

A State of Permanent Evolution: From 1970s Training and Doctrine Command to 2018 Army Futures Command

A Monograph

by

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2020

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 21-05-2020 | 2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis | 3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUN 2019-MAY 2020 |
|--|--|--|

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A State of Permanent Evolution: From 1970s Training and Doctrine Command to 2018 Army Futures Command. | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER |
| | 5b. GRANT NUMBER |
| | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER |

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Robert T. Kelly | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER |
| | 5e. TASK NUMBER |
| | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER |

| | |
|---|--|
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301 | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT |
|---|--|

| | |
|--|---|
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) |
| | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) |

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

Great-power competition characterizes the current geopolitical environment according to the 2017 National Security Strategy. Russia again has become the US Army's pacing threat and China stands as its long-term threat. The overmatch gap the US Army once enjoyed has diminished as its adversaries continue to rapidly modernize. Budget considerations, rapid advancements in technology, and persistent combat operations increase the complexity of the environment and challenges the US Army's efforts as it looks to the future.

Organizational evolution must occur to transition the US Army from an industrial to information age model that is prepared to dominate and win in future conflicts. Senior Army leaders recognized this need and began bold reforms to start this transition, epitomized by the creation of Army Futures Command in 2018. In 1973, the Army found itself in another period of organizational evolution embodied in the creation of Training and Doctrine Command.

This paper seeks to establish the connections between reforms in 1973 and how they inform the current transformation of the US Army. Through that connection, this paper highlights the necessary ingredients for effective organizational change such as senior leadership involvement and identification of potential threats from adversaries. Analysis emphasizes the need for organizational evolution and Army Futures Command is the vehicle to transition the Army for the future.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Army Futures Command; Organizational Change; Organization Theory; Threat-Based Change; Army Reform; Army Transformation

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|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT (U) | b. ABSTRACT (U) | c. THIS PAGE (U) | | | 19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) |

Monograph Approval Page

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Monograph Title: A State of Permanent Evolution: From 1970s Training and Doctrine Command to 2018 Army Futures Command

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Abstract

A State of Permanent Evolution: From 1970s Training and Doctrine Command to 2018 Army Futures Command, by MAJ Robert T. Kelly, 40 pages.

Great-power competition characterizes the current geopolitical environment according to the 2017 National Security Strategy. Russia again has become the US Army's pacing threat and China stands as its long-term threat. The overmatch gap the US Army once enjoyed has diminished as its adversaries continue to rapidly modernize. Budget considerations, rapid advancements in technology, and persistent combat operations increase the complexity of the environment and challenges the US Army's efforts as it looks to the future. Organizational evolution must occur to transition the US Army from an industrial to information age model that is prepared to dominate and win in future conflicts. Senior Army leaders recognized this need and began bold reforms to start this transition, epitomized by the creation of Army Futures Command in 2018. In 1973, the Army found itself in a similar period of organizational evolution embodied in the creation of Training and Doctrine Command. This paper seeks to establish the connections between reforms in 1973 and how they inform the current transformation of the US Army. Through that connection, this paper highlights the necessary ingredients for effective organizational change such as senior leadership involvement and identification of potential threats from adversaries. Analysis emphasizes the need for organizational evolution and Army Futures Command is the vehicle to transition the Army for the future.

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Acknowledgements

Particular consideration to Dr. Dan Cox for his support of material research and mentorship throughout the writing process. Additionally, the author thanks Colonel Shane Murphy for his leadership and mentorship through the monograph process. The author also thanks fellow seminar classmates for their multiple perspectives and feedback on research material. Special consideration to leaders at Army Futures Command who facilitated access to personnel and agencies at the headquarters in Austin, Texas that supported research for this paper on organizational change.

Abbreviations

| | |
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| AFC | Army Futures Command |
| AMC | Army Material Command |
| AMS | Army Modernization Strategy |
| CDC | Combat Developments Command |
| CENTCOM | Central Command |
| CFT | Cross Functional Team |
| CONARC | Continental Army Command |
| DA | Department of the Army |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| EU | European Union |
| FORSCOM | Forces Command |
| IDF | Israeli Defense Force |
| MDO | Multi-Doman Operations |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NSS | National Security Strategy |
| TRADOC | Training and Doctrine Command |

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Introduction: Deliberate and Meaningful Change

In 1983, General Donn Starry addressed the US Army War College and stated, “change is a constant for today’s armed forces.”¹ The attitude reflected an Army faced with frequent shifts in requirements due to technological advancements and a complex operational environment focused on Central Europe. Just as it was applicable in 1983, the mantra of constant change is no different for the US Army in 2020. Starry would later state in the address that “reform of an institution as large as our Army is problematic under the best of circumstances.”² Starry identified a dialectic of consistent transformation within an institution resistant to change. The challenge lies in the creation of adaptive space that enables organizational change to enhance agility and evolution in a complex environment. Michael Arena defines adaptive space as “the freedom for ideas to flow into and throughout an organization.”³ To enable their geo-political aspirations, US adversaries’ efforts have narrowed a capabilities and functions gap that traditionally the US military enjoyed unparalleled overmatch.⁴ The US Army must embrace the current period of transition and overcome resistance to meaningful reforms that enables the organization to remain competitive. The Army finds itself at another inflection point in its history and meaningful change must occur to enable evolution of the organization for a future environment.⁵

This significant period of change and reform comes at a time of rapidly shifting requirements influenced by a complex operational environment. The National Security Strategy (NSS) published in December of 2017 highlighted these complexities with a theme of the United States in great-power competition. Russia and China were specifically mentioned as they challenge US power, influence, and

¹ Donn A. Starry, “To Change an Army,” *Military Review* 63, no. 3 (March, 1983): 20.

² *Ibid.*, 21.

³ Michael J. Arena, *Adaptive Space: How GM and Other Companies are Positively Disrupting Themselves and Transforming Into Agile Organizations* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2018), 8.

⁴ Mark Esper, interviewed by Vago Muradian, *Atlantic Council’s Commanders Series*, May 17, 2019. Video, 8:00, accessed November 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9gA_jdWHiU.

⁵ Jim Garamone, “Army Secretary Notes Another Inflection Point for Service,” DOD News, May 1, 2018, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1508637/army-secretary-notes-another-inflection-point-for-service/>.

interests.⁶ These competitors seek to erode US prosperity and national security through their aggression and rapidly expanding military capabilities and modernization efforts. While serving as the Secretary of the Army, Dr. Mark Esper highlighted the need for the US Army to adapt and change in order to face the challenges posed by great power competition.⁷ The reemergence of great-power competition, constrained budgets, rapid technological advances, and over eighteen years of persistent conflict reflects the need for change and reform enabling the US Army to maintain a competitive edge on the future battlefield.

Confronted by these challenges, the need for change and reform to dominate in the future was recognized by senior Army leaders. In the fall of 2018, senior Army leaders announced the creation of a four-level command called Army Futures Command (AFC). The new command is meant to unify modernization efforts spread across multiple entities. Its aim is to provide concept, capabilities, and organizational structures for future soldiers to dominate on a future battlefield.⁸ It is the largest reorganization for the US Army since 1973 when Continental Army Command (CONARC) was separated into Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM). The reemergence of great-power competition and increased national security threats by state actors demand change to effectively respond to an evolved complex environment. To remain competitive and dominate in future war, the US Army must shift from an industrial to an information age Army capable of permanent evolution.⁹ AFC is the vehicle and adaptive space to facilitate this type of evolution and meaningful change.

⁶ Donald. J. Trump, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” The White House 17 December 2017, 2, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

⁷ Esper, *Atlantic Council’s Commanders Series*, 5:28.

⁸ Todd South, “Four Takeaways from the 4-Star General at Army Futures Command,” *Army Times*, May 7, 2019, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/07/four-takeaways-from-the-4-star-general-at-army-futures-command/>.

⁹ Sydney J. Freedberg, “Permanent Evolution: SecArmy Esper on Futures Command,” *Land Warfare, Threats, Breaking Defense*, May 7, 2018, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://breakingdefense.com/2018/05/permanent-evolution-secarmy-esper-on-futures-command-exclusive/>.

Significant challenges confront AFC and its charter to modernize and change the US Army within this complex strategic and operational environment. Russian and Chinese actions combined with continued conflict in the Middle East are the most prominent challenges. These challenges blended with budgetary constraints, complicated acquisitions process, modernization efforts, and shift in US Army concepts and doctrine further add to the complexities. Organizational change given these circumstances is a nebulous path that AFC is required to navigate in order to successfully prepare the US Army for the future. Such a large organizational change for the US Army requires a review of the relevant organizational change literature that answers the question of AFC being an effective vehicle for persistent and future readiness. External and internal pressures influence AFC as it changes a large organization for future warfare, the past provides a lens to view deliberate organizational change that successfully prepared the US Army for the future.

Fortunately, examining events in the US Army's past provides a way to navigate this period of change, specifically the establishment of TRADOC in 1973. Senior Army leaders consistently refer to the reforms in 1973 and its link with current organizational changes.¹⁰ This paper seeks to build on that connection through examination of TRADOC's creation and impact of the 1973 Yom Kippur War on the early development of TRADOC as a case study. This analysis seeks to support senior leader's claims while firmly establishing the relationship between the reforms of 1973 and the current transformation. It also identifies valuable lessons to pull forward in this current period of change and the potential impact of AFC to propel the US Army forward into the future. Historian John Gaddis' position is that "studying the past is no guide to predicting the future. What it does, though, is to prepare you for the future by expanding experience, so that you can increase your skills, your stamina – and, if all goes well, your wisdom."¹¹ Examination of this case study provides that wisdom to identify what effectively motivates

¹⁰ Mark Esper, "Army Futures Command," filmed on July 13, 2018 in Washington, DC, C-SPAN, 1:30, accessed February 15, 2020, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?448404-1/army-secretary-announces-austin-location-army-futures-command>.

