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NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



Multi-Domain Battle:

Seizing, Retaining, and Exploiting the Initiative Short of Armed Conflict

By

Dana T. Stowell

Colonel, United States Army

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes. (or appropriate statement per the Academic Integrity Policy)

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Abstract

The United States' position as a global power is under constantly increasing pressure from a dynamically changing environment and will continue to be so in the future. The Joint Force describes the future operational environment as one of contested norms and persistent disorder, which primarily describes the portion of the conflict continuum defined as competition short of armed conflict. Russia, China, and a variety of other actors are successfully using the military element of national power to compete with the U.S. short of armed conflict and the U.S. does not have a solution to this problem. How will the Geographic Combatant Commanders solve the challenges of today and of 2035?

In December 2017, the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps published version 1 of a new operational concept for land forces – *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century 2025-2050*. Multi-Domain Battle (MDB) is an evolution of the gold standard of operational concepts, AirLand Battle, yet it is unique among its predecessors. Similar to AirLand Battle, MDB focuses on land force operations against a peer adversary in armed conflict; however, it uniquely addresses how MDB applies in competition short of armed conflict.

Understanding the first order principles of Multi-Domain Battle reveals a wider Joint Force application of the fledgling operational concept, both in armed conflict and in competition short of armed conflict. There is an opportunity for the Joint Force and Combatant Commands to contribute to the development of the MDB concept for land forces and adapt it for broader application across the services to compete with actors short of armed conflict.

Dedication

I would like to thank my family, classmates, and faculty for their support throughout the thesis process.

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Multi-Domain Battle:
Seizing, Retaining, and Exploiting the Initiative
Short of Armed Conflict

Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States is in the 16th year of protracted armed conflict as part of the Global War on Terror; however, this singular element of the global security environment is only one challenge for America and its allies in the next 35-40 years and not the most dangerous. Many political and military leaders, as well as academics, perceive tectonic shifts in the global security environment. Just as with geological shifts, some changes have been years or decades in the making before appreciable changes are detected. Other changes occur rapidly, with little warning until a triggering event, like an earthquake or volcanic eruption, signals the change. China's rise in economic and military power is indicative of the former type of change, while the rise of various violent extremist organizations (VEOs), signaled by the attacks of 9/11 or ISIL's offensive to seize terrain in Iraq and Syria, is indicative of the latter. The United States military, both as individual services and as a Joint Force, recognized the changing environment by developing new operational concepts – *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* and *Multi-Domain Battle: The Evolution in Combined Arms for the 21st Century*.

The *Joint Operating Environment 2035* articulates two principle challenges that will define the future operating environment: contested norms and persistent disorder. The U.S., its partners, and allies, are already experiencing precursors of what is to come in this new operating environment. Contested norms will feature adversaries that

credibly challenge the rules and agreements that define international order. Persistent disorder will involve certain adversaries exploiting the inability of societies to provide functioning, stable, and legitimate governance.”¹ There are four interrelated and fundamental ways in which the environment will continue to change: adversaries challenge U.S. forces in all domains, the battlefield is becoming more lethal, operational complexity is increasing globally, and deterring aggressive acts is becoming more challenging.²

A new operational environment demands a new operational concept for Joint Force success. There is a consensus across the Joint Force and the Combatant Commands that these changes to the operational environment require changes to the way the Joint Force operates, especially in the period of competition short of armed conflict, in order to achieve the nation’s policy aims. Joint doctrine usually focuses on armed conflict, yet 20th Century history indicates the military primarily operates in periods of competition short of armed conflict. In fact, a review of the 2017 posture statements of each of the Geographic Combatant Commanders reveals a common, persistent challenge across each command – competing with U.S. adversaries short of armed conflict. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) is the only Geographic Combatant Command contending with armed conflict. The question to answer is: How does the Joint Force contribute to

¹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operating Environment 2035: The Joint Force in a Contested and Disordered World*, (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 14 2017), ii.
U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century (2025-2040)*, Version 1.0 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 2017), 15-16.

² U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century (2025-2040)*, Version 1.0 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 2017), 4-6.

achieving policy aims in competition outside of armed conflict in the future operational environment?

Competition short of armed conflict defined.

Quincy Wright described the continuum of conflict between absolute peace and absolute war as predominantly a spectrum of competition.³ Merriam-Webster defines competition as “a contest between rivals.”

Globally, competition occurs continuously and in many forms. Competition occurs between rivals at multiple levels from local to national to regional to global. In the past, the great powers only worried about other states as competitors and not the variety of rivals that can and will compete in the current and future strategic security environment. The end of the Cold War led to the uncoupling of power to the state alone. The world has seen the emergence of a variety of actors able to exercise power in addition to the Westphalian state –nations not formally recognized as states, ideological groups, corporations, and super-empowered individuals.

A realist worldview would argue states compete in a zero-sum game across all elements of national power and in all arenas. A constructivist worldview might argue for greater latitude between states and parties to cooperate rather than compete in a zero-sum game. As a hegemonic world power, the U.S. is in a zero-sum game regardless of worldview. Any relative gain in power by an adversary in a particular region is tied directly to a loss in U.S. power in that region. The U.S. might not appreciate small losses

³ Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, Second Edition, Midway Reprint, Abridged by Louise Leonard Wright, (Chicago, IL and London, England: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 3-15.

of power over time until a tipping point is reached and then the U.S. is in a position of relative disadvantage. Adversaries of the U.S. are directly seeking to reduce American power and influence, so whether the U.S. realizes it is in a zero-sum game, its adversaries are playing a zero-sum game...successfully.

Quincy Wright also articulates a threshold for conflict to be defined as war. Any conflict not meeting this threshold is merely disordered chaos.⁴ Along this continuum of conflict, there is a second threshold of importance, that of armed conflict. This distinction is more important for the purpose of this paper. Armed conflict is best defined under the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) that governs armed conflict. Armed conflict is simply defined as “a dispute, between two or more parties involving the use of armed force.”⁵ The distinction between force and forces is important. In this definition “armed force” is the use of a level of violence previously restricted to states vice the actual organization or forces. IHL distinguishes between international armed conflict between two states and non-international armed conflict between a state and an internal group or groups. Armed conflict by this definition is reflected in combat operations, not necessarily the deployment or employment of the military.

Competition short of armed conflict from a U.S. perspective is therefore defined as: “the persistent contest between the U.S. and its rivals utilizing the military element of national power absent employment of the armed forces in combat operations.” It is in this

⁴ Wright, 15-19.

⁵ World Health Organization, *Glossary of Humanitarian Terms*, Draft Version (ReliefWeb Project, 2008), <http://www.who.int/hac/about/reliefweb-aug2008.pdf> (accessed December 16, 2017), 13.

spectrum of competition short of armed conflict that the Joint Force operates in day to day in the past, present, and in the future.

Multi-Domain Battle as a framework.

Geographic Combatant Commanders agree upon certain activities short of armed conflict such as Security Forces Assistance/Security Cooperation, training exercises, maintaining or strengthening partnerships, and assuring allies. The military element of national power is employed to achieve the following effects: assure, deter, coerce, and compel. The U.S. is not currently effective in countering the aggressive acts of our adversaries through deterrence. Joint doctrine addresses deterrence, yet that has proven elusive and our adversaries have demonstrated an ability to act aggressively in manners which the U.S. cannot deter. Russia's aggressive actions short of armed conflict in the Ukraine ahead of combat operations, cyber attacks in Estonia, and the variety of other vaguely attributable coercive actions in the Baltics and worldwide via information warfare and cyber attacks are indicative of adversarial actions in competition which undermine traditional forms of deterrence.

The Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC) establishes a common vision for how the Joint Force will operate in the future OE routinely. It addresses the fundamental requirement of Geographic Combatant Commands to conduct operations to achieve strategic objectives, which most often occur short of armed conflict. The JCIC reframes the Joint Force approach to the periods of competition outside of armed conflict as a primary component of campaigning. This reframing of the use of the military element of national power in competition provides the foundation of thought, yet does not provide a way to operationalize the use of force in competition. Multi-Domain Battle

begins to operationalize how the Joint Force should approach periods of competition short of armed conflict.

