

# FM 3-0

## OPERATIONS



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**HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**



## Chapter 1

# Foundations of Operations

*War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.*

Carl von Clausewitz

This chapter describes the range of military operations and the Army's focus on readiness to conduct large-scale combat operations. It describes how Army forces meet challenges and conduct multidomain operations as part of a joint and multinational force. Beginning with the Army's view of war and warfare, this chapter describes key concepts that help leaders understand an operational environment.

## ARMY OPERATIONS

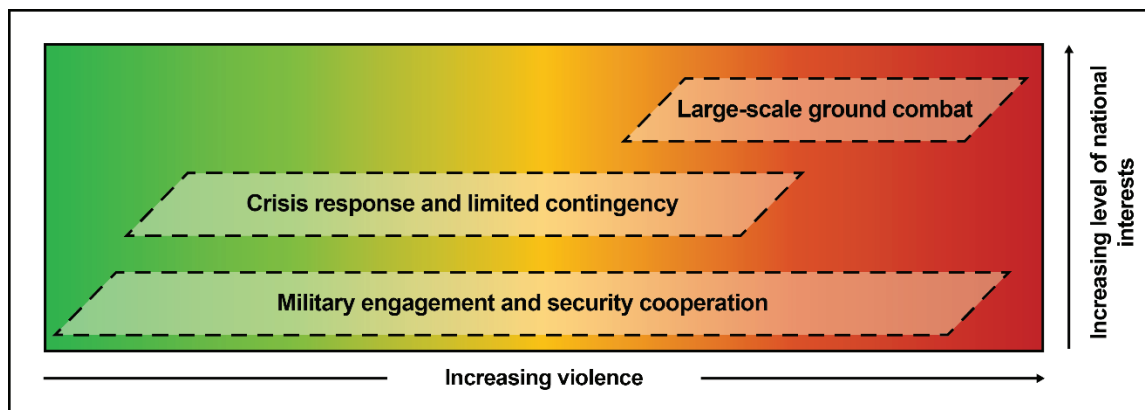
1-1. The Army's primary mission is to organize, train, and equip its forces to conduct prompt and sustained land combat to defeat enemy ground forces and seize, occupy, and defend land areas. It supports four strategic roles for the joint force. Army forces shape operational environments, counter aggression on land during crisis, prevail during large-scale ground combat, and consolidate gains. The Army fulfills its strategic roles by providing forces for joint campaigns that enable integrated deterrence of adversaries outside of conflict and the defeat of enemies during conflict or war. The strategic roles clarify the overall purposes for which Army forces conduct multidomain operations on behalf of joint force commanders (JFCs) in the pursuit of a stable environment and other policy objectives. Fulfilling policy objectives requires national-level leaders to orchestrate all instruments of national power throughout the entire government and coalition, in a manner commensurate with national will. (See JP 3-0 for more information on joint campaigns and deterrence. See ADP 3-0 for more information on the Army's strategic roles.)

1-2. Military operations on land are foundational to operations in other domains because almost all capabilities, no matter where employed, are ultimately based on or controlled from land. While any particular domain may dominate military considerations in a specific context, conflicts are usually resolved on land because that is where people live and make political decisions and where the basis of national power exists.

1-3. Army forces achieve objectives through the conduct of operations. An *operation* is a sequence of tactical actions with a common purpose or unifying theme (JP 1, Volume 1). Operations vary in many ways. They occur in all kinds of physical environments, including urban, subterranean, desert, jungle, mountain, maritime, and arctic. Operations vary in scale of forces involved and duration. Operations change factors in the physical, information, and human dimensions of an operational environment.

1-4. The complex environment in which operations occur demands leaders who understand both the science and art of operations. Understanding the science of operations—such as combat power ratios, weapons ranges, and movement tables—helps leaders improve synchronization and reduce risk. However, there is no way to eliminate uncertainty, and leaders must exercise operational art to make decisions and assume risk. Intangible factors, such as the impact of leadership on morale, using shock effect to defeat enemy forces, and supportive populations are fundamentally human factors that can overcome physical disadvantages and often decide the outcomes of an operation. (See ADP 3-0 for more information on the art and science of operations.)

1-5. Army forces meet a diverse array of challenges and contribute to national objectives across a wide range of operational categories, including large-scale combat operations, limited contingency operations, crisis response, and support to security cooperation. (See figure 1-1 on page 1-2 for a depiction of operational categories and the spectrum of violence.)



**Figure 1-1. Operational categories and the spectrum of violence**

1-6. Most operations occur on the lower end of the spectrum of violence, and their objectives do not reach the level of vital national interests or national survival. These operations typically shape operational environments in ways that stabilize global security and facilitate conditions that are generally favorable to the United States. They provide valuable options to JFCs because they achieve objectives best supported by persistent presence, often at relatively low cost.

1-7. While the overwhelming majority of operations conducted by Army forces occur either below the threshold of armed conflict or during limited contingencies, the focus of Army readiness is on large-scale combat operations. The United States always retains the option to employ greater levels of force when less coercive methods are ineffective, and when a vital interest or national survival is at stake. This requires Army forces to be prepared for the most demanding and dangerous types of operations. Army forces contribute to conventional deterrence through their demonstrated capability, capacity, and will to wage war on land in any environment against any opponent. Credible combat forces make the other instruments of national power more potent, and they help deter the enemy's escalation of violence during other types of operations.

