

# To Change an Army— Winning Tomorrow

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*Editor's note: In March 1983, Gen. Donn A. Starry penned an essay for Military Review titled "To Change an Army" that described the process of modernization to build an AirLand Battle Army. Much of his approach is leveraged by Army Futures Command today.*

In the summer of 2008, the Russian military conducted an incursion into the former Soviet state of Georgia. Although it defeated the less capable Georgian forces, by most accounts the Russian military's performance during this operation was poor. Its ability to conduct intelligence, logistics, and ground combat operations, and its ability to integrate air and ground forces was questionable at best.<sup>1</sup> After withdrawing and recognizing the significant deficiencies in its security forces, Russia set about modernizing its military. In March 2014, just six short years later, Russia annexed Crimea without engaging in battle. Eight months after that, it conducted an incursion into eastern Ukraine and revealed to the world that the problems exhibited in 2008 had largely been remedied. To those who might have thought these improvements had implications solely for small, isolated conflicts in Russia's own backyard, it should be noted that in 2015, just one year later, Russia conducted expeditionary operations into Syria, demonstrating that it could simultaneously sustain operations in both its near abroad (Ukraine) and at the end of extended lines of communication (Syria).<sup>2</sup> Concurrent to these operations, the Russians have conducted annual, large-scale exercises, such as the aggressive Zapad exercises in Belarus.<sup>3</sup> In November 2018, just over eighteen months ago, the Russian Navy seized several Ukrainian maritime craft and sailors in the Sea

of Azov just north of the Kerch Strait.<sup>4</sup> Though the world watched, little was done about it. We should, therefore, ask ourselves whether Russia just annexed the Sea of Azov too. And what about the Black Sea? If so, what, if anything, should we or can we do about it?

These behaviors are not just confined to Russia. China too is signaling its strategic intent to expand its political and economic influence through its Belt and Road Initiative where Beijing employs tributary trade practices to wield influence over those who might be beneficiaries of their investments.<sup>5</sup> This initiative extends into Europe and—approaching the American doorstep—Central America. China's development of, investment in, and presumptive annexation of artificial islands—patrolled by "dark" fishing fleets that serve as a de facto private navy while masking their true intentions—are a lightly veiled attempt to extend its domestic waters in the South China Sea.<sup>6</sup> It does not stop there. China continues to unapologetically steal commercial and military technology from the United States and its allies, adding to an already long list of dubious activities to exert and enhance its global influence with calculated consequences.

China's unprecedented economic growth over the last thirty years has enabled it to expand. It has benefited from a thirty-year average 9.46 percent annual GDP growth rate, which at its lowest point in the fourth quarter of 1990 was still 3.80 percent.<sup>7</sup> That is unquestionably powerful and unprecedented economic growth! For comparison, the United States is currently thriving at 2.3 percent GDP growth rate.<sup>8</sup>

(Photo by David McNally, U.S. Army Shutterstock)

This is what has elevated China to one of the world's largest economies in a matter of just twenty to thirty years. China will likely surpass Russia in the next five to ten years as the premier military competitor with the United States. In fact, China has publicly declared its intent to be a global superpower by 2049, and analysts believe China is well ahead of schedule in its pursuit of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation."<sup>9</sup>

Second only to concerns over Russia and China's global expansion and rapid technological advancement is the acquisition of sophisticated capabilities by malign actors such as Iran and North Korea that increasingly threaten to use them against the United States and its allies. Consider the events of 14 September 2019, when a drone swarm—initially unattributed, unannounced, and ambiguous—conducted a kinetic strike against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, marking one of the largest strikes against Saudi Arabia's

fossil fuel enterprise in its history. Although the attack initially was claimed by Iranian-backed Yemeni Houthis rebels, it is unclear if the Houthis launched it or if it actually originated from their Iranian sponsors. Even still, the international community continues to question and debate the extent of, if any, Iran's role in the attack to this day.<sup>10</sup> Thirteen weeks after this underhanded attack, the Iranians orchestrated the Popular Mobilization Force attack against the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. Within a week, Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the infamous commander of the Quds Force, was dead from a strike conducted by the United States of America of which U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper remarked in its aftermath, "The game has changed."<sup>11</sup>