Multi-Domain Battle (MDB) is an operational concept focused on winning in a complex world; that means it is designed to solve challenges in armed conflict versus the spectrum of threats anticipated in the future operational environment. This does not mean that the principles contained in the concept do not apply in operations short of armed conflict. The inherent joint, interagency, and multinational nature of MDB as a concept predisposes it to also effectively address the challenges Combatant Commanders routinely face. Multi-Domain Battle provides a conceptual framework for Joint Forces to achieve policy aims in competition short of armed conflict by countering U.S. adversaries' military element of national power.

Methods and Organization.

The focus of this paper is to advance the discussion on the utility of the evolving operational concept of Multi-Domain Battle by addressing how the concept can help Combatant Commanders solve the complex challenges they face in their geographical areas of responsibilities. MDB provides the conceptual foundation to seal the cracks in U.S. joint strength and capabilities which are steadily exploited by adversaries to reduce the credibility and effectiveness of U.S. military power. A more credible, MDB-capable force can challenge peer and near-peer adversary unconventional warfare (UW), information warfare (IW), and cyber capabilities, while putting adversary conventional anti-access/area denial (A2AD) systems at risk, thus improving the ability to effectively deter adversaries in competition. To achieve this end, the paper will provide an understanding of the future operational environment in the time period of 2035-2050, as

informed by the environment of today. Based upon that foundation, the paper will next provide contextual understanding of the Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC) and MDB. The discussion on MDB will: 1) provide the reader with a basic understanding of the concept; and 2) provide a basic understanding of where the concept is in development and the path to operationalizing the concept through DOTMLPF-P (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy) integration.

After establishing a firm understanding of the MDB concept and first order principles, the paper will utilize a Cold War case study to analyze an effective use of the military element of national power, in concert with the other elements, to counter aggressive adversarial actions with military deployment and employment to assure, deter, coerce, and compel in periods of competition short of armed conflict. The overall policy of containment and subordinate strategies achieved the desired political aim and the conditions favorable to the U.S. and its allies upon the conclusion of the Cold War.

With a firm view of successful employment of the military element of national power short of armed conflict, the paper will transition to describing how MDB will provide the Combatant Commanders with the DOTMLPF-P and joint integrated solutions to successfully address the challenges of the future Operational Environment presented by adversaries who routinely take action below the threshold of armed conflict. The focus of this section of the paper will be on options for deterrence in the 21st Century when the adversaries' aggressive actions are designed to be resistant to deterrent actions.

The paper will synthesize the essential points of the argument that Multi-Domain Battle will provide options to Combatant Commanders to deter aggressive adversarial

actions short of armed conflict. The key recommendations will include: 1) areas of development within the Multi-Domain Battle Concept evolution; and 2) tasks/capabilities/considerations for Joint Force Commanders in utilizing MDB-capable joint forces to challenge adversarial actions.

Limitations.

The underlying premise to this paper is that employment of the military element of national power discussed throughout is but one element employed to complement the other elements of national power - Diplomacy, Information, and Economic - to achieve the political aims of the United States. The evolving Multi-Domain Battle (MDB) concept is inherently joint, interagency, and multi-national. Military efforts are ultimately only one part of a whole of government approach to seeking to achieve conditions favorable to the nation. This paper will not address the linkages of the military element of national power with the other elements.

There is resistance to the dramatic changes occurring within the individual services and the Joint Force. That is to be expected within a large, bureaucratic organization such as the U.S. Department of Defense. This paper is not intended to defend or challenge JCIC or MDB as concepts, rather it is intended to advance the discussion within the Joint Force on operationalizing the concepts to maximum utility. The U.S. military often focuses solely on operations during armed conflict with little effort devoted to a majority of the requirements on the military element of national power – operations short of armed conflict. This paper is intended to bridge the gap between an operational concept developed to win decisively in armed conflict and the need of

Combatant Commands to address the challenges they routinely face short of armed conflict.

Chapter 2: Analysis of Operational Concepts – Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning and Multi-Domain Battle

Chapter 2 focuses on the document review and analysis of the emerging operational concept of Multi-Domain Battle and the *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (JCIC). It will summarize the JCIC to establish a foundation upon which to proceed, reviewing and applying MDB to the challenges Geographic Combatant Commanders face today and in the future. JCIC developers view the concept as changing the way the Joint Force thinks about seeking to achieve desired policy aims. This first section will be essential in establishing a common understanding of the period of competition and describing the importance of activities short of armed conflict. The foundational concept of the military's role in competition provided in the JCIC is operationalized in MDB.

Second, this chapter will describe the Multi-Domain Battle Concept. There are three important elements in this description and review: 1) provide the reader with a basic understanding of the concept; 2) provide a basic understanding of where the concept is in development; and 3) describe the path to operationalizing the concept through DOTMLPF-P integration.

The operational concepts discussed in this chapter describe the approaches the Joint Force and the services utilize to think about the future and shape the Joint Force to maintain a position of relative advantage globally. They do this in order to achieve politically desirable conditions to protect the national interests of the United States, across the spectrum of conflict. This foundational understanding begins with the description of the operational environment envisioned by the Joint Force and the U.S.

Army in the timeframe of 2035-2050. The contemporary operational environment (OE) serves as a precursor of the challenges yet to come.

The Operational Environment 2035-2050.

As previously introduced in Chapter 1, the *Joint Operating Environment 2035* published in 2016 identified two principle markers of the future OE - contested norms and persistent disorder. By definition, these markers uniquely describe elements of the OE most prevalent and with greatest impact during competition short of armed conflict. The sponsors of the JCIC relied upon the JOE 2035 description of the OE for development.

Likewise, the Army and Marine Corps utilized the JOE and the Army's description of the future OE for the development of the MDB concept. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) recently published *The Operational Environment, 2035-2050: The Emerging Character of Warfare*. The JOE served as the foundation for this expanded work over the course of the two years following the publication of the JOE in 2015. This more recent publication articulates a complimentary description of the future based upon an extrapolation of the environment today based upon the trends in changes in how people live, think, create, and prosper. These trends will change the character of future warfare in what the Army terms the Era of Contested Equality (2035-2050). The Army outlines five characteristics defining the future OE: 1) Contested in all domains; 2) Unprecedented speed, elusive resolution; 3) WMD Proliferation; 4) Complex terrain the norm; and 5) Hybrid combatants.⁶ Although these characteristics are applicable in armed

⁶ U.S. Army, *The Operational Environment 2035-2050: The Emerging Character of Warfare* (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, G2, August 2017), 17-19.

conflict, they are most instructive in understanding the OE that GCCs will operate in routinely and aptly describe the characteristics of the challenges the commands will face.

The United States typically views the continuum of conflict as binary; a view that complicates the full employment of the elements of national power in support of U.S. national interests in a routine and enduring manner. In January 2015, the Director of the Joint Staff, Air Force Lt. Gen. Goldfein, directed the Army, Marine Corps, and Special Operations Command as the sponsoring organizations to develop a new joint concept to address how the Joint Force approaches the use of the military element of national power routinely in support of national interests – the Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC).⁷ The JCIC was approved and published in early 2018, yet its tenets were proliferating across the Joint Force concept and doctrine development processes ahead of publication.

From a game theory perspective, competition can and does occur even when not all of the rivals are aware they are in a contest. This is dangerous for a great power when the competition is with states or actors of rising power and the great power is declining. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. lost some clarity on the changes in the operational environment, in particular the ever-expanding capabilities of emerging adversaries and competitors, while serving as the hegemonic great power in the world. In the 1990s, the U.S. focused on peacekeeping and other operations to maintain international order. Since 2001, the U.S. focused on the threat posed by violent extremist organizations in the “Global War on Terror.” Although the actions of the U.S. often

⁷ Director, Joint Staff, *DJSM 00010-15*, Published 8 January, 2015.

served the greater good, the U.S. sought to protect its national interests. Those interests became more and more linked to a globalist agenda, which contributed to the U.S. wearing “strategic blinders” to the rising levels of competition.

The Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC).⁸

The United States is in a worldwide competition with a variety of actors – emerging and resurgent global powers, aspiring regional hegemons, and non-state actors – challenging the post-World War II international order. As discussed under the operational environment of 2035-2050 earlier in this paper, the actors challenging the United States for regional and global power will continue to employ the elements of national power, in particular the military element, below the threshold of armed conflict with the United States. Challengers of the international order are adaptive and adept at orchestrating conventional, unconventional, and emerging capabilities to contest opponents across multiple domains to achieve desired objectives without direct confrontation.

The Joint Force has a military challenge based upon the changes in the operational environment of today and the future:

How do Joint Force and its inter-organizational partners prepare to conduct globally integrated operations to achieve acceptable and sustainable outcomes, taking into account: the complexity of the environment; interactions with adaptive adversaries; transregional challenges; emerging patterns of competition below the threshold of armed conflict; and the challenge of integrating military activities within the DoD and aligning those activities with inter-organizational partners?⁹

⁸ This section is derived from the Executive Summary and Introduction of the Joint Concept of Integrated Campaigning Draft published in March 2018 and is intended to give the reader an understanding of the changing Joint Force approach and thinking on how to achieve policy aims in competition short of armed conflict.

⁹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, (Washington D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 16, 2018), vii, 5-6.

The Joint Force solution to the military challenge is the central idea of *Integrated Campaigning*. Integrated campaigning is defined in the JCIC as “Joint Force and inter-organizational partner efforts to enable the achievement and maintenance of policy aims by integrating military activities and aligning non-military activities of sufficient scope, scale, simultaneity, and duration across multiple domains.” Integrated campaigning consists of four interrelated elements that provide a mental framework to effectively campaign: 1) understand the operating environment; 2) design and construct the campaign; 3) employ the integrated force and secure gains; and 4) assess and adapt the campaign.

The JCIC seeks to change the thinking about how the Joint Force operates routinely by applying the elements of operational design and campaign planning to steady-state operations carried out by the GCCs. This concept replaces the previously used phasing construct (phases 0-5) outlined in Joint Publication 5-0: *Joint Planning*, but removed in the 2017 publication. The change in conceptual approaches arose from an analysis of recent, ongoing, and emerging challenges that revealed several implications: 1) the need to eliminate institutional remnants of the obsolete peace/war binary conception of the OE; 2) recognition that following through to accomplish or enable policy aims is an inherent element of campaigning in armed conflict as well as an essential facet of campaigning outside of armed conflict; 3) military power alone is insufficient to achieve sustainable political objectives, and there are limited means to achieve integration across the elements of national power; and 4) a complex and rapidly changing OE will require a construct for employing the Joint Force in competition below armed conflict.

The JCIC puts forward two new ideas essential the discussion of MDB as a mental construct for the employment of the Joint Force in competition: 1) the competition continuum; and 2) competition mechanisms. The competition continuum is a three-part construct reflecting the character of relations between the U.S. and another actor, state or non-state consisting of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict. The elements of the competition continuum can co-exist at the same point in time and relate to the relationship of a specific actor relative to the U.S. and a specific issue. The descriptors provide a refined lexicon to facilitate shared understanding and the development of a shared vision to facilitate further planning and decision-making.

Below are the definitions of the three descriptors of the competition continuum:

- Armed conflict: use of violence is the primary means by which an actor seeks to satisfy its interest. Varies in intensity and ranges from limited warfare to major wars between great powers. Armed conflict policy aims in armed conflict include defeat, deny, and degrade.
- Competition below armed conflict: exists when two or more actors in the international system have incompatible interests, but neither seeks to escalate to armed conflict. A proxy war between two actors means the actors are in competition below armed conflict while the two proxies are in armed conflict. Policy aims in competition below armed conflict include:
 - Improve. Seek to improve the overall strategic position relative to the competitive actor with all measures short of those that might reasonably lead to armed conflict.

- Counter. Ensure the U.S. maintains relative strategic position and prevent further competitor gains. Seek opportunities to improve U.S. position based upon available resources and authorities without jeopardizing interests elsewhere.
- Contest. Use prudent means to achieve the best possible strategic outcome within given resources or policy constraints. Includes risk that the competitor will achieve further gains.
- Cooperation: includes mutually beneficial relationships between actors with similar or compatible interests. Policy aims in cooperation include engage selectively, maintain, and advance.¹⁰

The second new idea from the JCIC is the suite of competition mechanisms. The competition mechanisms provide ways to maintain or establish favorable conditions within the international order across the competition continuum and are complimentary to defeat and stability mechanisms in joint doctrine. The competition mechanisms include: strengthen, create, preserve, weaken, position, inform, persuade. These mechanisms all require a Joint Force that presents a credible capability to decisively win in armed conflict.

As described in the OE section, the Joint Force faces actors who are challenging the strengths of U.S. military power by contesting all domains and fracturing the current evolution of joint integration, thereby rendering the U.S. less effective in achieving policy aims through the military instrument of national power. The JCIC sets the

¹⁰ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, (Washington D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 16, 2018), 8-9.

foundation for a new operational approach to routine operations at the GCC-level and its importance is reflected in the new land force operational concept – Multi-Domain Battle.

Multi-Domain Battle (MDB).

A new operational environment demands a new operational concept. The JCIC provides an updated conceptual model for how the Joint Force approaches routine operations through integrated campaigning. Multi-Domain Battle is an operational concept that nests within the JCIC approach.

Multi-Domain Battle is a multi-service concept developed by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps and first published in December 2017, focused on how the two forces that control areas/operate within the land domain will contribute to the overall freedom of action for the joint force. This concept is unique. It is not the typically parochial document generated within the DoD to garner greater resources for one service in resource constrained times, rather it is a concept which is joint by its nature. Similar to the JCIC, it is an acknowledgement of the changing strategic, operational, and tactical OE. It envisions how the U.S. Army and Marine Corps will operate in the future. The concept can also serve as a mental framework that is useful to the Joint Force beyond the original scope of the multi-service concept.

The Concept.¹¹

The Multi-Domain Battle Concept provides the vision of how the Army and Marine Corps will fight in the future to achieve overmatch at the tactical level, provide freedom of action for the Joint Force at the operational level, and win at the strategic

¹¹ The overview of the MDB concept is a compilation of the description of MDB as outlined in version 1 of the concept and personal experience with observing the development of the concept at TRADOC.

level of warfare. From an Army perspective, MDB builds upon the October 2014 Army Operating Concept, which describes how the Army will “win in a complex world.”¹² It is the first operating concept within the Army that specifically addresses all three levels of warfare. AirLand Battle specifically restricts its scope to the tactical and operational levels, which was appropriate for the operational environment of the time. The changing OE and the description of the future OE led to a realization that the paradigm of winning wars with the military instrument of national power has changed. The operational destruction of an enemy’s force or the capture of a capital are no longer the primary means to win wars. The strategic employment of all elements of national power is the way in which the United States wins wars. In fact, the result of armed conflict is no longer a binary construct of victory or defeat. The paradigm is now one of a temporary state of winning or losing relative to an enemy or adversary for the desired political objectives or desired conditions. This dynamic exists on both sides of armed conflict on the conflict continuum described in the JCIC.

New Ideas of Multi-Domain Battle.

“Army forces, as part of the Joint Force, conduct Multi-Domain Battle to deter and defeat increasingly capable adversaries in competition, armed conflict, and a return to competition by calibrating force posture; by employing resilient, cross-domain capable formations that can maneuver on the expanded battlespace; and by converging

¹² U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century (2025-2040)*, Version 1.0 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 2017), iii-v.

capabilities across multiple domains, environments, and functions to create windows of advantage that enable maneuver.”¹³

MDB addresses several new ideas to respond to peer adversaries in this new OE which build upon the successes of AirLand Battle and synchronization of joint effects. One of the new ideas is that MDB consists of three interrelated components to operationalize the concept in a holistic manner: 1) calibrate force posture; 2) employ resilient formations; and 3) converge capabilities (see Figure 1).¹⁴

The convergence of capabilities across all domains, environments, and joint functions of the scale and intensity anticipated requires a new MDB operational framework to visualize combined arms integration and application across time and physical space to achieve a purpose.¹⁵

The final, major new idea in MDB as an operational concept is the application of the concept in competition. The period of competition described earlier in Chapter 2 is

Operationalizing MDB

Calibrate Force Posture:

Multi-Domain Battle requires a dynamic mix of forward presence forces and capabilities, expeditionary forces and capabilities, and partner forces to deter and, when required, to defeat an adversary plan within days.