¹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11.

meaningful change and ways for AFC to positively impact reforms that propels the US Army forward, prepared for future warfare.

Esper expressed his view of the future for the US Army stating, “change is hard for any organization, especially one as big as the Army but we must make the transition to the future. We must stay ahead of our adversaries and we must do all we can to deter conflict and keep the peace.”¹² AFC must be the lead agent for change, a model for other organizations in the US Army. Creation of AFC is more than a reform of a complicated acquisition and procurement process but an agent of change across the entire Army enterprise. While the other major commands focus on generating, sustaining, and fielding the current force, AFC prepares the future force to dominate on a complex battlefield.¹³ AFC’s efforts, integrated with major peer commands (TRADOC, FORSCOM, AMC), ensure the Army is prepared to consistently evolve and adapt to a complicated operational environment defined by great-power competition outlined in the NSS. US adversaries have made significant investments in modernization and organizational changes to erode US military strengths and exploit its weaknesses. AFC is the vehicle to bring the Army into a state of permanent evolution that transitions the organization from an industrial to information age model prepared for current and future challenges.¹⁴

Research Methodology

Organizational change for the US Army is no easy task. Detailed and focused analysis of its past provides applicable lessons for AFC. This is accomplished through the examination of the creation and early years of TRADOC and the impacts of the Yom Kippur War on US Army’s shift in doctrine, combat developments, and training via TRADOC. TRADOC’s past as a case study furnishes a relevant lens to view this current period of change for the US Army. Key aspects on the success of TRADOC and its

¹² Esper, *Atlantic Council’s Commanders Series*, 17:22.

¹³ Sydney J. Freedberg, “Army Outlines Futures Command; Org Chart in Flux,” *Breaking Defense*, March 26, 2018, accessed November 12, 2019, <https://breakingdefense.com/2018/03/army-outlines-futures-command-org-chart-in-flux/>.

¹⁴ Freedberg, “Permanent Evolution: SecArmy Esper on Futures Command.”

ability to change a large organization provide a means to apply relevant lessons to AFC and its leadership for necessary change for the US Army. Even more necessary is an assessment of the motivations and mechanisms that propelled change and reform forward, in this case a credible present and future threat. This case study provides a relevant perspective that helps overcome resistance to change that impedes the Army's ability to rapidly evolve.

The method this paper uses to examine change and reform is what Alexander George called "structured, focused comparison."¹⁵ The method is created as the researcher generates questions that reflect the research objectives and those inquiries are standardized. For the purpose of this paper, the research objective is to develop continuities between TRADOC in 1973 and AFC in 2018. It also seeks to demonstrate that a current or anticipated threat to national security is the best motivation for change and reform within an organization like the US Army. The method is focused in that it deals with certain aspects of a historical case. Specifically, for this paper, the focus is on the beginning years of TRADOC and the formation of AFC in 2018.¹⁶ This method provides an effective analytical framework for comparing the early years of TRADOC and the creation of AFC in 2018-2019.

Five tasks are considered key when conducting a structure, focused comparison case study. First, the researcher must identify the problem and research objectives. For the purpose of this paper, the problem is identifying the effective ways to enact change and reform within the US Army with an objective of demonstrating that AFC is the vehicle to facilitate that necessary change.¹⁷ Next, the researcher builds a strategy and specifies variables.¹⁸ In this case, the paper focuses on TRADOC in 1973 and its efforts to change the US Army given the conditions of a post-Vietnam War army, neglected modernization efforts, and threats demonstrated via the Yom Kippur War. These conditions are then

¹⁵ Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 67.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

compared with the present US Army and the creation of AFC during a time of persistent warfare, missed modernization windows, and rise of great-power competition manifested in Russia's aggression in the Ukraine.

Next is the case selection, for this paper that is the creation and early years of TRADOC in 1973. This case provides relevance to the present as TRADOC was the last major reorganization to occur in the Army until AFC's creation in 2018. Subsequently, the researcher then seeks to describe the variance in the variables.¹⁹ In this paper, variances include that TRADOC's creation and early years of change occurred during peacetime where AFC's creation occurred amid current conflict. Finally, researchers consider formulation of data requirements and general questions. This should be determined by the theoretical framework and research strategy which lead to the formation of general questions that should be asked.²⁰ For this case, questions such as the nature and urgency of the threat posed as well as internal motivations to change within the organization shape the research. In addition to examining TRADOC's role in changing the Army in the 1970s, this paper also uses elements of "process tracing" within the case analysis.²¹ Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel describe process tracing as "the use of evidence from within a case to make inference about causal explanations of that case."²² Simply put, it's following a chain of events and gathering evidence by tracing back.

Professor Thomas Gary observed that case study analysis' main goal is to understand the why and how something might have happened. Observation of a specific case allows a researcher to "drill down" as deep as possible for evidence ultimately creating a three-dimensional perspective of the topic.²³ Important to note is that case studies are not methods in themselves but rather it is a specific focus. For this paper the focus is organizational change within the US Army in a dynamic environment that's

¹⁹ Bennett and George, 83-84.

²⁰ Ibid., 86.

²¹ Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel, eds., *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4.

²² Ibid., 4.

²³ Thomas Gary, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2016), 4.

effective and deliberate.²⁴ Case study research has two components: a subject (in this case TRADOC in the 1970s and AFC) and an analytical frame or object (effective organizational change).²⁵ As this paper is primarily case-study research, elements of process tracing and following a sequential timeline starting in the early 1970s serve as a sufficient design frame. Case study analysis enables this paper to focus on the specific question of meaningful organizational change and provides a model with critical lessons for the current US Army to help navigate the current period of change and adapt the Army for future warfare.

Structured, focused comparison combined with process tracing enables this paper to effectively analyze the organizational changes brought about by TRADOC in its formative years. Analysis of the case study attempts to draw out the lessons available from TRADOC's creation and early years, then applies to them a single comprehensive analytical framework. These lessons are brought forward to the present and compared with the creation of AFC and the challenges it faces to lead necessary change and reform to prepare the US Army for future threats. John Gaddis saw the future as a zone where “contingences and continuities coexisted independently, the past a place where their relationship is inseparably fixed, and the present as the singularity that brings them together.”²⁶ That “singularity point” is the filter to view the TRADOC case study and the potential of AFC's future.²⁷

Literature Review

Much has been written about the early years of TRADOC and its impact on changing the US Army to meet current and future threats. Sources range from the leaders who created and led TRADOC, for instance the personal papers of General William DePuy and General Donn Starry, as well as a multitude of secondary sources about TRADOC and military reform. Literature on AFC, however, is sparse, limited to a handful of online and journal publications. This paper seeks to add to the body of

²⁴ Gary, 9.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 31.

²⁷ Ibid., 31.

knowledge on AFC and reaffirm conceptions of the impact TRADOC had on meaningful change in the US Army. This paper is a continuation of a thesis written by Suzanne Nielson in 2003 that analyzed TRADOC's impact on successful peacetime military reform in the 1970s and the lessons it possessed for the Army in 2003. This paper seeks to pick up where she left off in 2003 as AFC is a further evolution of reforms based on the current and anticipated strategic environment. Much of the arguments that Nielson makes for the success of TRADOC in its early years are the same arguments made for AFC as it leads the US Army through this period of change. Nielson's thesis emphasized that "warfare can be altered by political, social economic and technological developments; a military organizations must adapt to these changes to remain relevant."²⁸

Organizational change is the central theme of this paper. The US Army is in a period of rapidly changing and complex strategic environment. AFC has a crucial role in change that is persistent and guides the Army enterprise as it prepares and responds to that complex environment. This chapter examines theories based on organizations and how they effectively adapt and change in a new or future environment. The chapter focuses on organizational theories compiled by Professor Mary Jo Hatch and effective ways to conduct rapid organizational change by Professor Steven Bleistein. Additionally, this chapter examines an organization evolution model created by theorist Larry Greiner and his theory on organizational evolution and growth. A detailed analysis of organizational theory and ways to effectively change an organizational provides a lens to view the early years of TRADOC and what lessons can be drawn forward to enable the success of AFC as it prepares the US Army for the future.

Hatch best described why one should study organization theory, "the more one knows about organizations they participate in helps understand the environment one operates in while enhancing the relationships within the organization."²⁹ Expanded knowledge and enhanced relationships encourages

²⁸ Suzanne C. Nielsen, "US Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982: A Case Study in Successful Peacetime Military Reform" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2003), 7.

²⁹ Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

members in an organization and that enables meaningful change. Those reforms facilitate an organization to meet challenges in a rapidly changing environment while being prepared for a future environment. The early years of TRADOC and creation of AFC in 2018 both represent periods of change for the US Army. Comprehension of the organization and theories that influence its processes provides clarity on effective means for lasting change to meet future tasks. Hatch provides a filter to view organization theory through three perspectives: modern, symbolic, and postmodern.³⁰ The symbolic perspective provides the best lens for this paper to view organization theory as it applies to the US Army and the formation of TRADOC and AFC.

From the symbolic perspective, interpretations are considered facts of what a symbolic researcher studies and how they study it. Explanations and interpretative processes are details of the symbol-filled environment that creates and permeates any organization. This perspective often requires a researcher to empathize with the organization given the situation and environment, this creates a framework and greater understanding of that organization's reality.³¹ The symbolic perspective favors qualitative information that relies on documentation and narrative. Symbols of an organization along with its culture is relevant to this perspective as it leads to greater comprehension of organizational methods and processes.³² This perspective is useful for examination of the US Army and its sub-organizations that are rich in symbols, possess a unique culture, and operate in a unique strategic/operational environment. Figure 1 provides additional clarity of the symbolic perspective compared to modern and postmodern. Symbolic perspective employs empathy and insight as well as an engaged intellect to evaluate an organization, a useful filter to view TRADOC and AFC's impact on the US Army in a period of change.