## The Game Has Changed

Indeed it has. In fact, the world has changed and continues to do so at a quickening pace. This is a new era of great power competition. Absent change, capable and emboldened adversaries will, in just a few short years, reach parity with U.S. military strength. And in some areas, they may even achieve overmatch relative to current U.S. capabilities. The United States finds itself with significant challenges on the horizon, and as Gen. James



McConville, fortieth chief of staff of the Army, recently remarked, “Great power competition does not necessarily mean great power conflict, but it could if we don’t have a strong military.”<sup>12</sup> And right he is. Having been engaged in counterinsurgency operations for nearly two decades, the Army now faces the daunting challenge of reorienting itself and modernizing for large-scale combat and—just as important—readying itself for competition left of conflict. Therefore, the United States must modernize. To do so, there must be a common understanding of the secretary of the Army’s and chief of staff of the Army’s vision. And, there must be a com-

mon understanding and applied leadership to the modernization effort.

But how does one modernize an Army? Those of us wearing the uniform today have little experience in such an endeavor at an institutional scale. Instead, the United States has enjoyed the luxuries of an Army that has not had to fundamentally modernize—aside from incremental

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advances in acute technologies—in more than forty years. The unchallenged power differential following the Cold War produced a generation of leaders who were able to focus on the task at hand—deterrence and counterinsurgency—but who lost the muscle memory necessary for wholesale institutional modernization. So, like any good student of history, one must look for parallel lessons of the past as guides to navigate through problems anticipated in the future. Fortunately, there are historical examples that are not too dissimilar to the current situation.

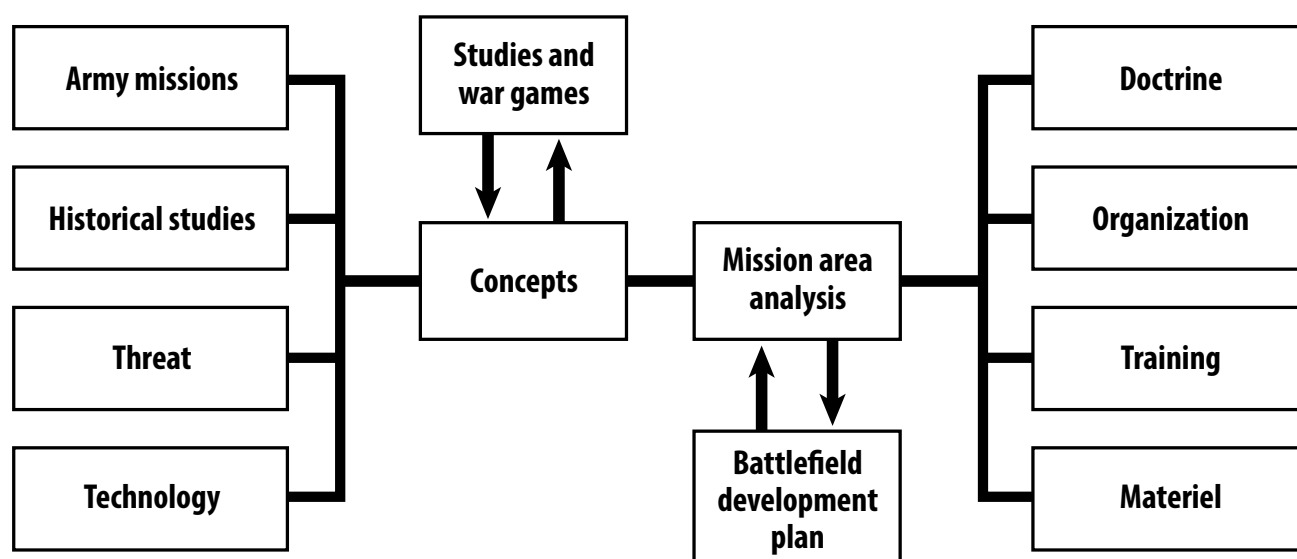
The post-Vietnam era serves as a period where the Army demonstrated the activities of fundamental institutional modernization. In the late 1970s, the Soviet Union threatened to leap ahead of the United States with massive investments in its conventional forces in Eastern Europe while the United States had been committed to fighting an insurgency in Southeast Asia. Subsequent to the war, the United States was exhausted by partisan bitterness and politically exhausted with defense spending. Today, Russia and China’s increased military spending, downward pressure on U.S. defense spending, political polarization in Washington, a war-weary nation, and an Army that reflects two decades of fighting, are all recognizable analogues to the environment and the challenges America faced then.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Gen. Donn A. Starry, the second commanding general of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), contended with challenges and institutional dynamics similar to those we experience today. The efforts of his generation of leadership resulted in the Army’s AirLand Battle concept and ushered in a fundamental modernization of the entire institution. In fact, the current DNA found in the U.S. Army organizational structure, materiel capabilities, doctrine, and culture can be traced back to that time. However, unlike then, the Army now faces not one, but two threats that require understanding and leadership to develop and execute a transformative modernization strategy.