Employ Resilient Formations:

Multi-Domain Battle demands formations capable of conducting semi-independent, dispersed, mutually supporting, cross-domain operations at operational and tactical levels. These scalable and task-organized units, empowered by the mission command philosophy, possess the essential protection, sustainment, and mission command capabilities to operate in lethal, contested environments while retaining the agility to mass capabilities at a desired place and time.

Converge Capabilities:

Multi-Domain Battle requires converging political and military capabilities – lethal and nonlethal capabilities – across multiple domains in time and space to create windows of advantage that enable the Joint Force to maneuver and achieve objectives, exploit opportunities, or create dilemmas for the enemy.

Figure 1 Interrelated Components of MDB

¹³ U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century (2025-2040)*, Version 1.0 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 2017), 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

more explicitly described in MDB as occurring in two distinct periods: 1) competition short of armed conflict; and 2) a return to competition following armed conflict.

Multi-Domain Battle in Competition. As the Joint Force re-envision its concept of thinking and approaching how to conduct routine operations to achieve national security and political objectives, the Multi-Domain Battle concept achieves another first of its kind as an operational concept – it provides ways in which the concept can support Geographic Combatant Commanders and Joint Force Commanders to compete against peer or near-peer adversaries in competition short of armed conflict. No other operating concept for U.S. land forces has approached any operations outside of armed conflict. Joint and service doctrine addresses tactical and operational level activities and operations short of armed conflict, but the concepts that lead to doctrine have previously focused solely on combat operations.

The changes to the operational environment and the actions of U.S. adversaries and competitors using the military instrument of national power to compete for power, influence, and resources below a threshold of armed conflict have evolved to a point where the concept writers recognize the need for a convergence of future capabilities. Likewise, there is also a recognition that the role of the military instrument of national power does not operate in a vacuum to achieve national objectives. Although not specifically addressed, MDB specifies the requirement to converge both military and inter-organizational capabilities across multiple domains and environments in time and space for Joint Force freedom of action to achieve a purpose.¹⁶ The fact that MDB

¹⁶ U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century (2025-2040)*, Version 1.0 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 2017), 25-27.

recognizes the inter-relationships of the instruments of national power and articulates the necessity to converge these capabilities is unique amongst operational concepts although it does not draw out the roles of the diplomatic, information, and economic instruments of national power. Solutions to future challenges in competition require more than just a military solution.

Concept Development – The Process.

Concepts describe how the military will operate in the future. Concepts rely upon capabilities not yet developed for operational use. Concepts are visionary. They are developed in a resource unconstrained manner to identify the capabilities necessary to fight and win the nation's wars in the future OE. The capabilities development processes and acquisition processes within the services and the Department of Defense writ large prioritize the capabilities based upon available resources outside of the concept itself. A resource constrained concept limits options and innovation necessary to adapt to the ever-changing environment of the future. Doctrine describes how the military conducts operations today with the available capabilities. If the military can execute a concept as written today, then it should be doctrine.

AirLand Battle is the most well-known operational concept, yet what most individuals understand as AirLand Battle is the resulting doctrine following eight years of concept development and DOTMLPF-P – Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy – integration. In comparison, MDB is still in its infancy as an operational concept at roughly eighteen months into development. The approved version 1 of the concept will be incorporated into the Army's existing capabilities development process and the other processes involved in integrating

the concept across the DOTMLPF-P. Optimally, the Joint Force would integrate the concept in the same Joint Capabilities Integration Development model.

A unique aspect of the development of MDB has been the level of joint engagement since its inception. The first formal reveal of Multi-Domain Battle occurred in October 2016 at the annual Association of the United States Army in Washington D.C. Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work gave the opening remarks before turning the microphone over to the panel consisting of senior representatives from each of the services (two service chiefs, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and GEN Perkins), a Geographic Combatant Commander, and an Army Component Commander. Since that time, the Army and Marines produced the first version of the concept with input from the other services, with an increasing commitment from each service to contribute to the next version as they develop their corresponding concepts to support the Joint Force. In fact, the video produced to describe Multi-Domain Battle and its importance to the land forces of the U.S. and the Joint Force as a whole, once again features senior leaders from each of the services. This level of integration across the services had not been previously seen. The first success of Multi-Domain Battle – reimagining joint integration; integration in development vice integration at the point of employment.

Chapter 3: AirLand Battle Concept in Competition Short of Armed Conflict

AirLand Battle is considered the “gold standard” of American operational concepts. The concept became doctrine and led to tactical and operational dominance showcased in the 1991 Gulf War in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm and again in the 2003 invasion of Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom. AirLand Battle, both as a concept and later as doctrine, was focused on the tactical and operational levels of war. That was the success it delivered in Iraq, twice. The strength of AirLand Battle’s key concept was “fight outnumbered and win.” Its sole focus was on how the Army would fight. No thought was given to operations short of armed conflict. The tenets of AirLand Battle and its strengths are not to be discarded, rather the U.S. military seeks to build upon the strength of its foundation with Multi-Domain Battle.

AirLand Battle – The Concept

AirLand Battle as a concept arose following Vietnam at a time when the U.S. Army needed to reinvent itself. The Army suffered from the years of war in the jungles of Vietnam, the effects of the draft, drugs, race issues, and an ever increasing conventional and nuclear threat from the Soviet Union. Although historians could argue that the environment of the 1970s and early 1980s was complex to an extent, it would appear as complicated and not complex in comparison to the environment evolving since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

The concept was built as a threat-based model. It was one dimension deep across the board. AirLand Battle was developed to counter one enemy, the Soviet Union, in one location, the Central Plains of Europe, with one alliance, NATO. The problem set was a known. Based upon this framework, the Army and the American military set out to

differentiate its capabilities from the Soviet Union. AirLand Battle was the final concept to arise in the Cold War following the concept of active defense. This change was driven by the fact that the Soviets had more forces than the U.S. and NATO could counter.

“Fight outnumbered and win” was the objective of AirLand Battle.

In order to defeat the Soviets, the Army needed to be able to engage uncommitted echelons with fires – Air Force, long-range fires (MLRS), and attack helicopters (Apache). In order to do this, the U.S. developed the battlefield framework of Deep, Close, and Rear. U.S. forces would engage the uncommitted echelons in the Deep fight. The Close fight required capabilities to penetrate enemy forces and rapidly maneuver throughout the depth and breadth of the battlefield. The Abrams tank and Bradley infantry fighting vehicle provided that capability. The Rear fight required the ability to sustain and protect the force from conventional and unconventional Soviet forces.

The AirLand Battle concept was the driver of necessary change to the way the U.S. military, the Army in particular, prepared for anticipate armed conflict with the Soviet Union. That allowed the U.S. to achieve stunning effects in Iraq both in 1991 and 2003. Of course, Iraq shared many traits with the Soviet military in organization, training, and equipment. The concept was proven. Unfortunately, the threat changed.

Risk of AirLand Battle.

AirLand Battle was the concept the U.S. needed in the 1970s and 1980s. The world dramatically changed following the end of the Cold War. Conceptually, the U.S. was ill-prepared, if not complacent in appreciating the changes. The Training and Leader Development components of integrating AirLand Battle arguably allowed for military leaders to eventually adapt over time in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it took nearly 15 years

to understand the changes to the environment sufficiently to take steps towards the conceptual change necessary to meet the demands of the OE in the future. GEN David Perkins, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command would often refer to the Heisenberg Principle in this regard – the fact that one is preparing for an anticipated future will result in changing what the future will be. The U.S. never fought the Soviet Union on the Central Plains of Europe with NATO, because that was the future the Joint Force planned against.