³⁰ Hatch, 10.

³¹ Ibid., 11.

³² Ibid., 12.

| | Modern | Symbolic | Postmodern |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Reality is | An independent unity | A socially constructed diversity | A plurality of simulacra |
| Reality is defined by | Convergence | Coherence | Incoherence and fragmentation |
| Knowledge is | Universal | Particular | Provisional |
| Knowledge is developed through | Facts Information | Meaning Interpretation | Decentering Deconstruction |
| Model for human relationships and identity is | Hierarchy Domination | Community Diversity | Reflexivity Voice |
| Overarching goal is | Prediction Control | Understanding Tolerance | Appreciation Emancipation |

Figure 1. Comparison of Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives. Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 58.

There are two major risks when using the symbolic perspective to view an organization. First, one may confuse interpretations influenced by their own culture with those of the subject organization to make sense of their environment. This risk is mitigated as much of the desired audience identify with a military organization. Another risk is the possibility of overgeneralization and broad conclusions based on small sample data.³³ Examination of TRADOC and AFC and the subject of organizational change mitigates the risk of becoming too broad in scope. Also unique to the symbolic perspective is subjectivist ontology, “a deliberate focus on what is revealed in the private thoughts and feelings of those in an organization.”³⁴ This element is key in the subsequent chapters as the motivations and desires of senior Army leaders enabled a positive environment for change. Though it may seem like a risk for the substance of the material presented, insight on the personal feelings of those in the organization provides greater understanding specifically on meaningful change for the US Army, both in the 1970s and now. The symbolic perspective of organization theory views the environment as a “social construction arising

³³ Hatch, 12.

³⁴ Ibid., 14-15.

from and in enactment, cognitive mapping, and sensemaking processes.”³⁵ Interpretation is a prominent factor in any social construction of the environment as are the symbols that carry meaning within the organization. Organizations can construct their environments differently and change their behaviors in response to their environment when its construction changes.³⁶ The symbolic perspective of organizational theory provides an effective lens to view change and reform for the US Army in a rapidly changing and complex environment.

When it comes to organization-environment relationships, the neo-institutional theory provides a lens to view transformation of an organization as it reacts to a changing environment. Neo-institutional theory claims that organizations not only require materials, labor, equipment, and information but also depends upon the acceptance of the societies within its environment.³⁷ The theory suggests that the environment places particular demands on an organization and that dictates certain roles the organization must play in a society. As an organization conforms to these demands it gains legitimacy and that leads to its continued survival. It is one of the most valuable inputs for an organization experiencing change.³⁸ This theory resonates with the US Army as it has demands placed on it, both internally and externally, to maintain a level of professionalism and further political aims in the international environment. Legitimacy, both in the institution and the challenges it faces, ensures its continued survival during the reform and in future operations. This is an important consideration for an organization as it contemplates change and reform to adapt to a new or future environment.

A key consideration to organizational change is the environment an organization creates and operates. This paper analyzes the motivations that led to change in the US Army in response to the environment, both with TRADOC in the 1970s and with AFC in 2018. Karl Weick provides a theory that maintains when decision-makers respond to their perceptions, they enact the environment they imagine

³⁵ Hatch, 88.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

and anticipate. Weick further blends enacted theory with the idea of social construction theory where organizational decision-makers assume the environment is real, they gather and analyze data in order to create an accurate forecast to make rational decisions for change.³⁹ The concept is useful for this paper as it focuses on the decisions to create TRADOC and AFC, specifically events in the strategic environment that motivated the drive for change. Nielsen emphasized this point when she argued that the primary decision-makers of change for the US Army in the 1970s came from inside the organization. Decisions that enacted change were based off their own understanding of the strategic environment they faced and future challenges posed by the implications of the Yom Kippur War.⁴⁰ Anticipation of a perceived future environment and threats associated with those environments influenced the US Army as an organization during key points of inflection. This is currently on-going as senior Army leaders seek an effective way for the current organizational structure to adapt to a future environment. In this chapter and subsequent chapters, the environment an organization operates in is a critical element of change.

An essential factor to meaningful change is how an organization is structured as it interacts within its environment. Typically, an organization's structure encompasses a physical (spatial/temporal relationship) and a social (patterns of interaction with members) aspect.⁴¹ Max Weber focused on the influence bureaucracy has on an organization and its ability to facilitate transformation or inhibit change. A bureaucracy seeks to arrange/structure people into jobs, jobs into departments, and departments into organizations. Though bureaucracies do not lend well to fast-pace environmental changes, they provide consistency, reliable decision making, typically merit-based, and impersonal application of rules.⁴² Added to that, bureaucracies, like the US Army, tend to follow a pattern of formalization; an extent of explicit rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that govern an organization. Studies show that formalization

³⁹ Karl E. Weick, *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), 64-65.

⁴⁰ Nielsen, 15.

⁴¹ Hatch, 106.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 107-108.

adds identity and structure, tends to suppress communication, and discourages innovation within an organization.⁴³ These characteristics challenge an organization's ability to successfully adapt to current or future environments, a struggle the US Army experiences during any period of change. Bureaucracies also possess either the dimension of centralization and decentralization and it figures significantly with organizational social structures. Of these two dimensions, the US Army identifies with a large decentralized organization. Within decentralization, many routine decisions are pushed to lower levels but strict rules and procedures ensure how these decisions are made.⁴⁴ Just as TRADOC was the primary agent of change for the US Army in the 1970s, AFC needs to lead in this period of change that is both sustainable and persistent.

Larry Greiner's organizational lifecycle theory provides a useful lens to view effective organizational change and is applicable for both the case of TRADOC in the early 1970s and the future of the Army with AFC. Greiner observed that organizations cycle through periods of evolution that exhibits stability to periods of revolution characterized by turmoil and change. A resolution of these revolutions facilitates the organization navigation through the period of change and determines if it moves forward in the next stage of evolutionary growth.⁴⁵ An organization passes through five different phases, each ending in a crisis that transitions it to the next phase. Figure 2 provides a graphic depiction of Greiner's theory that assists in understanding the evolution of an organization. First is the creativity phase where the focus is innovation, creativity, and simple in structure. As it gets bigger and more complex, a leadership crisis emerges that requires the organization to seek a more centralized hierarchy. This leads to the direction phase which involves introduction of professional management that seeks to manage increased differentiation brought by growth. A crisis emerges when the centralized system creates bottlenecks for action, requiring decisions to be pushed down the hierarchy of the organization, Greiner calls this the

⁴³ Hatch, 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 110-111.

⁴⁵ Larry E. Greiner, "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1998): 56, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://hbr.org/1998/05/evolution-and-revolution-as-organizations-grow>.

crisis of autonomy. This leads to the delegation phase where increased growth and autonomy require more coordination and integration. A crisis occurs when too much autonomy and decentralization occur, the crisis of control, as to not return to the direction phase, bureaucracies emerge and propel an organization to the next phase.⁴⁶

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Figure 2. Greiner's model of organizational lifecycles. Larry E. Greiner, "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1998): 56, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://hbr.org/1998/05/evolution-and-revolution-as-organizations-grow>.

The coordination phase solves the crisis of control by adding mechanisms to bound the organization and systems, creating rules and procedures. this can eventually lead to a red-tape crisis where a bureaucracy has grown so large as to slow down and prevent the organization from working efficiently. The collaboration phase is the final segment that pulls an organization out of the crisis of red-tape by redistributing teamwork, responsibilities, and reducing over-differentiated tasks into more

⁴⁶ Greiner, 62.

manageable sets, assigning shared responsibilities.⁴⁷ An organization's leadership is critical at the collaboration phase. If it fails to allow for necessary change, an organization undergoes a crisis of renewal; an organization becomes lethargic and unable to adapt to a changing environment. This crisis leads to a decline of an organization and eventual irrelevancy.⁴⁸ In the early 1970s the Army found itself between the coordination and collaboration phase of Greiner's model. Creation of TRADOC became an instrumental resolution that helped evolve the US Army into the next phase, a response to the challenges posed by future threats and evolving environment. This paper argues that the US Army currently finds itself at a point between the coordination and collaboration phase, just as it did in the early 1970s. AFC is the vehicle to bring the Army back into the collaborative phase in order to prepare the organization for a evolved complex environment and future threats posed by great-power competition.

While Hatch's compilation of organization theory provides a useful foundation, further review of organizational change from a business perspective offers additional insights to assess change in a complex organization like the US Army. Bleistein blends Western and Eastern perspectives of organizations and effective ways to change them through his theory of refraction. Like the idea of sound waves traveling through layers, he applies it to organization wherein the sound waves represent change and management/staff levels represent the layers. Refraction occurs when the difference in thinking at those layers deflect the change impairing its effectiveness and the organizations ability to adapt and change quickly.⁴⁹ Bleistein's focus in the theory is the mid-level management layer, a layer he's identified as typically the most resistant to change. Bleistein submits that unless issues at the refraction layer are resolved, an organization fails to change and adapt no matter the effort. Parochial ideals, common biases, and risk of failure all play into the development of a refraction layer. Once that layer is eliminated, effective and meaningful change comes rapidly for an organization.⁵⁰ Fear of failure creates an

⁴⁷ Greiner, 62-63.

⁴⁸ Hatch, 132.