## Modernization Framework and Development of a New Operating Concept

In 1973, Gen. Creighton Abrams, the Army chief of staff, directed then Maj. Gen. Starry, who was the chief of armor at the time, to go to Israel and study





(Figure courtesy of Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army: An Oral History of General William E. DePuy, USA Retired*)

## Figure 1. Concept-Based Requirements System

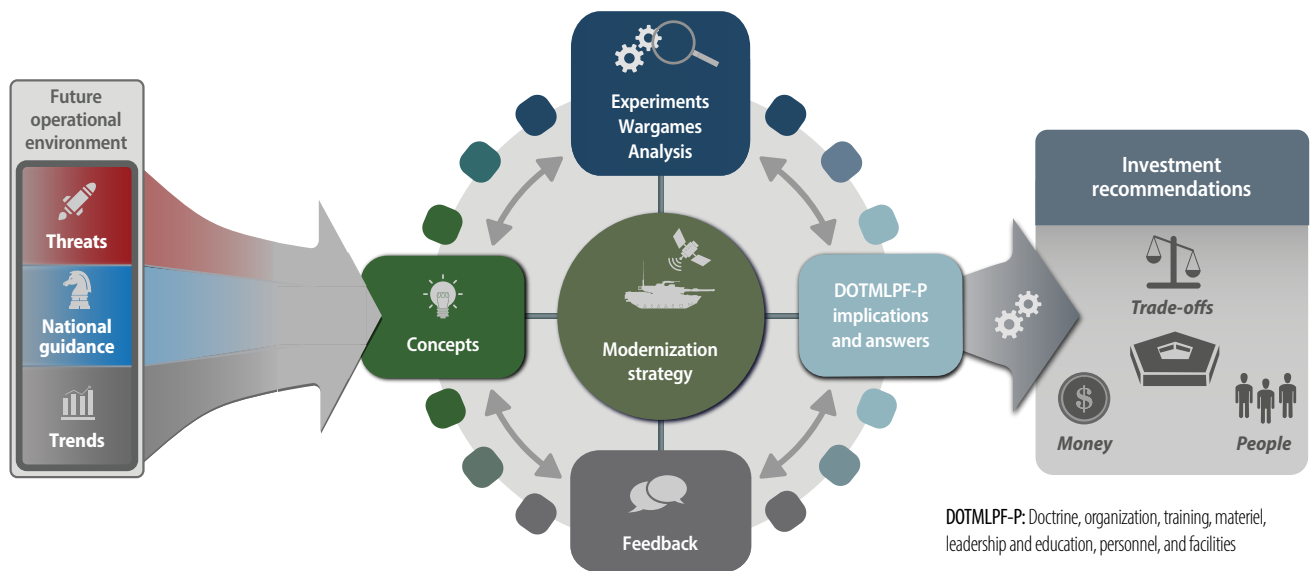
the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Soviet-equipped Arab states (Egypt and Syria). Abrams told Starry to return with a summary of the war's major lessons to understand what the United States would be up against and to examine the impact of these lessons on U.S. Army tactics, doctrine, training, and materiel development. His findings were published in what became known as the "Starry Study," which detailed the approach Soviet satellite states were using and specific problems the United States needed to solve.<sup>13</sup> The first solution TRADOC developed in response to his work was a concept called "Active Defense."