Summary of Differences between AirLand Battle (ALB) and Multi-Domain Battle (MDB)

Comparison	ALB (1986)	MDB (2017)
Level of War	Tactical and Operational	Tactical, Operational, Strategic
Theme	<i>Fight Outnumbered and Win</i>	Linked to Army Operating Concept (2014) – <i>Win in a Complex World</i>
Spectrum of Conflict	Armed conflict	Competition, Armed Conflict, Return to Competition
Battlefield Framework	Deep, Close, Rear	Strategic Support Area, Operational Support Area, Tactical Support Area, Close Area, Deep Maneuver Area, Operational Deep Fires, Strategic Deep Fires
Domains	Two maximum	All domains; capability to operate in all simultaneously

As a concept, AirLand Battle led to the capabilities and contributed to the DOTMLPF-P integration in the Army and across the Joint Force which led to the tactical and operational dominance of the American military showcased in Desert Storm and the invasion of Iraq. The first order principles of ALB set the foundation for MDB as a

concept. AirLand Battle is a proven concept, but the changes in the operational environment required the re-imagination of joint integration and the application of ALB principles across all domains in a manner not yet seen with capabilities not yet developed, thus Multi-Domain Battle seeks to build upon 30 years of experience in a complex and constantly changing world. Multi-Domain Battle builds upon the solid foundation of AirLand Battle to shape the future force of the U.S.

Chapter 4: Expanded Opportunities from Multi-Domain Battle in Competition

Short of Armed Conflict

This chapter will address the aggressive military actions of near-peer competitors, non-state actors, and violent extremist organizations in the phase of competition. The gaps currently exploited by the adversaries of the U.S. highlights the areas the U.S. Joint Force must address. This will be accomplished by describing adversarial actions below the threshold of armed conflict posed by the 4+1 adversaries in relation to each of the Geographic Combatant Commands in order to outline recommended actions and considerations for friendly military activities within the framework provided by MDB.

This section will outline first order principles for further development and study as Multi-Domain Battle evolves as a concept and Combatant Commands think about employment of Joint Forces, followed by a short discussion of the continued roles of military power: Assure, Deter, Coerce, and Compel. The first three are focused on competition roles, while MDB really enables better application of military power to deter and coerce.

The first order principles of MDB include previously discussed components of the solution to the military problem plus several principles not previously discussed. These first order principles will serve as the foundation for wider application of the MDB concept in competition short of armed conflict as the concept progresses through the development and integration processes. Of the three components of the solution: 1) calibrate force posture; 2) employ resilient formations; and 3) converge capabilities; MDB articulates force posture and converging capabilities as components of the solution in competition.

Calibrate force posture. This component includes the following elements: prepare the environment; compete, deter, and immediately challenge the adversary's A2AD system; conduct expeditionary maneuver from U.S. in days; and integrate and enable partner forces.¹⁷ This force posture includes proper balance of force forward positioned in theater to achieve the desired effects to assure, deter, and coerce. The forces must have credible capability or access to credible capability to challenge adversary capabilities, while leveraging partner forces.

Converge capabilities. MDB envisions a convergence of capabilities to create windows of advantage that enable cross-domain maneuver to create and exploit opportunities, achieve objectives, create dilemmas, or dislocate and defeat enemy systems to achieve the friendly operational endstate and defeat the adversary's campaign during the return to competition.¹⁸ One of the first order principles of MDB is that the concept requires a re-imagination of joint integration, which is codified in version 1 of the concept as converging capabilities. This first order principle requires deeper development and a thoughtful examination of joint processes and requires the erosion of the parochial stovepipes of the Joint Force. Currently, the Joint Force synchronizes capabilities to achieve effects while rudimentary integration occurs no lower than the joint task force level. MDB envisions not only a higher level of integration at a lower echelon operationally, but it also requires envisioning a new level of integration institutionally.¹⁹ This previously unknown level of institutional joint integration, which

¹⁷ U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century (2025-2040)*, Version 1.0 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 2017), 23-24.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.25-27.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

will provide the foundation for an operational and strategic convergence of military capabilities, is most likely a wholly separate effort within the Joint Force. Fundamentally, the convergence of capabilities will better enable GCCs to campaign routinely below the threshold of armed conflict by providing a more effective and efficient force.

Maneuver to positions of relative advantage to achieve Joint Force freedom of action and retain freedom of maneuver. MDB is a maneuver concept and retains the precepts of combined arms maneuver at the tactical and operational level, while adding maneuver at the strategic level with the expansion of the battlefield. MDB is joint combined arms maneuver through all domains. Positions of advantage are no longer isolated to physical terrain, but remain relative to an enemy, adversary, or competitor in the context of this paper. The purpose of maneuver in MDB is to achieve freedom of action and retain freedom of maneuver for the Joint Force. In AirLand Battle, land force, or Army force maneuver achieved objectives to enable other land force operations. ALB was developed prior to Goldwater-Nichols, so it follows that maneuver in that context enabled other land force or Army objectives. Although one might expect land force operations to contribute to the greater Joint Force operations and objectives, MDB explicitly states land forces achieve a desired effect in support of the Joint Force.

Create windows of temporary domain superiority and turn denied domains into contested domains. The U.S. experienced denied and contested domains in World War II, but enjoyed relative success in achieving domain dominance in air, maritime, and space. The ability to gain and maintain air or maritime superiority or supremacy for extended periods of time is no longer a given. As previously discussed, many actors can now challenge the U.S. in all domains. In the future OE, the U.S. can expect to encounter

denied domains and must utilize the converged capabilities of the Joint Force to turn those denied domains into contested domains. This ability sets the necessary conditions to achieve temporary domain superiority to enable operations in other domains. For example, land and cyber forces achieve temporary domain superiority on land by destroying or disabling elements of an enemy's A2AD system, which enables the Air Force to conduct deep strike operations in order to allow the Navy to achieve maritime superiority for a subsequent land force operation.

Achieve positions of relative advantage – physical, temporal, positional, and psychological. MDB expands on the precept of positions of relative advantage. ALB focused on positions of advantage relative to terrain and the enemy. MDB recognizes positions of relative advantage are in relation to the competitor and occur in physical, temporal, positional, and psychological dimensions. The expansion in the description of where positions of relative advantage occur are especially useful in competition short of armed conflict. In particular, the psychological dimension is essential when countering an adversary's IW operations.

Effects of Military Power. MDB directly addresses how land forces will contribute to the Joint Force campaigning in competition short of armed conflict. The concept does not descend into the desired effects of military power, yet the following section identifies the role MDB can provide as the framework for campaigning to achieve those effects.

Assure. One of the stated objectives of U.S. military power and national power is to assure allies and partners. In short, this effect is achieved primarily by force posture and activities that fall under Building Partner Capacity and Security Forces Assistance,

which are adequately covered in Joint doctrine. MDB provides an opportunity to enhance interoperability with partners and integration of partner capacity in any theater. The idea of partner capacity integration is especially rich in depth and reach with NATO allies.

Deter. Deterrence is a well-documented effect of the application of military power, yet it is difficult to measure. The foundation of deterrence is a credible force capable of countering an adversary's aggressive actions in a particular location, historically viewed in relation to physical terrain. The idea is to prevent armed conflict. Deterrence only occurs in competition. MDB establishes the foundation to resolve the gaps in Joint Force effectiveness that competitors are exploiting with increasing success. MDB seeks to deter an adversary's aggression by competing short of war, turning denied spaces into contested spaces, and defeating the adversary's campaign. Several traditional models of deterrence are widely accepted – deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial. Those models are directly challenged by competitors just as Russia seeks fait accompli in their past operations in Georgia and the Ukraine – achieve their national objectives before the international community can react. The size of the U.S. force makes denial difficult without MDB capabilities, while punishment requires a punitive use of force if military power is employed. Two newer models of deterrence have emerged – deterrence by reversal and deterrence by solidarity. Reversal is not a true form of deterrence as it is predicated on taking military action to reestablish the pre-aggression norms, which requires offensive action to accomplish unless the adversary is convinced to reverse its course by a convincing combination of all elements of national power. Deterrence by solidarity is a model proposed by a classmate at the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, UK Lt. Col. James Hadfield, in his thesis – *NATO's Deterrence*

Strategy is Failing. The Enhanced Forward Presence: delusion or renewal? His argument is that one of the primary national objectives of Russia is to divide allies, in particular NATO. He offers that solidarity of allies within the alliance against Russia is the best deterrent for an adventurous Russia. MDB offers a framework for NATO to strengthen the alliance's strategic, operational, and tactical capabilities beyond the Cold War model of using military land formations as tripwires to deter Russia by challenging A2AD systems and countering UW and IW efforts.