⁴⁹ Steven Bleistein, *Rapid Organizational Change* (Cornwall, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, 2017), 3-4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

atmosphere of risk aversion. This creates significant resistance to change that postpones its effects and magnifies a refraction layer, a challenge organizational leadership must overcome in order to create meaningful change.

Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy advocated a change in the perception of risk aversion, challenging Army leaders to fail and fail early to learn vital lessons that leads to success in the future.⁵¹ Growth-oriented people see failure as a way to learn and as such are most open to change. A culture that rewards a lack of failure and measures it as a sign of success postpones the actions for change thus creating a refraction layer that's difficult to penetrate.⁵² Bleistein offers a way to avoid the traps of risk aversion by appealing to the cause rather than the effect. An illustration of this is holding leaders responsible for the method of change rather than the result.⁵³ Growth-oriented vision and the conception that failure as learning enables leaders to be comfortable with ambiguity that provides the necessary environment to promote change within an organization.⁵⁴ Another aspect of effective change is a turn to thinking-driven processes. Most organizations employ process-driven thinking which is all about adherence and consistency. Thinking-driven process sees success or failure based on outcome – the form is flexible. TRADOC in 1973 and AFC now are a way for the organization to change the process from process-driven to thinking-driven.⁵⁵ The organizations creation was a response to an environment defined by ambiguity and dependent on contingencies based on real and future threats. TRADOC ultimately succeeded in the elimination of a refraction layer in the 1970s-1980s and has become an integral part of the organization, AFC must be the same for US Army as it prepares to confront future challenges in a complex strategic environment.

⁵¹ Ryan McCarthy, interviewed by Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Next Steps for the Army: A Conversation with Under Secretary Ryan McCarthy," *Brookings Institution*, February 8, 2019, 18:00, accessed December 10, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LODd2sb2x_8&t=1503s.

⁵² Bleistein, 6-7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

Organization theory and effective ways to change an organization in response to challenges in its environment provides a useful lens to view the US Army in a period of transformation. This paper is a continuation of what Suzanne Nielson started in 2003 when she analyzed the impact of TRADOC on Army reform in the 1970s-1980s. At the time she wrote her thesis, the US Army was in a similar period of inflection with Future Combat Systems (FCS), an initiative that stemmed from 1995 with the Army After Next and Army XXI concepts. The goal was to explore the future of warfare beyond 2020 to 2025 and develop operational concepts to modernize and prepare the US Army for future combat.⁵⁶ Ultimately these efforts failed to materialize any real organizational change as the US Army devolved into counterinsurgency-dominated warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan. Military strategist Michael Howard observed that the purpose of future gazing in war is not to get it right, but to avoid getting it terribly wrong.⁵⁷ In a strategic environment defined by great-power competition and rapidly emerging technology, AFC and the US Army have an opportunity to create meaningful change and reform that prepares the organization for future warfare and not get it terribly wrong.

Case Study One: Early Years of Training and Doctrine Command and its Contribution to Deliberate and Effective Organizational Change

The creation and formative years of TRADOC offers a focused case study that deals with deliberate change and reform for the US Army. It was the last time a major four-star command was established until the creation of AFC in 2018. Logically it makes sense to use TRADOC's establishment as a case study being it was the last time such a change occurred but AFC's and TRADOC's creation share more significant connections. In the late 1960s, the US Army faced numerous challenges, combat operations in Southeast Asia, budgetary constraints, aged equipment, mixed priorities, personnel changes (end of the draft to all volunteer force and reduction in the size), and an uncertain future environment. The Army Assistant Vice Chief of Staff at the time, Lieutenant General James Kalergis, noted that

⁵⁶ Robert H. Scales, "Forecasting the Future of Warfare," *War on the Rocks*, April 9, 2018, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/04/forecasting-the-future-of-warfare/>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

organizational change is nothing new for the Army, it reorganizes when necessary throughout its history to face the challenges of the time and perceived future.⁵⁸ Since 2014, the US Army faced similar challenges as it did in the early 1970s, persistent combat operations in Central Command (CENTCOM) theater of operations, additional global commitments, inconsistent budgets, personnel system changes, aging legacy equipment, and challenges posed by the reemergence of great power competition. Though separated by over forty years, evident connections make TRADOC's early history an exceptional case study for successful deliberate organizational change.

Although 1973 was a pivotal year that saw the dissolution of CONARC and the creation of two separate commands, TRADOC and FORSCOM, the idea to dramatically change and reform the US Army occurred earlier in the late 1960s. During the 1960s while the US Army focused on light infantry combat and counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam, the Soviet Union had been modernizing its mobile fire support, mechanized, and armored forces. General William DePuy called this the "lost decade" of modernization.⁵⁹ As US commitment in Vietnam concluded, the Army faced additional challenges. They included transition from a conscripted to an all-volunteer force, force reduction (1.6 million to 800,000 on active duty), complex social issues, reduced budget, and sustainment of neglected forces in Europe. Within these challenges and constraints the Army Chief of Staff, General William Westmoreland, recognized the need for the Army to change and prepare for the future.⁶⁰ In 1968, Westmoreland established two priorities for his tenure as the Army chief: support combat forces in Vietnam and prepare the future force. Although Westmoreland's time as Army Chief of Staff would not see through to the end of the Vietnam War or modernization of the force, he laid the foundations of change. His successor,

⁵⁸ James Kalergis, "Purposeful Change: Reorganization, 1973," *Army* 23, no. 10 (October 1973): 62.

⁵⁹ Henry G. Gale, *William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 213.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

General Creighton Abrams, and other senior leaders empowered by Westmoreland completed implementation of Operation Steadfast.⁶¹

Operation Steadfast was the largest reorganization of the Army at the time since 1962. Steadfast stemmed from the demands for reform within the Department of the Army (DA) that culminated in 1969 with the Parker Board. Recommendations from this board convinced Westmoreland and senior DA officials to focus reorganization efforts at CONARC.⁶² “CONARC reached through the headquarters of all numbered armies to corps, divisions, and most major Army installations.”⁶³ Additionally it served as the training command, branch schools, and the Army component command for two unified commands. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of CONARC’s organizational structure. An internal report labeled CONARC 72 concluded that the command was sufficient and no further action was required.⁶⁴ Despite this internal resistance driven by risk-aversion, many of the DA senior leaders recognized CONARC’s obligations and charter had become too broad (54 activities/lines of effort). CONARC’s span of control exceed its current capabilities and structure.⁶⁵ DePuy, at the time Assistant Vice Chief, noted that subordinate units and staffs were never enabled to manage and command the assigned responsibility and the Vietnam War was its breaking point.⁶⁶ Additionally, Combat Developments Command (CDC), developed in 1962 to focus on material developments, proved to be irrelevant and unproductive. CDC’s failures were characterized by focus on development of capabilities in the too-distant future that brought no substantial gains and lacked clear focus or priorities. As a separate three-star command, it lacked the

⁶¹ Gale, 228.

⁶² US Department of the Army, US Army Forces Command Historical Office. *Operation Steadfast Historical Summary: A History of the Reorganization of the US Continental Army Command, 1972-1973*, by Jean R. Moenk (Fort McPherson, GA: 1973), 1-2.

⁶³ US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Military History Office, *Transforming the Army: TRADOC’s First Thirty Years 1973-2003* (Fort Monroe, VA: 2003), 5, accessed January 10, 2020, <http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p4013coll11/id/1211>.

⁶⁴ US Army Forces Command, Operation Steadfast Summary, 13-15.

⁶⁵ Gale, 229.

⁶⁶ William E. DePuy, Oral History interview with Colonels Romie L. Brownlee and William J. Mullen III, 1979, conducted under the auspices of the US Army Military History Institute and published by the US Army Center for Military History as *Changing an Army* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1998), 77.

influence of the four-star CONARC and Army Material Command (AMC) to acquire sufficient resources or priorities.⁶⁷ Westmoreland tasked Vice Chief of Staff General Bruce Palmer and DePuy to develop options to reorganize the Army and prepare it for the future.

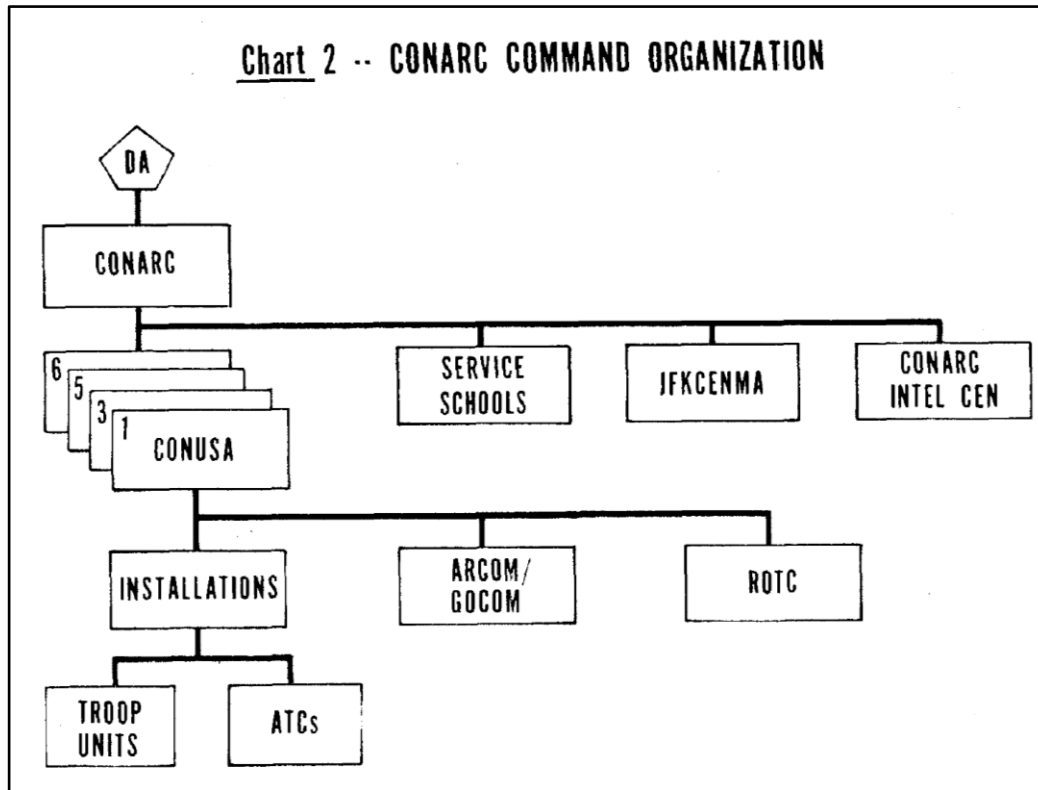


Figure 3. 1972 CONARC Command Organization. US Department of the Army, US Army Forces Command Historical Office. *Operation Steadfast Historical Summary: A History of the Reorganization of the US Continental Army Command, 1972-1973*, by Jean R. Moenk (Fort McPherson, GA: 1973), 13.