When later serving as the V Corps commander in Europe, Starry conducted exercises, wargames, and analyses of the Army's Active Defense concept and determined it was not sufficient for the significant numbers of Soviet tanks, artillery, and the multiple echelons of both that the U.S. Army would face in Eastern Europe. Starry was subsequently selected as TRADOC commanding general, and armed with lessons learned in Europe and aided by an exceptional handful of the Army's brightest thinkers and writers, he developed and published a new concept, AirLand Battle, in 1981.<sup>14</sup> AirLand Battle became the foundational

document to drive the Army into the future. During the ensuing years at TRADOC, Starry continued to develop and refine the Battlefield Development Plan, which provided the rigor and specific tasks of modernization over time. Thus, the Army of the 1980s was able to develop and integrate the "Big 5" weapons systems progressively, publish AirLand Battle as its doctrine, change professional military education, evolve its training paradigm, and adjust personnel management processes, to name just a few changes—forever altering the DNA of the Army.<sup>15</sup>

In short, Starry assessed an anticipated future operational environment (threat), developed a description of how the Army must fight to reconcile that threat (concept), analyzed and assessed capability requirements, and formed a strategy to modernize the Army (modernization strategy). Starry labeled this the "Concept-Based Requirements System" (see figure 1).<sup>16</sup>

Not coincidentally, one of the first activities the newly created U.S. Army Futures Command (AFC) pursued upon activation was to codify its approach to modernization. Gen. John (Mike) Murray, the command's inaugural commander, validated "The Army Modernization Framework"—the model that is driving U.S. military activity now (see figure 2, page 10).



(Figure by Bates, Krueger, and Fliesen)

**Figure 2. Army Modernization Framework**

## The Future Operational Environment—the Underpinning

*As with any study effort, we had to start with the environment. As most of you know, in recent years the Soviet Union has significantly increased its warfighting capability. Our quantitative inferiority has been evident for some time. An aggressive Soviet R&D program has now reduced the qualitative edge that we once enjoyed. The Soviets are equal to or ahead of us in the quality of most fielded ground combat systems.*

—Gen. Donn A. Starry, September 1980<sup>17</sup>

The future operational environment (FOE) is a composite of anticipated conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the development of concepts and capabilities, and bear on the decisions of our leaders.<sup>18</sup> The FOE includes analyses of socioeconomic and technology trends, pacing and anticipated future threats/adversaries, and existing national strategies that guide Army operations.

Just as the introduction of fast-moving tanks and armored vehicles dislodged horse cavalry as the primary means of battlefield mobility and assault, there must be recognition that advances in technology are ushering in a fundamental change to the character of how wars will be fought in the future. As new technologies

emerge and military applications become clearer, their impact will inevitably make battlefields unlike anything previously experienced. It is therefore essential for institutional recognition across the Army that new technologies are shaping future conflicts in ways that require creativity and in-depth research to envision. But it is not just about technology.

In order to change an army, one must begin more broadly with the pacing threat. A pacing threat provides the army an archetype against which to build solutions. It represents the benchmark of what the problems are and what must be fixed. In contrast, for the past thirty years—since the end of the Cold War—the Army has been capability based. However, today we are facing not one but two threats—a revanchist Russia and revisionist China. Russia has already demonstrated its expeditionary capacity as demonstrated by its operations in Ukraine and Syria. China continues to increase its military capabilities and reach at a quickening pace. And unlike the United States, both Russia and China pursue their global ambitions through whole-of-nation, coordinated efforts, making no legalistic distinctions between government and private enterprise, nor war and peace, in what they already publicly assert is a global conflict with the United States. Therefore, the “behavior” of these threats becomes equally important.

Much like Abrams's charter to Starry to study the Yom Kippur War, so too did TRADOC commander Gen. David Perkins commission a team to study what was being termed "Russian New Generation Warfare" (RNGW). Under the direction of the chief of infantry, Brig. Gen. Peter Jones, the 2016 RNGW study endeavored to analyze how Russian forces and their

"describes what is to be done" that the United States cannot already do today. An operating concept is an examination and articulation of how the United States must fight in anticipation of the changing character of war.<sup>22</sup> Paramount to a good concept is it must solve the fundamental problems the threat(s) pose now and in the future—those efforts that are infeasible today.