Coerce. Coercion involves the use of military power by one adversary to convince another adversary to behave in a manner that achieves the former's national objectives, both overtly and covertly. Russia is the preeminent example of a state that has mastered the use of all elements of national power to convince a competitor to bend to their will, especially in the integration of military power with other elements. This is easier in an autocratic state, but still an important effect for the U.S. military to achieve in competition. Credible, properly postured military force is essential to achieve a coercive effect. Coercion can include use of force to achieve limited objectives which remain below the threshold of armed conflict. MDB envisions a smaller force with converged joint capabilities to operate across all domains to present multiple dilemmas to an adversary and thus changing the adversary's behavior.

Compel. The role of military power to compel an adversary to bend to the political will of the U.S. is restricted to the direct application of military force in armed conflict and therefore not addressed in this paper.

Multi-Domain Battle begins the conversation and thought work for operationalizing how the military instrument of national power is brought to bear by the

land forces, in support of the Joint Force, in competition short of armed conflict and in a return to competition following armed conflict. Although limited in scope, the foundation built in version 1 of the concept offers additional opportunities for the Joint Force outlined in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary.

Multi-Domain Battle is unique as an operational concept in scope. It addresses the linkages between the levels of warfare – tactical, operational, and strategic – and how the operational concept fits in the architecture. Previous concepts only addressed tactical and operational levels of warfare. It also addresses competition short of armed conflict, specifically how the land force contributes to competing against peer or near peer competitors. Again, a first among operational concepts. A third unique aspect of MDB is that it describes the role of land forces as part of the Joint Force. The unique qualities of MDB can be seen as a signal to an evolution in Joint Force thinking and concept development.

The Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning also signals a change in thinking within the Joint Force; an evolution in how the Joint Force contributes to the achievement of political objectives in support of U.S. national interests. This effort began in 2015 to explicitly change how the Joint Force will compete short of armed conflict. This period of competition is a significant challenge in the application of military power, yet it is the routine range on the spectrum of conflict in which the Joint Force operates.

Synthesis.

Version 1 of MDB addresses competition short of armed conflict, yet limits its applicability to peer or near-peer competitors. This limitation was likely necessary to complete the initial version of the concept. Version 2 would benefit from a more sophisticated level of discussion informed by input from the Geographic Combatant

Commands (GCCs). A concerted effort to bring in planners from each of the GCCs and the Functional Combatant Commands would provide additional perspectives from the commands which actually employ forces at the operational level. Limiting the scope of the MDB concept to peer or near-peer competitors alone places an artificial ceiling to the utility of the concept in competition short of armed conflict based upon the changes in the OE and the Joint Force approach to campaigning. This limitation is most pronounced in the two operational time periods of competition identified in MDB – short of armed conflict and return to competition. The role of MDB-capable land forces in competition with the remaining tiers of adversaries or actors as identified by the Joint Force would expand the utility of the concept as the development process continues.

MDB Counterarguments.²⁰

One element exploited in the development of MDB as a concept was the ability to generate discussion and feedback through a number of online networks and military professional discussion forums, in addition to the more traditional professional journals. TRADOC tracks the full spectrum of writings and discussions on MDB as part of the concept development process. The many challenges to the nascent operational concept were beneficial to allow the concept writers to gain additional perspectives on their work. The following discussion is based upon the body of work identified by TRADOC for approximately three months between publication of version 1 of the MDB concept to the writing of this paper.

²⁰ This section draws upon the compilation of articles, blogs, and writings addressing Multi-Domain Battle by Mr. Robert Merkl as of February 20, 2018 in support of the Commanding General, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. His work provided visibility on the discourse surrounding the MDB concept along the full spectrum of support, including opposition to the concept.

There are four major counter-MDB themes that arose from the body of identified work that challenge the utility and completeness of the MDB concept: 1) MDB is “old wine in a new bottle;” 2) MDB is a resource grab; 3) MDB is an Army-only concept; and 4) MDB is focused on the wrong problem. Each counter theme is important to understand prior to providing the recommendations of the paper. The following synopses of the four counter-MDB themes addresses the argument and provides a rebuttal perspective for consideration.

MDB is “old wine in a new bottle.” True, in a very narrow sense. Much of the nascent MDB concept should seem very familiar to those analyzing its contents. The U.S. Joint Force has experienced a great deal of tactical and operational success, even when those successes do not always lead to decisive strategic victories. The ability of U.S. forces to synchronize and coordinate effects across the Joint Force is unparalleled. AirLand Battle is considered a “gold standard” of operational concepts among many western nations. MDB seeks to build upon the strengths of the Joint Force and decades of experience and apply proven principles of joint operations to the future environment. Adversaries and competitors now, and in the future, challenge the U.S. Joint Force strengths by fracturing their ability to bring joint effects to achieve overwhelming relative advantages. The U.S. is now contested in all domains and MDB seeks to regain American military relative advantage by evolving the way the U.S. thinks about operating across all domains. The U.S. should not abandon the strengths of joint operations, rather build upon them and adapt them to suit the future; therefore, the concept appears to re-package AirLand Battle while incorporating the lessons of joint operations. The assertion of this counter-argument is an over-simplification of what MDB describes. Combined arms

maneuver warfare through the synchronization of Joint Force capabilities works and MDB applies those proven principles to a new OE.

MDB is a resource grab. This counter theme is typical of the service-specific/service-centric resource competition perspective within the Department of Defense. Will resources eventually be tied to the concept? Yes. Concepts lead to capabilities, which require resources, eventually. The major difference is that MDB does not describe specific capabilities. It is not a budgeting or programming document. One must understand how the Army approaches concept development, which is fundamentally different from the Air Force and the Navy. The principle reason is that the Army's foundation is the Soldier. A Soldier or Marine does not require specialty equipment to operate in the land domain. The Air Force and the Navy require expensive, exquisite equipment to operate in the air and maritime domains. The Army "equips the man," while the Air Force and the Navy "man the equipment." This is not simply a turn of phrase, rather it is important context when attempting to view MDB as a concept that has greater applicability than otherwise might be expected across the DoD. MDB describes capabilities and the convergence of those capabilities, not specific weapon systems, to counter the challenges of the future OE. Just as this paper argues for a change in the way the Joint Force thinks about challenges short of armed conflict, it will take a major shift in thought across a sustained time period to change the way services compete for resources.

MDB is an Army-only concept. MDB is a land force concept, written by the Army and Marine Corps. It is specific to land force operational contributions to the overall Joint Force. The language is different in this concept versus previous operational

concepts. One of the elements of the first order principles of MDB is that land force operations will ensure the Joint Force maintains freedom of action and freedom of maneuver. AirLand Battle did not address how the Army's operations contribute to overall operations of the Joint Force. If a reader were to replace every use of Army or Marine reference with the word "force" or "joint force," it would be hard to argue the applicability of the first order principles beyond the Army of land force. The Army and Marine Corps are not attempting to subvert the Joint Force concept development processes, rather their expanded understanding of the OE and how the land force contributes to the greater Joint Force opens the concept for greater utility than it is currently written to achieve in version 1.

MDB is focused on the wrong problem. This counterargument narrative focuses on two elements: 1) implementation challenges and unknowns; and 2) the real problem facing the U.S. military is the expansion of the killing zone from the tactical level most pronounced in World War I trench warfare to a global scale where a military force is contested continually. Although MDB has far-reaching support across the Army, the Joint Force, and DoD, there is recognition of the complexity of implementing the concept institutionally. As with any operational concept, there are unknown 2nd and 3rd order effects which will require institutional effort to uncover as the concept moves forward. The premise of this argument is that the challenges of the future OE are not unprecedented, but rather increased exponentially in scale from the past. What is new is the fact that the killing zone of past battlefields previously restricted to the tactical battlefield are now expanded to the strategic/global level with the reach of weapon systems to include those operating in space and cyberspace.