DePuy and his team worked to develop an effective way to reorganize the Army that maximized efficiency with available resources and prepare the Army for a post-Vietnam environment. In 1972, DePuy presented justifications for change to senior Army leaders and the Secretary of Defense. He highlighted that the current structure was based off an antiquated 1962 model and was reactionary to the conflict in Southeast Asia. With the commitment in Southeast Asia ended, priority should be “maintenance of deployable forces at a state of high readiness, training individuals in tactics, techniques, and skills, and development of new force structures and material systems.”⁶⁸ DePuy proposed CONARC

⁶⁷ Nielsen, 26.

⁶⁸ US Army Forces Command, *Operation Steadfast Summary*, 31.

be split into two separate commands. US Army Forces Command would control the operational force and US Army Training and Doctrine Command would manage training, doctrine and material developments. Additionally, the CDC dissolved, and its activities fell under TRADOC. The goal of Steadfast was to attain better performance in maintenance, readiness, training individuals, and “continuous force development.”⁶⁹ This approach also enabled a unified relationship between doctrine and training combined with combat developments under TRADOC while FORSCOM focused on readiness of the operational force, a solution to the span of control and prioritization issues suffered by CONARC.⁷⁰ A clear distinction was made between training and readiness, critical to enact these substantial reforms were the senior Army leaders with the shared vision to accomplish such a deliberate organizational change.

Essential for deliberate and effective organizational change, particularly for the US Army in the 1970s, is the vision and awareness of senior leaders to enact change. Bleistein’s refraction theory postulated that resistance to change is not from the top but actually propelled by senior leaders and staffs, how they communicate that vision for change to the mid-level refraction layer is critical.⁷¹ Starry noted during that period at the senior headquarters level, a change-mindset rippled through the senior levels.⁷² Leaders like Westmoreland, Palmer, DePuy, and Abrams recognized that a paradigm shift was needed, the current organization was not sufficient for a post-Vietnam environment. Despite internal resistance (epitomized by the CONARC Commander, General Ralph Haines) who believed that stabilization was needed after Vietnam, these key leaders recognized the anomalies and moved towards deliberate change. Notwithstanding the resistance, many senior leaders embraced the mindset of change and were able to quickly enact it, DePuy noted that the decision to reorganize CONARC occurred in one week.⁷³ DePuy understood that CONARC impeded the Army’s evolution with unresponsive echelons of management,

⁶⁹ US Army Forces Command, Operation Steadfast Summary, 35.

⁷⁰ Nielsen, 26.

⁷¹ Bleistein, 4.

⁷² Donn A. Starry, correspondence to Richard Swain, June 7, 1995, Combined Arms Research Library, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 6.

⁷³ DePuy, oral history interview, 178.

cumbersome processes, and a hyper-bureaucracy.⁷⁴ Greiner's organizational lifecycle theory frames the position of the US Army at that time, the coordination phase faced with a red-tape crisis. TRADOC was the resolution to bring the Army into the next evolution of the lifecycle theory that promotes organizational growth through the collaboration phase.⁷⁵

In 1973, Operation Steadfast concluded with the creation of TRADOC and Abrams, now the Army Chief of Staff, assigned DePuy as its first commander. As the architect of Steadfast, DePuy was the most capable to lead this new organization and bring deliberate change to the Army organization. He appointed other senior leaders supportive of deliberate reform into positions of influence within TRADOC, most notably Starry. TRADOC's mandate stipulated in Steadfast made it responsible for "development, direction, management, and supervision of individual training of both active and reserve components and for formulating concepts, doctrine, material developments, and organization for the Army in the field."⁷⁶ DePuy highlighted the TRADOC challenges: train and educate the force, develop functional organizations, viable tactical concepts, doctrine, and tied with material requirements.⁷⁷ The first task was the establishment of internal systems, its second was to reshape a dispirited post-Vietnam Army through doctrine, training, and material development.⁷⁸ Through TRADOC, DePuy sought to change how the Army trained, organized for combat, and the equipment it took to war. He introduced new concepts to the training centers that exercised wide maneuvers with flexibility, not as a prescribed event.⁷⁹ Another major contribution through the work of Lieutenant General Paul Gorman included the concept of performance-oriented training, a "systematic approach to training objectives, tasks, conditions, and

⁷⁴ DePuy, oral history interview, 77.

⁷⁵ Greiner, 63.

⁷⁶ US Army Forces Command, Operation Steadfast Summary, 89.

⁷⁷ William E. DePuy, "TRADOC: A New Command for an Old Mission," *Army* 23, no. 10 (October 1973): 32.

⁷⁸ US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 8.

⁷⁹ DePuy, oral history interview, 183.

standards.”⁸⁰ Schools and functional centers realigned to directly impact the formation of doctrine and implementation of training that were formalized. Additionally, they took a major portion of the combat developments process previous under the authority of the separate CDC.⁸¹

Incorporation of activities previously conducted by CDC highlighted the recognized importance of the combat developments process integrated with training, doctrine, training, and organization.⁸² Previously, CDC was an ineffective, under-resourced, and overburdened system that failed to produce significant results. DePuy sought to incorporate material developments that aligned with training and doctrine concepts. Additionally, he believed that CDC’s attempts to predict potential needs were impractical with goals that looked to shape the Army thirty years into the future.⁸³ DePuy emphasized a scoped down timeline horizon to a realistic ten years, inherently fused with training and doctrine provided to the operational force.⁸⁴ DePuy noted one of his most significant achievements was the reorientation of combat developments to practical, real world situations and threats with a clear focus.⁸⁵ DePuy, along with senior Army leaders like Abrams and Starry, agreed that the Army’s focus post-Vietnam should orient towards the European theater and combat operations designed to deter and fight the Soviet Union, but how to accomplish this remained nebulous. Though the evolution and transformation occurred in 1973 with the creation of TRADOC, continued resistance to reform and lack of a centralized focus for the future threatened to slow the pace of change. However, a relatively short conflict in the Middle East would significantly impact the environment of change for the Army and propel deliberate reforms center stage.

⁸⁰ DePuy, oral history interview, 184.

⁸¹ US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 12.

⁸² Nielsen, 35.

⁸³ DePuy, oral history interview, 181.

⁸⁴ DePuy, “TRADOC: A New Command for an Old Mission,” 34.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

On October 6, 1973 combined Egyptian and Syrian forces, supplied with modern Soviet equipment, conducted surprise offensives into the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights that took the Israelis and world by surprise. The conflict, commonly referred to as the Yom Kippur War, demonstrated the over-confidence and lack of preparedness of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) which suffered heavy casualties from the start. Although Israel's misfortunes reversed by the end of the two-week conflict with Israeli forces in full control of its territory and the destruction of the Egyptian and Syrian field armies, the implications of the war reverberated through much of the Western world and the US Army. The intensity and speed of this modern battle had been unseen with examples of sophisticated, layered air defense capabilities, precision munitions, and massive tank battles not seen since World War II. More lethal and sophisticated munitions resulted in larger than anticipated casualties on both sides of the conflict. During a presentation to TRADOC leadership DePuy highlighted a staggering statistic, within eighteen days of conflict the combined Egyptian and Syrian force lost more personnel and equipment than what the entire US Army had stationed in Europe.⁸⁶ Starry noted that the "Yom Kippur War laid out future modern warfare in a tangible and measurable way; the threat was visible in real-time."⁸⁷ The Yom Kippur War provided a real-time instance for senior leaders to focus on and anticipate rather than predict a likely future environment.

The Yom Kippur War provided the catalyst DePuy and other senior Army leaders needed to advance their vision to reform and modernize the Army. The war also showed senior leaders how far behind the US Army was on modernization efforts compared to the Soviet Union. Persistent combat operations in Vietnam and inconsistent priorities allowed the US Army to miss a generation of modernization while the Soviets had advanced one or two generations ahead.⁸⁸ Starry identified a future battlefield through Yom Kippur that demanded dramatic change in warfighting doctrine, training, and

⁸⁶ US Department of the Army, Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy: First Commander, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, compiled by Richard Swain, edited by Donald Gilmore and Carolyn Conway (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1994), 79.

⁸⁷ Starry, correspondence with Richard Swain, 7.