“The Russian New Generation Warfare study determined that current U.S. Army capabilities, capacity, and warfighting doctrine were inadequate to defeat a reemergent Russia in a major conflict.”

proxies employ disruptive technologies in the conduct of modern warfare, identify enhanced Russian capabilities and their implications for the U.S. Army, and recommend actions the Army should take to ensure overmatch against Russia.<sup>19</sup> The RNGW study team visited multiple European countries, conducted over ninety interviews, and reviewed more than seven hundred reports. The RNGW study determined that current U.S. Army capabilities, capacity, and warfighting doctrine were inadequate to defeat a reemergent Russia in a major conflict and that “unless the Army adapts to the new realities of the modern battlefield, future U.S. Joint Forces could face operational and tactical defeat in war.”<sup>20</sup> The RNGW study, and others like it, reinforces the continual threat and socioeconomic/technological trend analysis and illustrates a clearer representation of the FOE. This provided Army leaders with the requisite demand signal and served as a starting point in developing a new way of war—a new operating concept termed multi-domain operations (MDO).

## Concepts—the Vision

*A concept is an idea, a thought, a general notion. In its broadest sense, a concept describes what is to be done; in its more specific sense it can be used to describe how something is done. They must also be dynamic—changing as perceptions and circumstances change.*

—Gen. Donn A. Starry, February 1979<sup>21</sup>

It is likely not necessary to improve on Starry's articulation of what a *concept* is. But to reinforce, it

And for it to be worthy of igniting change, it must be a “reach goal” that will shape capability development and help pull the present force into the future—not merely a description of existing programs.

TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, known simply as the “MDO Concept,” is the Army's operating concept.<sup>23</sup> It was developed partly in response to the RNGW study, but it also integrated myriad data from the intelligence community and experimentation. It begins with an articulation of the FOE and an assessment of the implications of the *National Defense Strategy*.<sup>24</sup> Then, it examines the military implications of socioeconomic and technological trends and assesses the threats that the United States' potential adversaries pose to the future security environment. Importantly, MDO's FOE assessment, supported by the RNGW study's findings, postulates that Russia and China are different; yet, they are sufficiently similar to build a concept against. Russia (the U.S.'s pacing threat) and China (a far more dangerous emerging threat) pose three common challenges to U.S. interests. First, both challenge the United States and its allies in all domains—land, maritime, air, space, and cyberspace. Second, they create multiple layers of physical and political stand-off designed to create separation amongst the joint force, U.S. partners and allies, and among the American people. Third, they leverage the competition space to achieve operational and strategic objectives without crossing the threshold of armed conflict with the United States. The net effect of each of these problems is diluted deterrence, and



without change, U.S. global influence will erode and international order and global stability will suffer.

The MDO concept seeks to solve these problems and return a greater capacity to deter. The MDO concept describes how “Army forces, as an element of the Joint Force, conduct Multi-Domain Operations to prevail in competition; when necessary, Army forces penetrate and dis-integrate enemy anti-access and area denial systems and exploit the resultant freedom of maneuver to achieve strategic objectives (win) and force a return to competition on favorable terms.”<sup>25</sup>

The Army cannot currently perform many of the tasks described in the MDO concept. But yet, to accomplish the mission, the Army *must* do them. In this way, the concept creates the necessary reach goal by providing the aiming point to align and shape corresponding capability development. This is why the

MDO concept is so important—not just for AFC, but for the entire enterprise.

However, a concept by itself is insufficient. It must be accompanied by something to turn the ideas into action. Otherwise, if left alone, it will merely be seen as a white paper with little effect. While a concept provides the description—or portrait—of the future, the Army still needs specific strategic direction—a document that will integrate every part of the enterprise and align resources to priorities. There must be an accompanying modernization strategy.