1-8. Credible combat forces are those able to overcome the advantages peer threats generate within a specific regional context. Enemies typically initiate their aggression under conditions optimal for their success, requiring U.S. forces to respond at a disadvantage. U.S. combat operations typically involve force projection over long distances, providing advantages for enemy forces operating closer to their bases of support. Enemies typically have a degree of popular support cultivated through decades of propaganda and isolation from the free flow of information. This increases the enemy's will to fight and can make local populations hostile to U.S. forces and objectives. Although a combatant command and theater army may accrue a variety of advantages as they set the theater and prepare for armed conflict during periods of competition, Army forces are typically faced with challenges they have to overcome at the onset of hostilities and throughout the conduct of armed conflict.

## MULTIDOMAIN OPERATIONS

1-9. **Multidomain operations** are the combined arms employment of joint and Army capabilities to create and exploit relative advantages that achieve objectives, defeat enemy forces, and consolidate gains on behalf of joint force commanders. Employing Army and joint capabilities makes use of all available combat power from each domain to accomplish missions at least cost. Multidomain operations are the Army's contribution to joint campaigns, spanning the competition continuum. Below the threshold of armed conflict, multidomain operations are how Army forces accrue advantages and demonstrate readiness for conflict, deterring adversaries while assuring allies and partners. During conflict, they are how Army forces close with and destroy the enemy, defeat enemy formations, seize critical terrain, and control populations and resources to deliver sustainable political outcomes.

1-10. Army forces conduct operations in support of joint campaigns which for the most part occur as part of a larger coalition operation. Leaders must understand the interdependencies between their own assigned forces and the forces or capabilities provided by others to generate the complementary and reinforcing effects

of combined arms approaches. Army forces employ joint and other unified action partner capabilities to the degree they are available. However, because peer threats can contest the force in all domains, Army forces must be prepared to conduct operations when some or all joint capabilities are unavailable to support mission accomplishment.

1-11. All operations are multidomain operations. Army forces employ organic capabilities in multiple domains, and they continuously benefit from air and maritime strategic transportation and space and cyberspace capabilities that they do not control, including global positioning, satellite communications, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). Lower echelons may not always notice the opportunities created by higher echelons or other forces that operate primarily in other domains; however, leaders must understand how the absence of those opportunities affects their concepts of operations, decision making, and risk assessment.

1-12. During operations, small advantages can have significant impacts on the outcome of the mission, particularly when they accrue over time. Creating and exploiting relative advantages are therefore necessary for all operations, and they become even more critical when opposing sides are evenly matched. A **relative**

Army forces must accurately see themselves, see the enemy or adversary, and understand their operational environment before they can identify or exploit relative advantages.

**advantage is a location or condition, in any domain, relative to an adversary or enemy that provides an opportunity to progress towards or achieve an objective.** Commanders seek and create relative advantages to exploit through action, and they continually assess the situation to identify ways to expand opportunities. (See paragraphs 1-106 through 1-117 for more information on physical, information, and human advantages.)

1-13. Army leaders are accustomed to creating and exploiting relative advantages through the combined-arms approach that traditionally focuses on capabilities from the land, air, and maritime domains. The proliferation of space and cyberspace capabilities further requires leaders who understand the advantages those capabilities create in their operational environment. The ability to integrate and synchronize space and cyberspace capabilities at the most effective tactical echelon expands options for creating advantages to exploit.

1-14. Multidomain operations fracture the coherence of threat operational approaches by destroying, dislocating, isolating, and disintegrating their interdependent systems and formations, and exploiting the opportunities these disruptions provide to defeat enemy forces in detail. Army forces therefore require timely, accurate, relevant, and predictive intelligence to understand threat characteristics, capabilities, objectives, and courses of action. Intelligence initially drives what combinations of defeat mechanisms commanders pursue as they employ the capabilities of their forces in space and time against enemy forces.

Some combination of maneuver and attrition is typically necessary to achieve victory during armed conflict. This is reflected in the defeat mechanisms which encompass both ideas.

Army forces combine maneuver and targeting methods to defeat enemy formations and systems. Army forces employ maneuver to close with and destroy enemy formations in close operations. Targeting generally sets priorities for information collection, fires, and other key capabilities to disintegrate enemy networks and systems. Leaders execute the targeting process to create advantages that enable freedom of maneuver and exploit the positional advantages created by maneuver. Targeting is a key way for leaders to integrate the joint capabilities required to create depth in the battlefield and protect friendly formations.

## CHALLENGES FOR ARMY FORCES

*We don't maintain a strong military force to conquer or coerce others. The purpose of our military is simple and straightforward: We want to prevent war by deterring others from the aggression that causes war.*

President Ronald Reagan

1-15. The joint force deters most adversaries from seeking to achieve strategic objectives through direct military confrontation with the United States. As a result, adversaries pursue their objectives indirectly through malign activities and armed conflict targeting others in ways calculated to avoid war with the United States. These activities include subversive political and legal strategies, establishing physical presence on the

ground to buttress resource claims, coercive economic practices, supporting proxy forces, and spreading disinformation. However, several adversaries have both the ability and the will to conduct armed conflict with the United States under certain conditions, which requires Army forces to be prepared at all times for limited contingencies and large-scale combat operations.