⁸⁸ Gale, 240.

material developments to prevail at the tactical and operational level in an environment where the US Army was outnumbered and matched in equipment capabilities.⁸⁹ DePuy later said the Yom Kippur War was “the most fortunate thing for us because it dramatized the difference between the wars that we might fight in the future and the wars we had fought in the past.”⁹⁰ The war also provided the catalyst needed not only to accelerate change but ensure the impacts remained permanent. Dr. Philip Karber identified the Yom Kippur War as the principal driver for the ten-year period of doctrine evolution, restructure, and equipment modernization that followed the creation of TRADOC.⁹¹

Establishment of TRADOC in 1973 and additional reforms outlined in Operation Steadfast were part of what has been called “one of the most sweeping reorganizations of the US Army in the continental US since the general reorganization of 1942 when the Army Ground Forces, Army Service Forces and Army Air Forces was established.”⁹² From 1968-1973 the US Army found itself in Greiner’s coordination phase of an organization lifecycle faced with a red-tape crisis where bureaucratic systems and procedures took precedence over problem-solving and innovation. US Army senior leaders reframed and challenged their current paradigm to overcome the red-tape crisis that inhibited organizational evolution. The Army transitioned from the coordination phase and into the collaboration phase, it evolved successfully to meet the challenges of an anticipated future operational environment.⁹³ Even further, these senior leaders were able to ensure the effectiveness of these deliberate changes. Westmoreland, Abrams, DePuy, and Starry displayed characteristics of growth-oriented leaders. They embraced ambiguity, rejected risk-aversion tendencies, fostered an environment of innovation and problem-solving, and created a future rather than divined it.⁹⁴ These leaders eliminated the refraction layer that paved the way for rapid change, the effects

⁸⁹ Starry, correspondence with Richard Swain, 7.

⁹⁰ Gale, 240.

⁹¹ Philip Karber, “Dr. Philip Karber on the Russian Way of War,” Modern War Institute, US Military Academy, April 9, 2018, video of lecture, 5:54, accessed January 14, 2020, <https://mwi.usma.edu/video-dr-phillip-karber-ukraine-russian-way-war/>.

⁹² Gale, 235.

⁹³ Greiner, 62.

⁹⁴ Bleistein, 131.

still felt today in the US Army.⁹⁵ The lessons from the Yom Kippur War dramatically increased the pace of change and reform. It provided a focus for senior leaders to envision a future operational environment.⁹⁶ These changes impacted every aspect of the US Army, from new doctrine encapsulated in Active Defense followed by AirLand Battle to the “Big Five” initiatives that modernized material capabilities. Esper emphasized the impacts of the reforms in 1973 and drew parallels between that period of change and the challenges the current Army faces.⁹⁷ The reforms that started in 1973 transformed the military landscape. The US Army finds itself in a similar position now with the resurgence of great-power competition, rapid technological advancements, and evolved character of war. These challenges have compelled the organization to change and begin the move from an industrial to an information age Army.

Case Study Two: Great Power Competition, Continuous Modernization, and Army Futures Command’s role in US Army Transformation.

By 2014 the US Army entered its thirteenth year of persistent combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq combined with other substantial global commitments. Operations compelled US Army doctrine to shift focus to predominately counterinsurgency operations and concentrated organizational efforts at the brigade rather than the division level. Additionally, the US Army continued upgrades and maintenance on existing equipment and systems developed in the 1980s. An effort was made in the late 1990s and early 2000s to substantially modernize and transform the organization called the “Army After Next” and “Army XXI.” These initiatives sought to significantly modernize and transform the Army after the victory of the First Gulf War.⁹⁸ Ultimately the efforts to prepare the Army for a future operational environment ended in failure caused by misjudgment of the rate of essential technology needed and early application to operationalize material solutions.⁹⁹ The Army was unable to focus priorities and shape a

⁹⁵ Bleistein, 5.

⁹⁶ Nielsen, 39.

⁹⁷ Esper, *Atlantic Council’s Commanders Series*, 20:25-23:14.

⁹⁸ Scales, “Forecasting the Future of Warfare.”

⁹⁹ Ibid.

narrative to justify programs of modernization that were focused on material capabilities instead of capability gaps. The initiative was cancelled in 2008, a period when the US Army was engaged in a major surge in Iraq to contain escalated sectarian violence across the country. In 2014, Russian actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine compelled the US Army and Department of Defense (DOD) senior leaders to challenge their paradigms on the character of warfare and what a future force would need to look like.

Since the creation of contemporary Ukraine, Russian lawmakers view it as an artificial country with no right to exist, exemplified by Vladimir Putin's remark in 2008 that "Ukraine is not even a real state."¹⁰⁰ Given this sentiment, Ukraine's move towards Western influence is intolerable to Russia, a realization more evident with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) expansion. In late 2013, Ukraine leader Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign an EU trade agreement (presumably under Russian pressure) in exchange for incentives from Moscow. This unpopular decision in Ukraine led to massive protest that ended in a parliamentary impeachment of Yanukovich and his eventual exile to Russia in February 2014.¹⁰¹ Separatist groups in Crimea during this period, enabled by Russian agents, began calls to leave the Ukraine. Unmarked uniformed units dubbed "little green men" then appeared throughout Crimea that reinforced separatists and facilitated seizure of key government and military facilities.¹⁰² In March 2014, Crimea voted to join Russia in a referendum and the next day Putin recognized Crimea as a sovereign state. Conventional Russian forces intervened into Crimea, secured the peninsula, and neutralized Ukrainian military units with little bloodshed. By the end of the month, Putin signed a law that formally admitted Crimea into the Russian Federation.¹⁰³ These events significantly

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Treisman, "Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 95, no. 3 (May/June 2016): 50, accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-russian-president-putin-took-crimea-from-ukraine>.

¹⁰¹ Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, 2nd ed. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 243.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 242-243.

¹⁰³ Treisman, 52.

challenged Western strategic assumptions regarding Russia. The events that followed in the Donbass and Eastern Ukraine had substantial impact on military conceptions of Russian capabilities.

Soon after Crimea's annexation, Russia supported a series of information campaigns and pro-separatist protests in the Donbass region of Eastern Ukraine. Those actions quickly escalated to a separatist movement and Russian volunteer terrorism, political assassinations, and population coercion.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Russian volunteer and separatist militias used cyber and electronic warfare attacks to reduce Ukrainian forces capabilities. By May 2014, separatist militias seized key government, military, communication facilities, and established sanctuary areas supported by Russian Spetsnaz forces in an insurgency campaign and proxy war that further destabilized the region.¹⁰⁵ As Russian conventional forces massed on the eastern border of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Army redeployed a majority of its forces to the region and by the end of summer made significant progress to regain control of the Donbass.¹⁰⁶ As separatist forces lost control within the region, Russian conventional forces intervened, first with cross-border artillery fires that escalated to armored offensives that pushed back and surrounded four Ukrainian Army brigades.¹⁰⁷ Russian forces continued offensive operations until the Minsk I ceasefire in September 2014. Despite this agreement and subsequent ceasefires (Minsk II), hostilities continue between separatist/Russian forces in Eastern Ukraine. Concurrently, Russia conducted several nuclear alert exercises at the highest levels and executed numerous flights with nuclear capable aircraft over the Mediterranean Sea and Balkan area.¹⁰⁸ Russia's ability to orchestrate and combine conventional and non-conventional military means in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine redefined the character of war with serious implications for the future.

¹⁰⁴ Philip Karber, "Russian Hybrid War Campaign: Implications for Ukraine and Beyond," moderated by Paul Schwartz, filmed on March 10, 2015 in Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies video, 15:22, accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/events/russian-military-forum-russias-hybrid-war-campaign-implications-ukraine-and-beyond>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 22:36.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 34:04.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 34:04-35:55.

¹⁰⁸ Karber, "Russian Way of War," 11:14-12:30.

These events represented the impact of Russian military reforms and modernization efforts informed by the Valery Gerasimov doctrine now commonly referred to as “Russian New Generation Warfare” or hybrid warfare.¹⁰⁹ Reuben Johnson defined Russian hybrid warfare as a “complex blend of conventional and non-conventional warfare techniques combined with firepower, deception, misinformation, and cyber-attacks.”¹¹⁰ Figure 4 represents a model of hybrid warfare developed by Karber that illustrates the relationship between the level of intensity and responsibility of a state actor. Karber outlined Russia’s use of hybrid warfare in four areas, political subversion, proxy/insurgency war, invasion/intervention and coercive deterrence.¹¹¹ Russian actions in Eastern Ukraine demonstrated their capacity to combine and orchestrate all levels of hybrid warfare effectively.¹¹² Russian armed forces displayed enhanced mobility, a relatively high level of training of professional forces, and modernize equipment. Modernized Russian equipment and increased lethality of fire support and air defense capabilities resulted in a peak intensity higher than the Yom Kippur War.¹¹³ Where military capabilities alone were not sufficient, Russia combined non-military abilities (cyber, information operations, etc.) to achieve desired results.¹¹⁴ Hybrid warfare is not a new concept but Russia’s ability to combine and orchestrate all its elements in Ukraine posed serious challenges for the US Army, just as it did in 1973 based on the implications of the Yom Kippur War.¹¹⁵ Events in Ukraine compelled senior Army leaders to challenge their assumptions of the US Army’s future and reframe their paradigm, Army Futures Command epitomized this shift.

¹⁰⁹ Heidi Reisinger and Aleksandr Golts, “Russia’s Hybrid Warfare: Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defense,” Research Division, NATO Defense College no. 105 (November 2014): 2, accessed January 14, 2020, https://ftalphaville-cdn.ft.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/rp_105.pdf.