## **A Pathway to the Future—the Modernization Strategy**

*The Battlefield Development Plan (BDP), first published in November 1978, is designed to be used as a road map for the future. It sets forth priorities and issues that*





*require the Army's attention. The BDP is based on an assessment of selected Army near-term force readiness and midrange force modernization programs. It lists requirements necessary for program improvement. An assessment of U.S. and Soviet combat readiness, force modernization, personnel, weapon systems, force mixes, technology, training, and production capabilities is also included in the BDP. Effects of technology on the Army of the 1980s are described, as are problems of training, personnel acquisition, and spiraling costs.*

—Gen. Donn A. Starry, September 1980<sup>26</sup>

In the early 1980s, TRADOC developed, tested, and refined a “roadmap for the future,” which Starry termed the Battlefield Development Plan (BDP). At first, the BDP was an Army G-2 (intelligence) product compiled on an annual basis that drove Army modernization

efforts in response to the Soviet threat. As the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union ended, so too did the BDP's utility, leading to its discontinuance. Today, AFC's Futures and Concepts Center has rejuvenated the BDP to examine how the current operating concept, multi-domain operations, measures up to the threats posed by anticipated near-peer adversaries. The BDP examines how the U.S. Army, as part of the joint force, conducts MDO to deter—or when deterrence fails, to defeat—a near-peer threat or other adversary. It is an examination and analysis of projected Army capabilities, systems, and force structure employed against U.S. adversaries in specific scenarios, and it serves as a running estimate to inform programmatic and investment decisions toward an MDO-capable force.

The BDP represents the intellectual and analytical rigor foundational to a modernization strategy by

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and the Threat Systems Management Office push a swarm of forty drones through the town 8 May 2019 during the battle of Razish at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. Drone usage is just one example of the many technologically advanced threats that U.S. forces might face in the modern operational environment. (Photo by Pvt. James Newsome, U.S. Army)





employing principles outlined in the MDO concept. By tapping into this foundation, the modernization strategy articulates the ends, ways, and means for achieving the vision of the future Army. It sets a vision for the Army, establishes core principles to guide the way forward, sets priorities, and articulates key milestones and objectives, setting the course toward the future. For it to be effective, a modernization strategy must gain civilian and joint leadership support, and prioritize and synchronize limited resources to provide continuity of vision and guide action across multiple resourcing windows.

Modernization entails more than just new materiel—it must address doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leader development and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) to operationalize the concept's vision. Unlike previous modernization strategies that primarily focused on materiel, the “2019 Army Modernization Strategy” (AMS) is holistic. It drives who we are, how we fight, and what we fight with by guiding, synchronizing, and integrating changes needed across DOTMLPF-P elements over time while maintaining continuity of priorities.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, it requires the Army to continue to test, experiment with, and evolve new formations and echelons that currently do not exist. The AMS calls for a comprehensive paradigm shift in *training*. For MDO, training must be tough and realistic at every echelon and reflective of highly contested multi-domain environments. In the 1980s, AirLand Battle required expanded training areas to enable fighting “deep” simultaneously with the “close” fight. This led to the creation of the combat training centers we have today. New capabilities like cyber ranges and synthetic training environments—whether live, virtual, constructive, or simulated—will reflect the global nature of MDO and enable specialized and collective training at echelon from home station.

Most recall the signature “Big 5” systems of AirLand Battle. The 2019 AMS requires new *materiel* development initiatives to both enable MDO and to create unmatched lethality against peer adversaries by leveraging cross-functional-team-developed solutions in support of the Army’s modernization priorities (i.e., long-range precision fires, Next-Generation

Combat Vehicle, Future Vertical Lift, Army network, air and missile defense, and soldier lethality). To effectively wield new and improved capabilities, future leaders must be capable of thinking, accessing, and employing



For more information on Russian new generation warfare, *Military Review* recommends the 2016 “Russian New Generation Warfare: Unclassified Summary of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Russian New Generation Warfare Study,” commissioned by then TRADOC commander Gen. David Perkins to “analyze how Russian forces and their proxies employ disruptive technologies in the conduct of modern warfare, identify enhanced Russian capabilities and their implications for the U.S. Army, and recommend actions the Army should take to ensure overmatch against Russia.” To view the report, please visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/online-publications/documents/RNGW-Unclassified-Summary-Report.pdf?ver=2020-03-25-122734-383>.