1-16. Global and regional adversaries apply all instruments of national power to challenge U.S. interests and the joint force. Militarily, they have extended the battlefield by employing network-enabled sensors and long-range fires to deny access during conflict and challenge friendly forces' freedom of action during competition. These standoff approaches seek to—

The notion of integrated deterrence goes beyond preventing armed conflict. It includes preventing adversaries from increasing the scope and intensity of their malign activities conducted below the threshold of armed conflict

- Counter U.S. space, air, and naval advantages to make the introduction of land forces difficult and exploit the overall joint force's mutual dependencies.
- Increase the cost to the joint force and its partners in the event of armed conflict.
- Hold the joint force at risk both in the U.S. and at its overseas bases and contest Army forces' deployment from home station to forward tactical assembly areas overseas.

1-17. Adversaries increase risk to the U.S. joint force in order to raise the threshold at which the United States might respond to a provocation with military force. By diluting the joint force's conventional deterrence, adversaries believe they have greater freedom of action to conduct malign activities both within and outside the U.S. homeland. Adversaries exploit this freedom of action through offensive cyberspace operations, disinformation, influence operations, and the aggressive positioning of ground, air, and naval forces to support territorial claims. Adversaries employ different types of forces and capabilities to attack private and government organizations, threaten critical economic infrastructure, and disrupt political processes, often with a degree of plausible deniability that reduces the likelihood of a friendly military response. Conducting these activities in support of policy goals threatens allied cohesion, weakens responses, and creates additional opportunities. (See paragraphs 2-40 through 2-44 for description of enemy information warfare.)

1-18. Threat standoff approaches intensify other friendly challenges. These challenges include—

- Gaining and maintaining support of allies and partners.
- Maintaining the continuous information collection needed to determine composition, disposition, strength, and activities of enemy forces.
- Integrating and synchronizing intelligence at all echelons, distributed across large operational areas with diverse requirements.
- Preparing forward-stationed forces to fight and win while outnumbered and isolated.
- Protecting forward-positioned forces and those moving into a theater.
- Minimizing vulnerability to weapons of mass destruction.
- Maintain C2 and sustainment of units distributed across vast distances in noncontiguous areas and outside supporting ranges and distances.
- Maintaining a desirable tempo while defeating fixed and bypassed enemy forces.
- Defeating threat information and irregular warfare attacks against the United States and strategic lines of communications.

1-19. Army forces prepare to conduct operations in contested theaters prior to and during armed conflict, including in the United States. Army forces must account for being under constant observation and the threat's ability to gain and maintain contact in all domains, wherever they are located. Army forces must be ready to deploy on short notice to austere locations and be capable of immediately conducting combat operations. During the initial phases of an operation, Army units may find themselves facing superior threats in terms of both numbers and capabilities. The first deploying units require the capability to defend themselves and continuously collect information on threat activities, as they provide reaction time and freedom of maneuver for follow-on forces. Army units with limited joint support may have to defend while at risk from enemy long-range fires. Forward-stationed forces may defend critical terrain with other coalition forces to delay enemy offensive operations. Some forward-stationed forces may defend joint bases to mitigate

the impact of enemy attacks against strategic and operational lines of communications. In both cases, forward-stationed Army forces must be prepared to fight while relatively isolated in the early stages of an enemy attack.

1-20. The likelihood of the enemy force's use of massed long-range fires and weapons of mass destruction increases during large-scale combat operations—particularly against command and control (C2) and sustainment nodes, assembly areas, and critical infrastructure. To survive and operate against massed long-range fires and in contaminated environments, commanders ensure as much dispersion as tactically prudent. Army forces seek every possible advantage using dispersion, deception, counterreconnaissance, terrain, cover, concealment, masking, and other procedures to avoid detection and mitigate the impact of enemy fires. In the offense, Army forces maneuver quickly along multiple axes, concentrating only to the degree required to mass effects, and then dispersing to avoid becoming lucrative targets for weapons of mass destruction and enemy conventional fires. Although dispersion disrupts enemy targeting efforts, it increases the difficulty of both C2 and sustainment for friendly forces. Success demands agile units that are able to adjust dispositions rapidly, assume risk, and exploit opportunities when they are available.

1-21. The high tempo of large-scale combat operations creates gaps and seams, generating both opportunities and risks as enemy formations disintegrate, disperse, or displace. After generating sufficient combat power for offensive operations, friendly forces may intermingle with or fix and bypass enemy formations. This requires follow-on and supporting units to protect themselves and to defeat enemy remnants in detail within the rear area as part of consolidating gains.

1-22. Army forces deploying from the United States and elsewhere face a wide range of threats that are difficult to counter without joint support. The disruptive effects of enemy action may occur at unit home stations, ports of embarkation, while in transit to the theater, and upon arrival at ports of debarkation. Army forces may not have the capability, or the authority, to preempt these attacks, although counterintelligence may aid in early identification of threats. The threat's ability to contest the deployment of forces may degrade combat power available to forward forces and cause unit personnel and equipment to arrive in piecemeal fashion at ports of debarkation. (See Appendix C for more information on deployments contested by threat forces.)

## LETHALITY: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

1-23. Army forces overcome challenges posed by threats and the environment with credible formations able to employ lethal capabilities. **Lethality is the capability and capacity to destroy.** Employing and threatening the employment of lethal force lies at the core of how Army forces achieve objectives and enable the rest of the instruments of national power to achieve objectives.

