in the level or even types of violence are potentially mere historical anomalies and we should continue to expect wars in the future. Regardless, while there are many that claim armed conflict is decreasing, no one claims it is gone forever. If we can derive any meaningful lessons from human history, among them must surely be that defense planners are better served in preparing assiduously for the next conflict than they are anticipating a future without one.

Building upon these lessons, defense planners can logically derive that warfare, in all its types, has a place in our future. As the practitioners suggest, future conflict may be characterized by increased levels of complexity, but it will continue to exist all the same. For these reasons, it would be foolhardy to organize and equip the U.S. Army to only address threats from one portion of the continuum of conflict (see Figure 2). While the U.S. may indeed experience future threats that come primarily from terrorist or other portions of the continuum most likely to relate to non-state actors, it is high-intensity battles that have lasting meaning in the international system.

While Joseph Nye is likely correct in suggesting there is currently a diffusion of power underway from state to non-state actors, Russian military adventurism in Crimea and ever increasing Chinese defense spending tell us state threats are very much alive and relevant. Defense planners are perhaps best served considering conflict as a continuum.

Figure 2: The Continuum of Armed Conflict



Source: The above figure is an original creation of the author.

A deeper consideration of Mao's work reveals a hybrid threat orientation to be the best option for a force orientation of the U.S. Army. All threats, be they affiliated with an established nation-state or not, can be considered to lie at some point along one of Mao's three phases. Just as a small group carrying out terrorist activity in order to sow discontent among a local populace lies in Mao's first phase, an insurgent organization that has attained such success that they begin to

assume the tactics and weapons of a state actor, such as Hezbollah or North Vietnam in the 1960's, lies in his third. The task of force orientation would be made much easier if the U.S. were always able to intervene militarily at a point of its choosing, but political realities interact in such a way that this is clearly infeasible. Thus, the U.S. Army is required to retain the ability to defeat a threat at any point in its progression through Mao's phases, up to and including that of a fully fledged state waging a war of movement.

The question then becomes one of capability versus capacity. Given that the U.S. Army does not have the luxury of choosing the conflicts in which it will be engaged, it must retain the capability to act across the continuum of conflict. This is, and likely forever remains, the cost of doing business for the army of the leading global power. Army Doctrine Publication 1-0: *The Army*, citing Title 10, United States Code (USC) and Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5100.01, describe the mission of the U.S. Army as, "to fight and win the Nation's wars through prompt and sustained land combat."<sup>79</sup> Until specific types of warfare are definitively proven to be obsolete, the Army retains the requirement to act at any given moment at any particular point along the continuum of armed conflict. Regardless of whether or not the Army is in a period of growth or contraction, resources are always limited to some extent and Army leadership is compelled to make choices to address potential threats. In a time of war this task is easier as a tangible conflict exists that the Army can be oriented to address. In times of relative peace, however, this task is much more difficult as any number of scenarios could demand the immediate application of U.S. ground combat power. Accordingly, United States Army decision makers are best advised to man, resource, and train the army to address a "hybrid" type threat. It is only through this approach – a policy of "least regret" – that military decision makers and planners can be assured that the U.S. will have sufficient capacity to address the threats our nation

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<sup>79</sup>Army Doctrine Publication 1-0: *The Army* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, September 2012), 1-8.

may face. This is particularly true if, as Secretary Gates suggests, we remain perfect at failing to anticipate what shapes those threats will take.



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