The 2019 AMS focuses on developing *doctrine* to operationalize the MDO concept commensurate with capability maturity, and dependent on a deliberate learning and experimentation program. It calls for force designs to be reviewed and updated so new Army *organizations*—in the near term, multi-domain task forces and security force assistance brigades—meet the requirements for multi-domain tasks.

tools in all domains with a keen eye for opportunities to enable his or her success in a future fight. *Leader development and education*, therefore, will forge leaders who can deliver results through the complexities of cross-domain synergy and mission command. The Army will develop leaders who can confidently *trust* subordinates to make decisions while out of contact, who accept *risk* to empower soldiers’ ability to seize

fleeting opportunities, and who instill in soldiers the ethical foundation to act absent orders to better achieve the mission. To accomplish this, the Army will maximize the human potential of its *personnel* by modernizing its systems and policies as reflected in Gen. McConville's twenty-first-century talent management initiatives (e.g., Army Talent Alignment Process, Battalion Commander Assessment Program). *Facilities* will be designed and/or modified to support new requirements for training, materiel, and organizations. Finally, we will pursue *policy* changes to increasingly enable the Army and the larger joint force in competition and to leverage the space and cyber domains.

## Unified Leadership

*While I started BDP [Battle Development Plan] with the idea it would provide a way of setting out our combat development strategy, it has developed broader applicability. In addition to setting the course for developments efforts, it can also set forth a training strategy and a strategy for sustaining the Army. If it is to be useful as an Army strategy for the future, however, it must be decided upon and agreed to by its leaders today.*

—Gen. Donn A. Starry, April 1979<sup>28</sup>

The Army must constantly balance operational demands with its competing needs for near-term readiness and long-term modernization. Often, operational demands and readiness understandably consume the bandwidth of organizations responsible for modernization, resulting in only incremental change. Post-Vietnam, Army leadership recognized that it had, in effect, a span-of-control problem that impeded its ability to prioritize modernization. For years, the responsibility rested with Continental Army Command (CONARC) to both modernize its forces and effectively run the Army within the United States, but its breadth of responsibilities grew too large, and it became mired with bureaucratic processes and policies. The solution, the Army decided, was to reorganize CONARC into two new four-star commands—TRADOC and Forces Command (FORSCOM)—the former to manage institutional development and the latter to manage near-term readiness.<sup>29</sup>

Today, the U.S. Army is comprised of over a million soldiers and growing, more than 195,000

civil servants, and countless contractor-aided support staff. It has a \$182 billion service budget and is actively conducting a range of operations in more than 140 countries worldwide.<sup>30</sup> Until recently, modernization responsibilities were divided between Headquarters, Department of the Army; TRADOC; FORSCOM; and Army Materiel Command (AMC), each with responsibilities to coordinate with its secretariat counterparts to man, ready, train, and equip the Army's massive enterprise. To bring unity of effort and reduce mounting bureaucracy, in May 2018, the Army established Army Futures Command—a single organization responsible for describing the future operational environment, developing concepts and future force designs, and supporting—in collaboration with the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics, and technology—the delivery of modernization solutions.

AFC is a key leader among the Army Modernization Enterprise (AME). It is modernizing the requirements development processes to adapt to the emerging realities of twenty-first-century warfare. In addition to realigning organizations with key modernization roles under one command, AFC is experimenting with new organizational constructs like cross-functional teams designed to support faster delivery of materiel solutions to the Army's top priorities and established others to reach a wider range of nontraditional solution sources. It concurrently guides and synchronizes near-term modernization activities across the AME by way of the Army Modernization Strategy. To implement and govern that strategy, AFC also publishes the annual modernization guidance—or “AMG”—an annual mission-type order coordinating the AME to sustain or reallocate efforts against priorities—as a way of keeping the Army's modernization efforts on azimuth toward the future MDO force. In just two short years, Army senior leadership and AFC, in collaboration with the many parts of the enterprise, have delivered an assessment of the FOE, published the Army's operating concept, provided the “Army Modernization Strategy” to the institution, supplying the requisite analytical foundation to weigh risk decisions in pursuit of a modernized future force, and manifest material development with speed by way of cross-functional teams. In effect, Army senior leaders



and AFC have systematically delivered each component of the Army Modernization Framework and are providing unity of effort toward an MDO force.