1-24. Lethality is enabled by formations maneuvering into positions of relative advantage where they can employ weapon systems and mass effects to destroy enemy forces or place them at risk of destruction. The speed, range, and accuracy of weapon systems employed by a formation enhance its lethality. The demands of large-scale combat rapidly deplete available stockpiles and require forces to retain large reserves of ammunition, weapons, and other warfighting capabilities. Leaders multiply the effects of lethal force by employing combinations of capabilities through multiple domains to create, accrue, and exploit relative advantages—imposing multiple dilemmas on enemy forces and overwhelming their ability to respond effectively. Overcoming challenges in the operational environment further requires lethal Army forces that employ all available capabilities to—

- Continuously cultivate landpower networks with allies and partners to facilitate interoperability.
- Be demonstrably prepared for large-scale combat operations to deter conflict on land.
- Employ capabilities in a combined arms manner to create exploitable opportunities.
- Maneuver, mass effects, and preserve combat power to defeat threats to other Service components of the joint force.
- Defend forward-positioned critical joint infrastructure and key terrain.
- Conduct offensive operations to create and exploit opportunities and achieve objectives.
- Consolidate gains during competition, crisis, and armed conflict to enable sustainable political outcomes.

1-25. The effective employment of Army forces depends on leaders who understand war, warfare, and the environment within which military forces fight. Gaps in understanding are often causes of failures to achieve sustainable political outcomes with military means.

## **WAR AND WARFARE**

*[W]e now need another voice of wisdom to tell us, “Technology is not enough.” War is not one big engineering project. There are people on the other side—with strengths and will that we never bothered to measure. As a result of that omission we have been drawn into a greater, and certainly more ruinous, belligerent action than we intended. To fight without understanding the opponent ultimately serves neither the reputation of the military nor the reputation of the nation.*

Barbara W. Tuchman

1-26. War is a state of armed conflict between different nations, state-like entities, or armed groups to achieve policy objectives. Wars are fought between nations locally, regionally, or on a global scale. Wars are fought within a nation by a central government against insurgent, separatist, or resistance groups. Armed groups in semiautonomous regions also fight wars to achieve their objectives. Wars range from intense clashes between large military forces—sometimes backed by an official declaration of war—to more subtle hostilities that intermittently breach the threshold of violence.

1-27. The object of war is to impose a nation’s or group’s will on its enemy in pursuit of policy objectives. Regardless of the specific objectives, the decision to wage war represents a major policy decision and changes how Army forces use military capabilities. The nature of war, its principles, and its elements remain consistent over time. However, warfare, the conduct and characteristics of war, reflects changing means and contexts.

1-28. The Army’s multidomain operations concept accounts for the constant nature of war and the changing character of warfare. Its balanced approach guides how Army forces operate across the competition continuum given the prevailing characteristics of anticipated operational environments now and in the near future. Doctrine for the conduct of operations begins with a view of war and warfare that includes the—

- Nature of war.
- Principles of war.
- Characteristics of warfare.
- Methods of warfare.
- Offense, defense, and stability.
- Large-scale combat operations.
- Combined arms.
- Levels of warfare.
- Army strategic contexts.
- Consolidating gains.

(See Chapter 3 for more information on the multidomain operations concept.)

## **THE NATURE OF WAR**

1-29. While the term war has multiple uses depending on the context (for example, the war on drugs or the war on poverty), it is the threat or use of violence to achieve political purposes that distinguishes war in the military context from other human activities. This distinction accounts for three elements of the Army’s view of war. War is—

- Fought to achieve a political purpose.
- A human endeavor.
- Inherently chaotic and uncertain.



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**Note.** War, by definition, includes at least two opposing sides. However, not all violence for political gain causes a war. For example, in the current security environment China imposes low levels of violence and new types of violence (including space and cyberspace attacks against government, economic institutions, private industry, and infrastructure) that do not trigger significant military responses. In these cases, China sees itself in a state of war with its adversaries, but its adversaries do not. Such a disparity in perspective is dangerous for those nations opposing China that may endure low levels of violence for long periods, while slowly ceding interests until it is too late to respond effectively. Responding to such situations requires a comprehensive government approach supported by joint and Army forces.

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## Political Purpose

1-30. All U.S. military operations share a common purpose—to achieve or contribute to national policy objectives. As a principle of war, objective reinforces the proper relationship between military operations and policy. War must always be subordinate to policy and serve a political end. In conjunction with political leaders, military leaders develop strategies to achieve the desired policy outcomes. Policy outcomes often relate to the nation’s ability to influence, control, or secure populations, civil infrastructure, natural resources, and access to global commons in all domains. (See Appendix A for a discussion of the principles of war.)

Objective—to direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal—is a principle of war.

## Human Endeavor

1-31. War is shaped by human nature and the complex interrelationships of cognition, emotion, and uncertainty. National sentiments are often targets to be affected or manipulated by one or both sides. Values and ethics are some of the cognitive factors that motivate both the cause for going to war and restrictions in the conduct of war. Fear, passion, camaraderie, grief, and many more emotions affect the resolve of a war’s participants. They affect the behavior of combatants, including how and when leaders decide to persevere and when to give up. Individuals react differently to the stress of war; an act that may break the will of one enemy may only serve to stiffen the resolve of another. Human will, instilled through commitment to a cause and leadership, is the driving force of all action in war. The human dimension infuses war with its intangible moral factors. (See paragraphs 1-115 through 1-117 for more information on the human dimension.)

## Inherently Chaotic and Uncertain

1-32. War is inherently chaotic and uncertain due to the clash of wills and intense interaction of innumerable factors. Orders are misunderstood, enemy forces do the unexpected, units make wrong turns, unforeseen obstacles appear, the weather changes, and units consume supplies at unexpected rates. This friction affects all military operations, and it must be anticipated by leaders. The chaotic nature of war makes discerning the precise cause and effect of actions difficult, impossible, or delayed. The unintended effects of operations are difficult to anticipate and identify. Such chaos imposes a great deal of uncertainty on all operations and drives the importance of leaders who are skilled at assuming risk.