Recommendations.

Multi-Domain Battle is version 1 of many to come as the concept is refined and further developed by the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps in the coming years. There are interesting developments occurring at the time of this paper that reflect active participation in the concept development process or evolution by both the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy. This level of collaboration in developing an operational concept is unprecedented. The level of critical thought, discussion, and writing are important to the Joint Force's approach to meeting the challenges of the future OE. Likewise, this paper is intended to expand the aperture for the utility of the MDB concept as a framework for assisting Joint Force Commanders, especially CCDRs, to solve the challenges they face in campaigning short of armed conflict.

Recommendations for Joint Force consideration:

1. Geographic Combatant Commands should use MDB as the conceptual framework to achieve policy aims in competition short of armed conflict. Efforts by the GCCs to apply the principles and tenets of the concept to the challenges they face today will help better inform the development process while countering some of the gains made by adversaries in their AORs.
2. The Joint Force should use MDB as a conceptual framework to inform the development of the Joint Force of the future. The Joint Force must seek to re-imagine joint integration from concept development to capability generated to joint formation employed – convergence of capabilities.
3. Expand involvement of the all the services and Combatant Commands, both Geographic and Functional, in the future evolutions of MDB.

4. Expand the definition of the “adversary” or “enemy” in the MDB concept to cover the range of actors in the future OE. Currently those terms specifically relate to a peer competitor.

Multi-Domain Battle applications for Geographic Combatant Commands

The following sub-section will briefly describe a Multi-Domain Battle approach to challenges unique to each Geographic Combatant Command. The composition of the forces and echelon of employment will be different for each. The following discussions are the author’s thoughts for continued discussion in how the GCCs can utilize the MDB framework to address the unique challenges of each AO. The cursory discussions below only reflect potential roles of the military element of national power to compete short of armed conflict and will not address the integration and synchronization of all elements of national power required to truly compete strategically.

Each GCC seeks to build upon decades of experience to assure allies and partners in a similar manner. MDB simply provides a military power more capable of integrating partners and allies and does not provide a distinguishable approach by separate GCC.

All GCCs seek to deter adversarial aggression, yet the credible force to provide the foundation for the use of military power will be different based upon the unique environment of each GCC.

- **AFRICOM (Deter, Coerce/Contain).** AFRICOM campaigns to seek a better level of stability in the Area of Operations (AO) to achieve deterrent effects on regional aggressors, coerce actors driving instability, and contain VEOs. AFRICOM primarily relies on land and special operations forces to achieve those effects. In the future OE, a battalion-level MDB Task Force with converged Joint Force capabilities, as defined in

Chapter 2, could replicate what only Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa can do currently and accomplish a similar mission across Western Africa for example. A smaller organization with greater access to all capabilities of the Joint Force would allow the command to respond with better agility to emerging crises requiring U.S. military forces, while providing better presence and engagement. The expansion of global competitors into Africa in the form of Russia and especially China will potentially require military capabilities that can challenge additional expansionism.

- **EUCOM (Deter, Coerce).** EUCOM faces the pacing threat of Russia and the aggressive, comprehensive, and integrated efforts of the Russian government. The Cold War version of deterrence by forward positioning of conventional forces as a tripwire to delay Soviet forces while the remainder of the U.S. military mobilized and deployed no longer works. The Enhanced Forward Presence mission of NATO simply serves as a tripwire, but Russia has no intention to trigger the tripwire as they have optimized the use of the military in competition. In the future, an MDB-capable Task Force (MDB TF) from the land force, supported by forces operating in all other domains, can effectively counter Russia's capabilities in UW, IW, and place the Russian ISR-Strike complex at risk in competition short of armed conflict. EUCOM, in conjunction with NATO allies and European partners could place Kaliningrad at risk, which could change the decision calculus of Russia and deter an escalation of aggressive actions in the Baltics for example. This MDB TF will require a combination of resilient ground maneuver forces, long-range precision fires forces capable of joint cross-domain fires, Special Operations Forces, and reachback for IO and Cyber.

- **PACOM (Deter, Coerce).** PACOM is the largest AOR of the GCCs and contains a disproportionate amount of the world's population and growing economic strength. The greatest competitor with the U.S. is China within the PACOM AO, while the DPRK is the most dangerous competitor. MDB as a framework for competition has great utility in PACOM and the command is leading the effort in exercising and experimenting with MDB application. An Army cross-domain fires unit centered on what we currently see as a Field Artillery Battalion capable of firing surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, and surface-to-maritime long-range munitions in support of a Carrier Strike Group and supported by Air Force and CYBERCOM assets could take position along a series of islands to place the Chinese military at risk along critical choke points in and around the South China Sea. The land force capability would free up naval and air assets to accomplish other critical tasks.

- **CENTCOM (Deter, Coerce, Compel).** CENTCOM is engaged in active armed conflict in multiple locations within the AO, yet have a requirement to deter further aggression by competitors. An MDB-capable Army unit conducting operations in Iraq could have the capability to conduct multi-purpose operations that serve to coerce Iranian actions, deter Russian interference, and compel ISIL simultaneously. The actions taken by the MDB-capable unit might be primarily in support of combat operations against ISIL in Iraq, yet operate across multiple domains to challenge the malign actions of Russia and Iran below the threshold of armed conflict. Currently, many of the Joint Force capabilities remain above the CJTF-level and reduce the responsiveness and effectiveness of CENTCOM's efforts.

- **NORTHCOM (Deter).** NORTHCOM presents the greatest challenge to the applicability of MDB in campaigning, which reinforces the need for input from all of the GCCs. NORTHCOM's primarily deterrent role as a component of homeland defense is even more challenged today and in the future as the variety of threats from multiple domains increases. NORTHCOM might rely upon an Air Force formation supported by Army forces from each component to deter both threats from long-range ballistic missiles, VEO attacks, and the use of WMD in the AO. NORTHCOM might also need to support civil authorities in the realm of cyber defense to protect critical infrastructure. MDB-capable task forces tailored to a specific purpose at a much lower echelon would provide significant capability and increase the capacity of NORTHCOM to campaign. For example, Navy and Coast Guard forces operating in the Arctic would have access to Joint Force capabilities and visibility of actions by competitors in all domains impacting their current operations.

- **SOUTHCOM (Deter).** The SOUTHCOM AO provides another unique set of challenges which are not addressed by operational concepts such as AirLand Battle or AirSea Battle or even MDB as it is currently written. The SOUTHCOM Commander contends with a litany of challenges wholly beneath the threshold of armed conflict for the U.S. primarily by competitors who possess near-peer or peer capabilities. Russia and China are involved in this AOR, but their activities are primarily economic and diplomatic vice military. An expanded future version of MDB would help SOUTHCOM better contribute to the competition with all competitors through the integrated application of the military element of national power. This could obviously change in the

future should a competitor threaten U.S. national interests or overtly threaten the sovereignty of a partner nation.

Risk.

What is the risk of adopting Multi-Domain Battle as the conceptual framework for the Joint Force to achieve policy aims in competition short of armed conflict? The primary risk, common to all approaches, lies in getting the description of the future operating environment, upon which all else is built, wrong. The work completed to date by both the Joint Force and the services resulted in a sufficiently complete description of the future based upon current and expected trends. The descriptions of the future OE retains sufficient flexibility and latitude to account for changes over time in the next 30 years. The Joint Force will mitigate this risk by routinely assessing its description of the future OE and adjusting when the trends indicate a significant shift to drive the next evolution of concepts and development within the Joint Force.

A secondary risk lies in getting the enemy or adversary wrong. As previously discussed in the recommendations, the fixation on a peer competitor or adversary in the concept has the potential to lose the applicability that MDB brings to any competition short of armed conflict against any competitor – peer, near-peer, regional actor, transnational actor, or VEO. Narrowing the focus of the concept as it moves forward will likely diminish the flexibility and adaptability the Joint Force will need in the future. The “4+1” or “2+3” constructs provide a range of threats that adequately portrays the depth and breadth of adversaries who will challenge the U.S. in the future. The Chief of Staff of the Army, GEN Mark Milley, explicitly identified Russia as “the pacing threat” for development of the future force in 2016. This “pacing threat” helps to focus the Army’s

efforts of threat-based capability development, but should not limit the scope of the concept. Each of the five threats can, do, and will challenge the U.S. military element of national power in multiple domains.