## Conclusion—Winning the Next Fight

*Army 86 brought about concepts and force structure to best use the equipment already under development. If we do it right, the concept-based acquisition strategy will guide investments in today's tech base that will result in materiel that fits a concept of how our Army should fight in the 90s.*

—Gen. Donn A. Starry, 30 January 1981<sup>31</sup>

Like Gen. McConville recently remarked, “It’s not about winning the last fight, it’s really about being ready to win the next fight.”<sup>32</sup> The Army faces diminishing windows for senior leaders to impact critical resourcing decisions and mitigate the capabilities being developed by our adversaries, many of which are already deployed. Presently, senior Army leaders are already weighing organizational decisions bearing on a 2024–2028 force structure and program decisions for 2023–2027. The United States is already in the window to decide how it meets the future. Regardless of U.S. views concerning the likelihood of a conflict with peer states, the United States must acknowledge that—absent change in its ability to operate within the FOE—it will find that its operational deterrence capacity will be diluted, and therefore,

American influence will incrementally wane in the ensuing years. The Army Modernization Framework, properly applied, provides a roadmap to reconcile American shortfalls, but the framework itself will not modernize the Army. Leadership matters—not just at the highest offices in the Pentagon, but at every echelon and across the enterprise, including the other services. All Army professionals have an obligation now to understand and apply the unified vision and arrive at the future ready to fight and win. There is little maneuver space remaining and thus the United States cannot hesitate, delay, or divert focus; otherwise, the next major conflict will be sure to upend many entrenched assumptions about the new character of war resulting in compromised security at best, or bloodshed at worst.

*The strength of the heavy division and the corps work in Division 86, in my view at least, comes from the fact that we did an enormous amount of consensus building in the development of those organizations. ... Philosophically, it’s essential that you do that. ... [N]o matter how good the organization you may draw up is ... —it could be perfect, but if you don’t do a little consensus building out there among the people that have to write about it, use it, employ it, develop it, and so on, in its finite detail, it’s not going to get very far.*

—Gen. Donn A. Starry, 29 July 1981<sup>33</sup> ■

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## Notes

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# Military Review

## RECOMMENDS

One of the most important articles you will ever read on China's successful effort to take over global maritime shipping is "Asia Rising: Ships of State?," by Christopher R. O'Dea. This article from 2019 was published in the *Naval War College Review* 72, no. 1, and is available for download at <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol72/iss1/5>.

O'Dea: Asia Rising: Ships of State?

### SHIPS OF STATE?

Christopher R. O'Dea

*Our Ship of State, which recent storms have threatened to destroy, has come safely to harbor at last.*

CREON, IN SOPHOCLES'S *ANTIGONE*

**B**acked by substantial financing and political support, China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited (COSCO) emerged from the container shipping industry's recent turmoil with one of the largest fleets of commercial vessels in the world and control of a rapidly expanding network of ports and terminals. This article argues that this expansion is a new and distinctly Chinese approach to maritime development and asks whether the state-owned shipping company has become the flagship of China's ambition to become a global maritime power.

Chinese maritime and logistics firms, supported by state-subsidized capital deployed overseas, quickly are becoming a leading edge of China's global influence. In recent years, Chinese state-owned companies have built a global network of shipping and port assets that suggests the country is using maritime commercial investments to advance its geostrategic priorities by establishing economic influence over countries in which Chinese-controlled port facilities are located.

*A former international investment management executive, Christopher R. O'Dea is an authority on global capital market trends and the security implications of infrastructure finance. Mr. O'Dea's work appears regularly in Investments & Pensions Europe and IPE Real Assets, London-based publications specializing in institutional investment management. He is a contributor to National Review Online and a contributing editor of Korn Ferry Institute's Briefings on Talent & Leadership. A native of Long Island, New York, Mr. O'Dea graduated from Brown University with a degree in American history, concentrating on colonial maritime trade. A life member of the Naval War College Foundation, he is a member of Business Executives for National Security and the Pritzker Military Museum & Library.*

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These Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are creating one of the most extensive maritime networks in the world by acquiring strategically located port assets in the European Union (EU), Latin America, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean. They provide the capital to build or upgrade commercial terminals; then they direct container traffic to those ports through shipping lines