## PRINCIPLES OF WAR

1-33. From a U.S. military perspective, war involves nine principles, collectively and classically known as the principles of war. The nine principles of war represent the most important factors that affect the conduct of operations, and they are derived from the study of history and experience in battle. (See table 1-1 on page 1-8 for a concise listing of the principles of war.)

1-34. The principles of war capture broad and enduring fundamentals for the employment of forces in combat. They are not a checklist that guarantees success. Rather, they summarize considerations commanders and their staffs account for during successful operations, applied with judgment in specific contexts. While applicable to all operations, they do not apply equally or in the same way to every situation. (For more information on the principles of war, see Appendix A.)



Table 1-1. Principles of war

<b>Maneuver:</b> Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power.
<b>Objective:</b> Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal.
<b>Offensive:</b> Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.
<b>Surprise:</b> Strike at a time and place or in a manner for which the enemy is unprepared.
<b>Economy of force:</b> Expend minimum-essential combat power on secondary efforts to allocate the maximum possible combat power on the main effort.
<b>Mass:</b> Concentrate the effects of combat power at the most advantageous place and time to produce decisive results.
<b>Unity of command:</b> Ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander for every objective.
<b>Security:</b> Prevent the enemy from achieving surprise or acquiring unexpected advantage.
<b>Simplicity:</b> Increase the probability that plans can be executed as intended by preparing clear, uncomplicated plans and orders.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF WARFARE

1-35. Warfare, the conduct and characteristics of war, is affected by changes in technology, national policy, operational concepts, public opinion, and many other factors. Warfare may retain similarities over time, but it inevitably also has great variations. Rapid advances in, and the proliferation of, air, space, and cyberspace capabilities with military applications are changing warfare. Space technology enables persistent overhead surveillance and global communications, navigation, timing, missile warning, and environmental monitoring. Cyberspace technology is integrated into most military capabilities, and it enables near-instantaneous communications and information sharing, creating both opportunities and vulnerabilities that can be exploited by both sides during competition, crisis, and conflict.

## METHODS OF WARFARE

1-36. Although the nature and principles of war reflect the continuity of war, the conduct of warfare, like dynamic operational environments, reflects wide variation. Therefore, depending on the situation, strategic actors pursue their objectives in war through different methods of warfare. There are many different methods, but they generally fall into two broad categories: conventional and irregular. Each method of warfare serves the same strategic purpose—to defeat an enemy—but they take fundamentally different approaches to achieving their purpose. Both methods share one characteristic, which is that they involve the use of lethal force to achieve a political end. Warfare rarely fits neatly into any of these subjective categories, and it almost always entails a blend of both methods over the course of a conflict.

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**Note.** These broad categories describe the overall approaches to warfare. Other categories attempt to describe the dominant means used in a particular application, for example “information warfare,” “cyber warfare,” or “anti-submarine warfare.” In these cases, the terms “warfare,” “operations,” and “activities” are often used interchangeably.

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## Conventional Warfare

1-37. **Conventional warfare is a violent struggle for domination between nation-states or coalitions of nation-states.** Conventional warfare is generally carried out by two or more military forces through armed conflict. It is commonly known as conventional warfare because it means to fight enemy forces directly, with comparable military systems and organizations. A nation-state's strategic purpose for conducting conventional warfare is to impose its will on an enemy government and avoid imposition of the enemy government's will on it and its citizens. Joint doctrine refers to conventional warfare as "traditional" because it has been understood that way in the West since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which reserved, for the nation-state alone, a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. However, irregular warfare has a longer history, and it has been just as common as the "traditional" method of warfare in some societies.

1-38. Conventional warfare normally focuses on defeating enemy armed forces, enemy warfighting capabilities, and controlling key terrain and populations to decisively influence an enemy government's behavior in favorable ways. During conventional warfare, enemies engage in combat openly against each other and generally employ similar capabilities. Conventional war may escalate to include nation-state use of weapons of mass destruction. Like the other branches of the armed forces, the Army is organized, trained, and equipped primarily to conduct or deter conventional warfare, especially its most lethal manifestation—large-scale combat operations.

1-39. Conventional deterrence creates the paradox that although combat-ready forces reduce the probability of large-scale combat, they increase the frequency of adversaries pursuing irregular warfare and malign activity short of armed conflict to achieve objectives. The tradeoff is acceptable because conducting irregular warfare with forces prepared for large-scale ground combat incurs less risk than conducting large-scale ground combat with forces unprepared to do so.

## Irregular Warfare

1-40. **Irregular warfare is the overt, clandestine, and covert employment of military and non-military capabilities across multiple domains by state and non-state actors through methods other than military domination of an adversary, either as the primary approach or in concert with conventional warfare.** Irregular warfare may include the use of indirect military activities to enable partners, proxies, or surrogates to achieve shared or complementary objectives. The main objective of irregular warfare varies with the political context, and it can be successful without being combined with conventional warfare (for example, the Cuban Revolution). While it often focuses on establishing influence over a population, irregular warfare has also historically been an economy of force effort to fix enemy forces in secondary theaters of conflict or to cause enemy leaders to commit significant forces to less critical lines of effort. Two characteristics distinguish irregular warfare from conventional warfare:

- The intent is to erode a political authority's legitimacy and influence or to exhaust its resources and will—not to defeat its armed forces—while supporting the legitimacy, influence, and will of friendly entities engaged in the struggle.
- The nonmilitary instruments of power are more prominent because the military instrument of power alone is insufficient to achieve desired objectives.