¹¹⁰ Nicholas Barber, “A Warning from the Crimea: Hybrid Warfare and the Challenge for the ADF.” *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 201 (May-June 2017): 47, accessed January 14, 2020, 46, https://www.defence.gov.au/adf/adfj/Documents/issue_201/Barber_April_2017.pdf.

¹¹¹ Karber, “Russian Hybrid War Campaign,” 12:29.

¹¹² Karber, “Russian Way of War,” 12:37.

¹¹³ Karber, “Russian Hybrid War Campaign,” 35:06.

¹¹⁴ Reisinger and Golts, 10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

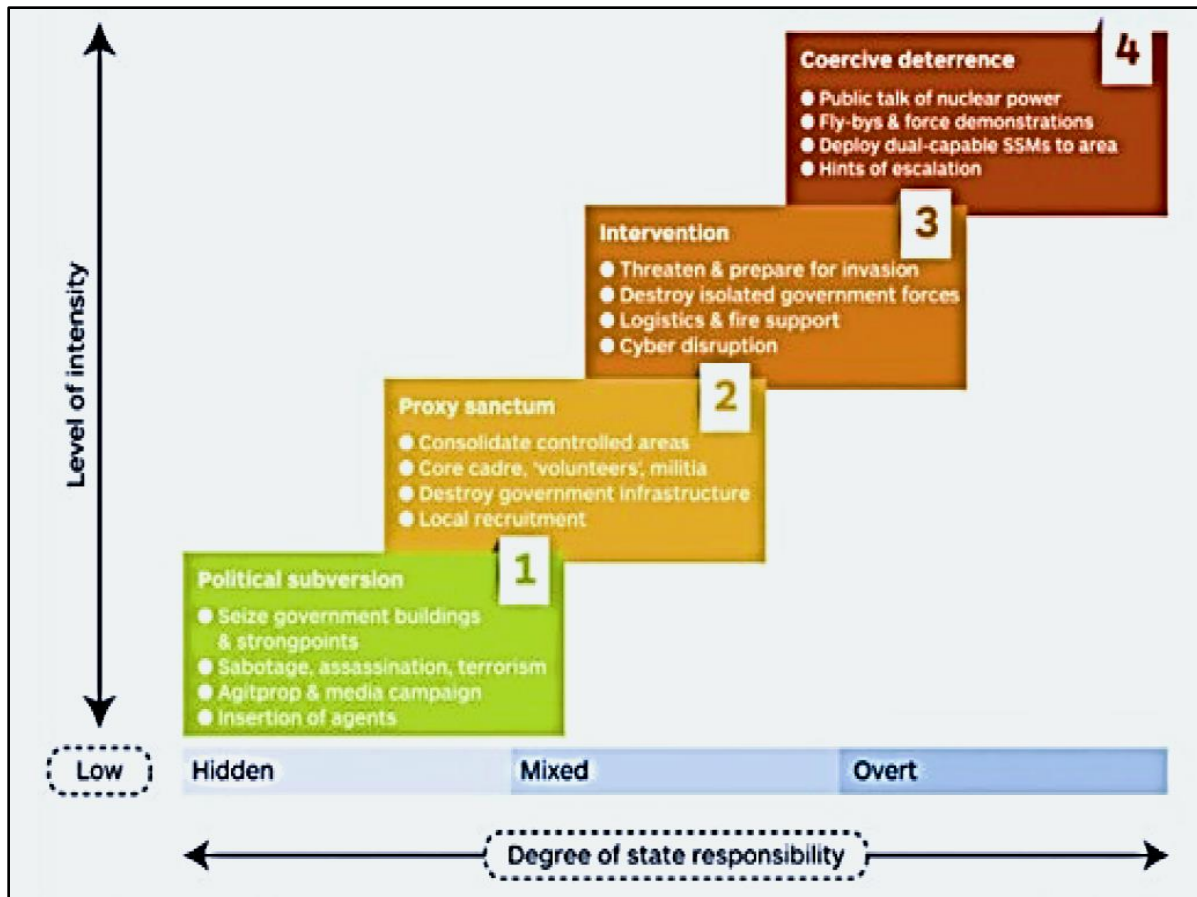


Figure 4. Hybrid Warfare Model. Nicholas Barber, “A Warning from the Crimea: Hybrid Warfare and the Challenge for the ADF.” *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 201 (May-June 2017), 47, accessed January 12, 2020, https://www.defence.gov.au/adc/adfj/Documents/issue_201/Barber_April_2017.pdf.

In 2017, the Department of the Army (DA) announced creation of AFC, the largest reorganization within the Army since 1973 and Operation Steadfast.¹¹⁶ Creation of AFC encapsulated years of work and research on how the Army should move forward, given the events in Ukraine. Senior Army leaders like Chief of Staff General Mark Milley, Undersecretary Ryan McCarthy, and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper recognized the threat posed by a resurgent and rapidly modernized Russia and China. This recognition facilitated a significant reframe of how Army senior leaders viewed a future environment and guided their vision to prepare the future Army. AFC provided unity of effort to the already established cross functional teams (CFTs) that are dedicated to identification of capability gaps, development of

¹¹⁶ James Long, “Four Problems Army Futures Command Needs to Solve,” Modern War Institute, January 4, 2019, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://mwi.usma.edu/four-problems-army-futures-command-needs-solve/>.

requirements to close the gaps, and overhauling the entire modernization process.¹¹⁷ Milley justified the creation of a new permanent, four-star command rather than an “ad hoc” initiative (Army after Next and Army XXI) based on the need to “consolidate modernization efforts spread across the force and provide unity of command.”¹¹⁸ Esper shared the greater aim of AFC and reforms within the Army, “AFC is not just a new organization, it embodies a new way of organizing and reorganizing on a continuous basis,” a concept Esper called “permanent evolution.”¹¹⁹

The 2019 Army Modernization Strategy (AMS) emphasized modernization as a continuous process and AFC is the lead organization that brings unity of effort to the modernization approach. This approach signals the transformation of the US Army from an industrial to an information age organization.¹²⁰ The strategic aim highlighted in the AMS was a modernized force capable of Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) by 2035 executed over two periods: one of rapid change as the Army fields and tests solutions and a second period of fundamental changes with operationalized MDO and an MDO ready force.¹²¹ MDO is the concept that drives AFC’s and the greater Army enterprise efforts to modernize and transform the force. The handover to TRADOC and AMC is the operationalization of MDO concepts into the force, Figure 5 represents this in time and space. Esper connected this period of strategic inflection with the Army of 1973, its reorganization driven by realization that the Army was not prepared to face the Soviets in Europe in high-intensity conflict post-Vietnam.¹²² Although AFC is still in its infancy and there is much speculation on the potential success of the organization, its creation and the strategic context provides a relevant case study to compare with the successful reforms of the Army in the 1970s. The threats exhibited by Russia’s actions in Ukraine, and great-power competition at large, played

¹¹⁷ Esper, “Army Futures Command,” 2:05.

¹¹⁸ Long, “Four Problems Army Futures Command Needs to Solve.”

¹¹⁹ Freedberg, “Permanent Evolution: SecArmy Esper on Futures Command.”

¹²⁰ US Department of the Army, *2019 Army Modernization Strategy: Investing in the Future*, October 2019, 3-4, accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/228552/2019_army_modernization_strategy.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²² Esper, “Army Futures Command,” 00:51.

a vital role in the development of modernization strategies and AFC’s mandate. Current senior Army leaders identified a paradigm shift, enabled critical modernization efforts, and have begun the move from an industrial to an information age Army. They acted in a manner like Army reformers of the late 1960s and 1970s.