There is a risk of not involving the Joint Force adequately in the MDB solution to the challenges facing the Joint Force in the future OE. This paper argues for greater involvement and inclusion of the Joint Force, the GCCs and FCCs in particular, to generate a depth of concept development within the MDB framework which has the potential to at least maintain or optimally expand the Joint Force's current asymmetric advantage of joint operations over U.S. competitors.

From a holistic, Joint Force perspective, the risk associated with a lack of Joint Force involvement in the MDB concept development process stems from a dialectic set of risks: risk of collaboration vs. risk of service/domain-centric concept development. Collaboration carries the risk of a perceived loss of service prestige and the potential real loss of funding, which can be a significant deterrent in and of itself. On the other hand, the risk of retaining separate and distinct service/domain-centric concept development processes, relatively uninformed by each other, presents a greater threat to the Joint Force's ability to meet the challenges of the future OE. The willingness of senior leaders to collaborate across the Joint Force in the early stages of MDB development presents an opportunity to create a shared visualization of how to employ the Joint Force in the future OE based upon the common understanding of the OE. This shared visualization then informs the service or domain concept processes as complimentary efforts.

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

The United States is in a precarious position in its history, one that civilian and military leaders alike have not experienced in their lifetimes. The U.S. is a declining power continually competing with multiple rivals interested in contesting American power, prestige, influence, and the liberal democratic way of life she represents. The competition is fierce, unrelenting, complex, and evolving.

Effective competition against the U.S. is a part of the operational environment today and in the future. Over the past decade and a half, the United States' adversaries built momentum as they developed approaches to fracture U.S. military strengths developed through AirLand Battle and joint capabilities and integration. Meanwhile, the U.S. lost momentum to compete for two reasons: 1) operationally and strategically distracted or preoccupied; and 2) failure to recognize the competitive challenges as they emerged. The good news is the leadership within the U.S. military realizes this predicament, the bad news is that the U.S. military is in this predicament. The first step in solving a problem using the design methodology is to first identify the problem. The multitude of ways in which American adversaries have placed the U.S. at a disadvantage militarily is one component of the problem.

Another component of the problem is the future operational environment described in Chapter 1. The description of the future OE articulates not only the true complexity of the environment, but the rate at which the environment and elements of the environment will change. Changes to the elements of the environment will change the relationships of the variables within the environment. The rate of change will also change; it too will increase based upon the rate of technological innovation if nothing

else. The combination of the future OE, the competition short of armed conflict, and the current relative military disparity between the U.S. and its rivals set the foundation of the problems faced by the GCCs.

In the past, the U.S. military focused almost solely on its role to “fight and win the nation’s wars” in a parochial manner. The need to employ all elements of national power to win wars, with the interplay and interdependence of the elements to successfully achieve the desired political objectives and victory, was not engrained in the thought of the military. Instead, the military was focused on developing and maintaining tactical and operational excellence. The experiences of the past 16 years of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan have revealed a necessity for military leaders to view what the military element of national power contributes to achieving the desired political ends. In war or cases of armed conflict, the military’s role is paramount and typically leads the efforts on behalf of the nation. This was a strength of American military thought. In all other forms of competition, the military element of national power still has a significant role to play, but one that previously has not been well understood or described in the form of joint or service concepts or doctrine. The lack of focus and paucity of thought on the contributions of the Joint Force in competition short of armed conflict is a weakness in American military thought.

The Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning is a strong step to correct this deficiency. The purpose of the JCIC is to change the way the Joint Force thinks about routine operations and the military contributions to competing with the plethora of rivals the U.S. faces. In essence, the JCIC provides a coherent framework for the Geographic Combatant Commands and their Commanders to approach the challenges faced in their

respective areas of operational responsibility. The JCIC directly attacks the typically binary view of conflict in the U.S. – either at war or at peace – and replaces it with a deeper understanding of the continuum of conflict characterized by competition short of armed conflict. The ultimate goal of the JCIC is to change the way GCCs think about and approach the challenges, or competitions, over the long term in their AORs.

The JCIC establishes the foundation for a shared understanding of the role of the Joint Force in competition short of armed conflict. MDB utilizes the JCIC foundation to address how the land force will operate or campaign against a peer or near-peer competitor in competition. This evolution in operational concepts yields much more applicability for the GCCs who employ the force to achieve strategic objectives.

The strategic purposes the Geographic Combatant Commands must achieve will largely remain the same – assure, deter, coerce, and compel – yet the capabilities required to accomplish them must change based upon the changes in the future OE. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Multi-Domain Battle Concept is in its infancy as an operational concept to replace AirLand Battle. Just like the JCIC, part of the intent behind the concept is to change the way the U.S. Army and Marine Corps think about the tactical, operational, and strategic challenges of the future battlefield. Although the concept focuses on an approach and capabilities to succeed in war, the capabilities and first order principles of MDB can provide a framework for GCCs to critically think about how to compete as the military element of national power in their AOR.

The Joint Force, employed by GCCs, would become a more capable and credible force to operate in the OE of the future by evolving to better assure allies and partners, deter adversarial aggression, and coerce bad actors in competition short of armed conflict.

As previously defined, the use of the military element of national power to compel an adversary to conform to the will of the nation requires the direct application of military force in armed conflict. To compel an adversary means to make them do something they do not want to do absent voluntary compliance. Armed conflict and the use of land forces are required to compel an adversary when voluntary compliance is never achieved. The actions taken by the GCC to assure allies and partners, deter aggression, and coerce adversaries will assist in preparing for the transition to armed conflict, if necessary.

As previously discussed, the changes in the operational environment driving the change of operational concepts from AirLand Battle to Multi-Domain Battle arose from adversarial gains in fracturing the strengths of U.S. military power by contesting all domains via conventional and irregular means. The adversaries range from peer/near-peer competitors to non-state actors as articulated in both the “4+1” and “2+3” constructs. The change in the operational environment also drove a reversal in course for capability development from a capability-based approach to a threat based-approach. The revitalization of a threat-based approach bears risk in building capabilities that will not meet the need of the future. Detractors of the threat-based approach compare this shift to the threat-based approach used during the Cold War and caution against the pitfalls of the approach. The U.S. never fought the Soviet Union and the capabilities did not translate to success in Iraq or Afghanistan, minus the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003 and Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/1991.

In acknowledgement of the challenges with a threat-based approach to capability development, the military and civilian leadership of the U.S. developed a 4+1, and later a 2+3, threat scenario. This approach is unique in the wide range of threats addressed, but

each of the five threats represents a unique set of data points along a continuum of threats the U.S. faces today and in the future. This acknowledgement of the range of threats and a need to challenge those threats sufficiently focuses the efforts of the U.S. when combined with an operational concept such as Multi-Domain Battle. MDB will not only help shape capability development, it will serve to integrate DOTMLPF-P solutions that will allow GCCs to solve the problems faced in their AORs.

A new operational environment requires a new operational concept. The JCIC is intended to serve as a concept to change the way the Joint Force thinks about routine operations, that is to say competition short of armed conflict. The Joint Force will better accomplish the desired objectives or maintain positions of relative advantage over adversaries through integrated campaigning.

Similarly, Multi-Domain Battle can serve the Joint Force and GCCs as an approach to integration of Joint Force capabilities and employment of the military element of national power to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative by holding strategic, operational, and tactical positions of relative advantage. The Multi-Domain Battle concept's inherent joint, inter-organizational, and multi-national nature surpasses Airland Battle in scope and utility for the Joint Force. The discussion amongst the Joint Force has begun with the publication of version 1 of the concept. Continued discussion, studies, and testing throughout the concept development process will not only enhance the value of the concept in the DOTMLPF-P integration across the Joint Force, but shape the way the force competes throughout the process. MDB acknowledges the challenges of the future OE and when fully developed and embraced, it can serve to change challenges into opportunities.

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