1-41. JFCs can employ most Army forces and capabilities during irregular warfare. Certain forces and capabilities are irregular warfare focused (for example Army special operations forces), in that they are specifically designed and organized for irregular warfare, but they can also be employed effectively in conventional warfare (for example as combat advisors to host-nation forces). Other forces are irregular warfare capable, in that they are primarily designed and organized for conventional warfare, but they can also be employed effectively in irregular warfare. Historically, the overwhelming majority of Army forces employed to conduct irregular warfare have been conventional forces.

## OFFENSE, DEFENSE, AND STABILITY

1-42. Offense, defense, and stability are inherent elements of conventional and irregular warfare. Divisions and higher echelons typically perform some combination of all three elements in their operations simultaneously. However, the lower the echelon, the more likely it is for that formation to be focused on one element at a time.

1-43. An *offensive operation* is an operation to defeat or destroy enemy forces and gain control of terrain, resources, and population centers (ADP 3-0). Offensive operations are how commanders impose their will on an enemy. The offense is the most direct means of seizing, retaining, and exploiting the initiative to gain a physical and psychological advantage. Offensive operations typically include a sudden action directed toward enemy weaknesses, capitalizing on speed, surprise, and shock. The offense compels an enemy force to react, creating new or larger weaknesses the attacking force can exploit. (See ADP 3-90 for a detailed discussion of the offense.)

1-44. A *defensive operation* is an operation to defeat an enemy attack, retain key terrain, gain time, and develop conditions favorable for offensive or stability operations (ADP 3-0). Normally the defense cannot achieve a decisive victory. However, it sets conditions for a counteroffensive or a counterattack that enables forces to regain the initiative. Defensive operations are a counter to an enemy offensive action, and they seek to destroy as many of the enemy forces as possible. Defensive operations preserve control over land, resources, and populations, and they protect lines of communications and critical capabilities against attack. Commanders can conduct defensive operations in one area to free forces for offensive operations elsewhere. (See ADP 3-90 for a detailed discussion of the defense.)

1-45. A *stability operation* is an operation conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to establish or maintain a secure environment and provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief (ADP 3-0). These operations support governance by a host nation, an interim government, or a military government. Stability involves coercive and constructive action. (See ADP 3-07 for more information on stability operations.)

## LARGE-SCALE COMBAT OPERATIONS

1-46. The focus of Army readiness is on large-scale combat operations. *Large-scale combat operations* are extensive joint combat operations in terms of scope and size of forces committed, conducted as a campaign aimed at achieving operational and strategic objectives (ADP 3-0). During ground combat, they typically involve operations by multiple corps and divisions, and they typically include substantial forces from the joint and multinational team. Large-scale combat operations often include both conventional and irregular forces on both sides.

The Army is manned, equipped, and trained to operate in all operational scenarios or categories, starting with the most lethal conditions first—large-scale combat against a peer threat.

1-47. Conflicts encompassing large-scale combat operations are more intense and destructive than limited contingencies, often rapidly amassing heavy casualties. Peer threats employ networks of sensors and long-range massed fires that exploit electromagnetic signatures and other detection methods to create high risk for ground forces, particularly when they are static. Army forces must account for constant enemy observation, including the threat from unmanned systems that saturate the operational environment. Army forces take measures to defeat the enemy's ability to effectively mass effects while creating exploitable advantages to mass effects against enemy capabilities and formations.

1-48. Urban areas are high risk areas that are a factor in many operational environments. Avoiding urban areas during large-scale combat through deception or other means is ideal, but generally not possible. Commanders may conduct urban operations because they provide a tactical, political, or economic advantage, or when not doing so threatens the joint campaign. Army forces conduct large-scale combat operations in urban areas either as specific, unique operations, or more typically, as one of a larger series of operations in a joint campaign. Urban operations focus on the threat to or within the urban area and allow other forces to conduct operations elsewhere. Conducting operations in dense urban terrain is complex and resource intensive. Combined arms operations that integrate joint capabilities, allies and partners, and conventional and irregular forces are essential to success. Commanders voice concern to higher headquarters when they do not have sufficient forces for the task issued, and they must arrange their forces and operations according to purpose, time, and space to accomplish the mission. Success in defeating enemy forces in large urban areas typically requires the ability to isolate them from physical, information, and human support. (See ATP 3-06 for more information on urban operations.) During large-scale combat operations, Army forces focus on the defeat and destruction of enemy ground forces as part of the joint team, and they contribute to the defeat of forces in other domains. Army forces close with and destroy enemy forces in all types of terrain, exploit



success, and break the enemy's will to resist. Army forces attack, defend, perform stability tasks, and continuously consolidate gains to accomplish objectives that support a desirable political outcome. Corps and divisions are the formations central to the conduct of large-scale combat. The ability to prevail in ground combat is a decisive factor in breaking an enemy's capability and will to continue a conventional conflict. Conflict resolution requires Army forces to consolidate gains with unified action partners as long as necessary to accomplish national objectives.