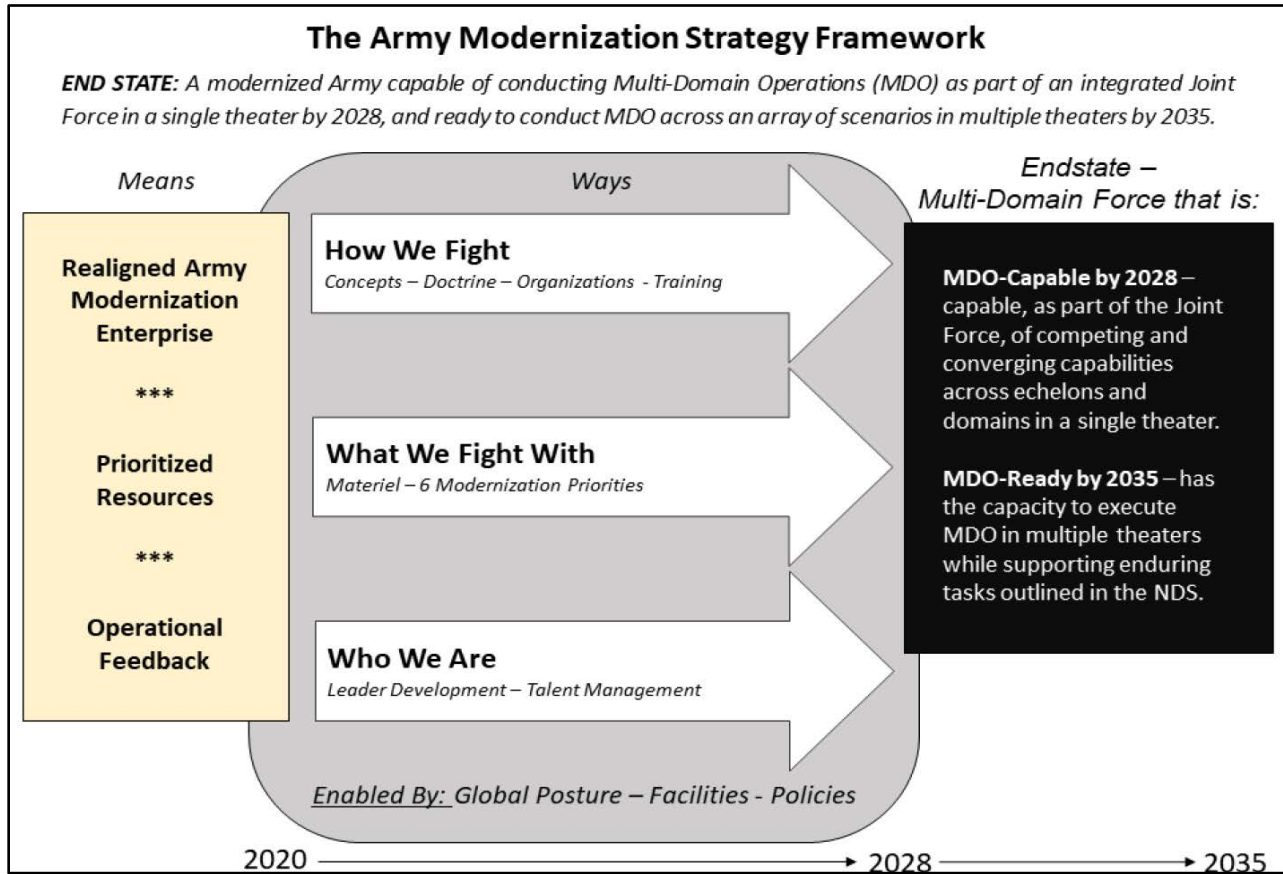


Figure 5. The Army Modernization Strategy Framework. US Department of the Army, *2019 Army Modernization Strategy: Investing in the Future*, October 2019, 3, accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/228552/2019_army_modernization_strategy.

For any research into deliberate and meaningful change of an organization like the Army, the reforms of 1973 and formative years of TRADOC provides a relevant case study. The creation of TRADOC in 1973 was the largest reorganization of the Army until the creation of AFC in 2018. Beyond the magnitude of change both organizations created within the Army, many factors that influence deliberate and effective reforms reside in both cases. Conditions such as an evolved strategic environment, identified threats, persistent combat operations, budgetary constraints, and senior leadership actions are predominant factors both cases share. Although the AFC case study lacks the depth of the

TRADOC study inherent to its recent creation, several vital elements to organizational change in the Army leads to prudent speculation on the future impact of AFC. Particularly, the identified threat motivated both organizations in a similar pattern towards rapid organization change. Though the sequence differs between both cases, the impact served the same purpose through the focus, justification, and resources to enact deliberate change. Organizational change theories by Greiner and Bleistein provided a filter to view both these case studies and relevant models to identify and enact change. DePuy saw TRADOC's creation and influence as a turning point in the Army's evolution in the 1970s, a fact acknowledged by current senior Army leaders.¹²³ AFC is a new organization that epitomizes not just the transformation of the Army modernization process but a commitment to bold reform for the entire Army that enables the transition from an industrial to information age.¹²⁴

Summary

In a 1973 article, Brigadier General Lynn Smith stated, "In the Army, resistance to change is historical, automatic, and stubborn."¹²⁵ This paper is an effort to help eliminate refraction layers that build up to resist current change and reforms in the US Army.¹²⁶ It is also an extension of work done by Suzanne Nielsen in 2003 as she outlined TRADOC's key role in successful peacetime reforms in the 1970s and 1980s. Her work recognized the significant impact of Operation Steadfast and TRADOC's early efforts to prepare the Army for future warfare, this paper is an evolution of her efforts as the Army finds itself in a considerable state of change.¹²⁷ Additionally, this paper aims to increase the body of knowledge on AFC and its contribution to effective organizational change. It provides additional discussion and discourse to the idea of meaningful organizational reforms as well as AFC's role and potential impact as a lead agent of change. Starry stated in the early 1980s that the US Army had in place

¹²³ US Department of the Army, *Selected Papers of William E. DePuy*, 180.

¹²⁴ Esper, "Army Futures Command," 00:29.

¹²⁵ Lynn D. Smith, "Overhauling the Army: A Question of Purpose," *Army* 23, no 10 (October 1973): 12.

¹²⁶ Bleistein, 3.

¹²⁷ Nielsen, 96.

“all the ingredients which history suggest are necessary to effect orderly change,” the Army of 2020 is in similar circumstances of meaningful change.¹²⁸

Organizational change is the central element of this paper. Greiner’s organizational lifecycle model provided a perspective of the Army within its evolution, caught between the coordination and collaborative phase caused by a red-tape crisis. General George Marshall reflected on the Army enterprise capability after Pearl Harbor, “it had lost track of its purpose to exist. It had become a huge bureaucratic, red-tape ridden agency. It slowed everything down.”¹²⁹ Army organizations cannot resist but instead create the adaptive space that enables evolution. AFC exemplifies the Army’s effort to emulate Arena’s conception that adaptive space is the path forward for agile organizations in a dynamic and complex environment.¹³⁰ This paper highlighted the critical importance of senior leaders’ capacity to recognize the need for change, operationalize the vision, and enable the organization to enact reforms. Bleistein’s refraction theory emphasizes resistance to change typically emerges from the mid-level of an organization, critical is senior leaders’ ability to message their vision and growth-oriented action. Elimination of a risk-aversion attitude within the organization is essential to promote change.¹³¹ General Michael Murray, first commander of AFC, highlighted this attitude for the organization, leaders must be willing to take prudent risk and fail.¹³² Much of the resistance AFC and other reforms face revolve around risk aversion, it is imperative leaders see failure as an opportunity to grow. Like the current environment, Army leaders in the 1970s took considerable risk to dramatically reform the post-Vietnam Army, this is just one of many shared elements between the two cases.

¹²⁸ Starry, “To Change an Army,” 27.

¹²⁹ Smith, 12.

¹³⁰ Arena, 239-240.

¹³¹ Bleistein, 6-7.

¹³² Todd South, “Four Takeaways from the 4-Star General at Army Futures Command,” *Army Times*, May 7, 2019, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/07/four-takeaways-from-the-4-star-general-at-army-futures-command/>.

Comparison of the current Army reform efforts and those in the 1970s appear natural and convenient but it is not out of intellectual laziness. The magnitude of changes and complexity of the strategic environment irrefutably connect both the past case of TRADOC and emergent case of AFC. First, the largest Army reorganizations over the past forty-year period occurred between both cases. Secondly, the impacts of observable and anticipated threats, ironically by Russia, in the Yom Kippur War and events in Ukraine are key components of organizational change for the Army. Starry noted “the 1973 Arab-Israeli War provided a fortuitous field trail of useful concepts. The lessons drawn from this conflict, as well as other analytical study, led to the Army’s conclusion about the requisite strategy, operational concepts, tactics, organizations, equipment, and training.”¹³³ Forty-five years later, Esper promoted a similar message, much like the Army in 1973 and impact of the Yom Kippur War, Russia’s actions and to a greater extent China, compelled the current Army to evolve organizationally.¹³⁴ The effects of these anticipated threats ensured the permanent status of change and enabled the successful evolution of the organization. Finally, senior leadership involvement share similarities between both case studies and its significance to meaningful change. As the Army Chief of Staff, Westmoreland outlined his top priorities for the Army in 1969: support combat forces in Vietnam and reform the Army. Forty-five years later, Milley echoed comparable priorities: maintain readiness for current combat operations and focus on modernization and reform.¹³⁵ Throughout both case studies, senior leadership involvement is an essential element in the implementation of meaningful change that becomes commonly accepted in an organization.

AFC is the vehicle to prepare the Army and bring it from an industrial age to an information age Army. Murray highlighted the magnitude of current reforms, “The Army took some really bold steps two years ago when they came up with the concept of the Futures Command. It is about doing things

¹³³ Starry, “To Change an Army,” 24.

¹³⁴ Mark Esper interviewed by Vago Muradian, *Defense and Aerospace Report*, March 28, 2018, 2:46, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJBODOeUUaI>.

¹³⁵ Esper, “Army Futures Command,” 12:05.

differently. It is about moving the Army into the information age because we will not be successful if we just continued to do the same thing we have always done in the past.”¹³⁶ Senior Army leaders all emphasize this transition from an industrial to information age Army, a critical shift to prepare the Army for a future strategic environment. Great-power competition characterizes the current geopolitical environment, Russia again has become the US Army’s pacing threat. The US Army has a diminished lead in ground combat systems and is now surpassed in indirect fires capabilities. Russian cyber and electronic warfare capabilities match many of the US abilities and the Russian military have made significant strides in the level of training across its force. Modernization focused on capabilities gaps, an agile acquisition process focused on continuous innovation, development of new operational concepts such as MDO, and space to confront new opportunities and challenges are factors AFC facilitates.¹³⁷ The Army faced similar conditions in 1973, TRADOC was the solution to an industrial age Army that proved successful. Kalergis stated in 1973 that “For the Army, the future is always now. The Army must be ready to discharge its responsibilities in defending the nation now, while looking ahead to change in the future.”¹³⁸ This is precisely what senior Army leaders are doing now and just like the reforms started in 1973 proved successful, the Army has in place all the necessary elements to evolve for the future.

¹³⁶ Stew Magnuson, “AUSA News: Army Futures Command Breaking Down Barriers,” *National Defense Magazine*, October 16, 2019, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2019/10/16/army-futures-command-breaking-down-barriers>.

¹³⁷ Andrew P. Hunter and Rhys McCormick, “The Army Modernization Imperative: A New Big Five for the Twenty-First Century.” Center for Strategic International Studies, May 31, 2017, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/army-modernization-imperative>.

¹³⁸ Kalergis, 64.

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