1-49. Planning for large-scale combat operations must account for possible enemy use of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and allied retaliatory response options. Planning must also account for toxic industrial hazards caused by combat operations. Enemy employment of CBRN weapons and the allied response would affect all domains, but they present disproportionate effects in the land domain. Some adversaries plan for the employment of nuclear and chemical weapons by incorporating them into their doctrine and training, and they maintain delivery systems for their employment on the battlefield. Furthermore, the use of these weapons does not terminate a conflict and may cause it to escalate. Units must be prepared to operate in, around, and through contaminated environments. This is fundamental to deterring adversaries from employing weapons of mass destruction. CBRN considerations should inform both operational planning and force readiness. (See FM 3-11 for doctrine on operating in a CBRN environment, and see ATP 3-72 for more information operations in a nuclear environment.)

## COMBINED ARMS

1-50. *Combined arms* is the synchronized and simultaneous application of arms to achieve an effect greater than if each element was used separately or sequentially (ADP 3-0). Leaders combine arms in complementary and reinforcing ways to protect capabilities and amplify their effects. Confronted with a constantly changing situation, leaders create new combinations of capabilities, methods, and effects to pose new dilemmas for adversaries. The combined arms approach to operations during competition, crisis, and armed conflict is foundational to exploiting capabilities from all domains and their dimensions.

1-51. Complementary capabilities compensate for the vulnerabilities of one system or organization with the capabilities of a different one. Infantry protects tanks from enemy infantry and antitank systems, while tanks provide mobile protected firepower for the infantry. Ground maneuver can make enemy forces displace and become vulnerable to joint fires, while joint fires can disrupt enemy reserves and C2 to enable operations on the ground. Cyberspace and space capabilities and electromagnetic warfare can prevent enemy forces from detecting and communicating the location of friendly land-based fires capabilities, and Army fires capabilities can destroy enemy ground-based cyberspace nodes and electromagnetic warfare platforms to protect friendly communications.

1-52. Reinforcing capabilities combine similar systems or capabilities to amplify the overall effects a formation brings to bear in a particular context. During urban operations, for example, infantry, aviation, and armor units working in close coordination reinforce the protection, maneuver, and direct fire capabilities of each unit type while creating cascading dilemmas for enemy forces. Army artillery can be reinforced by close air support, air interdiction, and naval surface fire support, greatly increasing both the mass and range of fires available to a commander. Space and cyberspace capabilities used to disrupt enemy communications can reinforce a brigade combat team's (BCT's) ground-based jamming effort to increase the disruption to enemy C2. Military information support operations can amplify the effects of physical isolation on an enemy echelon, making it more vulnerable to friendly force exploitation.

1-53. The organic composition, training, and task organization of Army units set conditions for effective combined arms. Throughout operations, commanders assess the operational environment and adjust priorities, change task organization, and request capabilities to create exploitable advantages, extend operational reach, preserve combat power, and accomplish missions.

## LEVELS OF WARFARE

1-54. The *levels of warfare* are a framework for defining and clarifying the relationship among national objectives, the operational approach, and tactical tasks (ADP 1-01). While the various methods of warfare are ultimately expressed in concrete military action, the four levels of warfare—national strategic, theater

strategic, operational, and tactical—link tactical actions to achievement of national objectives as shown in figure 1-2.

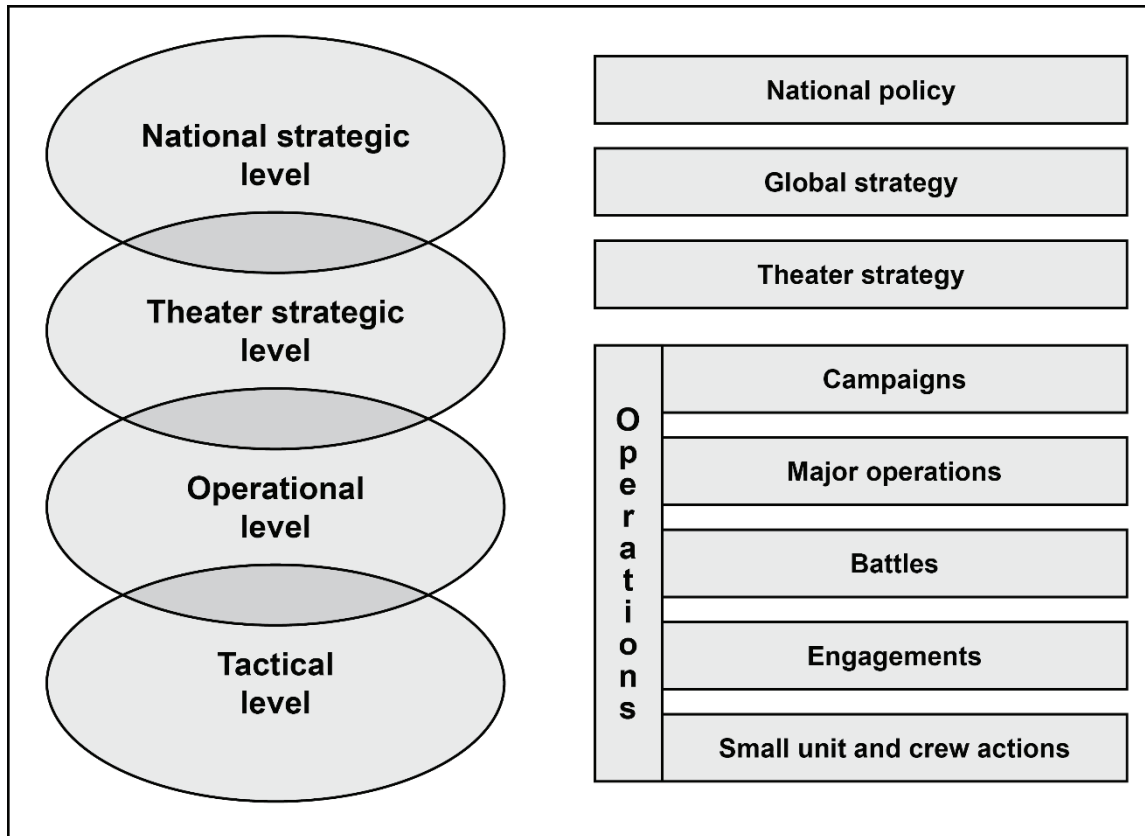


Figure 1-2. Levels of warfare

1-55. The levels of warfare distinguish four broad overlapping activities—providing national direction and creating national strategy (national strategic), conducting continuous theater campaigning (theater strategic); planning and conducting campaigns and major operations (operational); or planning and executing operations, battles, engagements, and actions (tactical). Some commanders act at more than one level of war. For example, a combatant commander (CCDR) formulates theater strategy and designs the campaign plan. A land component commander assists a CCDR in campaign design and may lead a field army during major operations. The levels of warfare are conceptual, without finite limits or boundaries. They do, however, correlate to specific activities and responsibilities. They help commanders visualize the relationships and actions required to link strategic objectives, military operations at various echelons, and tactical actions. Among the levels of warfare, planning horizons, methods, and products differ greatly. Without this context, tactical operations become disconnected from operational end states and strategic objectives. There are skills and practices related to strategic, theater strategic, operational, and tactical level that differ from each other and are enhanced by specific training and education.

### National Strategic Level of Warfare

1-56. The *national strategic level of warfare* is the level of warfare at which the U.S. government formulates policy goals and ways to achieve them by synchronizing action across government and unified action partners and employing the instruments of national power. The instruments of national power are all of the means available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives, expressed as diplomatic, economic, informational, and military. The national strategic level of warfare focuses on developing global strategy and providing global strategic direction. Strategic direction provides context, tasks, and purpose for the employment of the instruments of national power. The specifics of strategic

direction address long-term, emerging, and anticipatory issues or concerns that may quickly evolve due to rapidly changing circumstances. Strategic direction is always evolving and adapting.

1-57. The *theater strategic level of warfare* is the level of warfare at which combatant commanders synchronize with unified action partners and employ all elements of national power to fulfill policy aims within the assigned theater in support of the national strategy. Based on strategic guidance, CCDRs with assigned areas of responsibility and staffs—with input from subordinate commands, including theater armies and supporting commands and agencies—update their strategic estimates and develop theater strategies. A theater strategy is an overarching construct outlining a combatant commander’s vision for integrating and synchronizing military activities and operations with the other instruments of national power to achieve national strategic objectives. The theater strategy prioritizes the ends, ways, and means within the limitations established by the budget, global force management processes, and strategic guidance. The theater strategy serves as the basis for development of the combatant command campaign plan (CCP).

## Operational Level of Warfare

1-58. The *operational level of warfare* is the level of warfare in which campaigns and operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve operational objectives to support achievement of strategic objectives (JP 3-0). The operational level links the employment of tactical forces to the achievement of strategic objectives.

1-59. The operational level of warfare generally is the realm of combatant commands and their Service or functional components and subordinate joint task force (JTF) headquarters and their Service or functional components. This includes the theater army headquarters as the Army Service component to a combatant command and any other echelon operating as an ARFOR, JTF headquarters, or land component command. The focus at this level is on operational art—the design of campaigns and operations by integrating ends, ways, and means, while accounting for risk. (See ADP 3-0 for more information on operational art.)

1-60. Actions at the operational level of warfare usually involve broader aspects of time and space than tactical actions. The theater army’s activities continuously support the CCDR in shaping the operational and strategic situation. Operational-level commanders need to understand the complexities of the operational environment and look beyond the immediate situation. Operational-level commanders seek to create the most favorable conditions possible for subordinate commanders by preparing for future events.

1-61. The operational level of warfare demands leaders with a unique set of skills. Because the operational level is fundamentally about linking tactical action to strategic objectives, leaders must understand both strategy and tactics. They must have some expertise in the capabilities and operations of all Services and components and those of allies and partners. Leaders at the operational level must be able to assess large, complex operational environments and be expert planners. They must understand the application of warfighting functions on a large scale and how this application differs from application at the tactical level. The elements of operational art help operational leaders understand, visualize, and describe their campaigns and major operations. (See ADP 3-0 for details on the elements of operational art.)

## Tactical Level of Warfare

1-62. The *tactical level of warfare* is the level of warfare at which forces plan and execute battles and engagements to achieve military objectives (JP 3-0). Activities at this level focus on *tactics*—the employment, ordered arrangement, and directed actions of forces in relation to each other (ADP 3-90). Operational-level headquarters determine objectives and provide resources for tactical operations. Tactical-level commanders plan and execute operations to include battles, engagements, and small-unit actions.

1-63. Tactical-level combat operations rise to the level of battles or engagements. A *battle* is a set of related engagements that lasts longer and involves larger forces than an engagement (ADP 3-90). Battles can affect the course of a campaign or major operation, and they are typically conducted by corps and divisions over the course of days or months. An *engagement* is a tactical conflict, usually between opposing lower echelon maneuver forces (JP 3-0). Engagements are typically conducted at brigade echelons and below. They are usually short, executed in minutes or hours.