

# Qualitative and Practical Analytical Arguments for Removing Chapter 7 from Field Manual 3-0



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**T**he Army's 2022 version of Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, significantly departs from the doctrine published in 2017. The changes were necessary. In 2017, the Department of Defense was beginning to shift its focus from the War on Terrorism to near-peer threats. In the previous FM 3-0, the Army's contribution to unified action were unified land operations, where offense, defense, stability, and defense support to civil authorities were the proficiencies the Army needed win the Nation's wars.<sup>1</sup> Now, multidomain operations (MDO) are the Army's contribution to the joint force, and according to the latest FM 3-0, "all operations are multidomain operations."<sup>2</sup> The resulting FM 3-0 is now structurally different to articulate the Army's shift to MDO.

Highlighting this structural shift in FM 3-0 is the inclusion of chapter 7, "Army Operations in Maritime Environments." The chapter begins with an explicit justification for its presence in the Army's primary land operations manual: "The ultimate objective of

conflict is typically not control over vast expanses of open water, but rather the land and people who control it."<sup>3</sup> While this assertion may be true strategically, the maritime environment presents significant tactical and operational challenges that should force questions of the appropriateness of a maritime chapter in a primarily land-focused doctrine publication.

This research examines the appropriateness of chapter 7's inclusion in FM 3-0 through a doctrine-based methodology that first presents an analytical framework; then conducts a qualitative, doctrinal analysis of chapter 7 using the framework; and finally, applies the framework and analysis to the practical employment of a multidomain task force (MDTF) in the Indo-Pacific theater during large-scale combat operations (LSCO) against the Nation's pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>4</sup> Based on the results of these analyses and the consideration of a strategic counterargument, this research recommends removing chapter 7 and expanding its themes, concepts, and organization

# Army Doctrine Hierarchy

## ADP

### Army Doctrine Publication

Fundamental principles by which operating forces and elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgement in application.

## FM

### Field Manual

**Tactics:** The employment and ordered arrangement of forces in relation to each other.

**Procedures:** Standard, detailed steps that prescribe how to perform specific tasks. Procedures are prescriptive.

## ATP

### Army Techniques Publication

**Techniques:** Non-prescriptive ways or methods used to perform missions, functions, or tasks.

(Figure from Army Doctrine Publication 1-01, *Doctrine Primer* [2019])

## Figure 1. Army Doctrine Hierarchy

in a separate, MDO-focused doctrine publication that includes a discussion of Army operations in all nonland environments.

## Qualitative Analysis of FM 3-0, Chapter 7

**Analytical framework.** Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-01, *Doctrine Primer*, provides a hierarchy of Army doctrine. ADPs detail fundamental principles to guide a commander's actions, while FMs provide

prescriptive steps for specific tasks assigned to a commander (see figure 1).<sup>5</sup>

FM 3-0 directs its readers to review specific ADPs to comprehend the doctrine.<sup>6</sup> These publications contain fundamental principles applicable to Army LSCO doctrine.

**Landpower (ADP 1-0, *The Army*).** The Army's congressionally mandated and primary responsibility is to provide "prompt and sustained land combat" to support the joint force.<sup>7</sup>

**Principles of war (ADP 3-0, *Operations*).** Military actions that respect the principles of war must align with and directly support strategy.<sup>8</sup>

**Maintaining the initiative (ADP 3-90, *Offense and Defense*).** Commanders initiate combat on favorable terms by gaining positions of relative advantage through effective employment of all warfighting functions.<sup>9</sup>

Applying these fundamental principles has tangible physical costs for Army units during LSCO: high resource consumption, high operational tempo, and, unfortunately, high casualty rates.<sup>10</sup> If the strategic benefits of conducting LSCO by the Army are to outweigh the inherent costs to the force, the Army should evaluate the doctrine found in FM 3-0 based on the answers to these qualitative questions:

- Does this doctrine prescribe steps for prompt and sustained land combat?
- Does this doctrine prescribe steps that respect the principles of war and directly support strategy?
- Does this doctrine prescribe steps that allow Army commanders to initiate combat on favorable terms?

**Doctrinal analysis.** Chapter 7 reminds readers that the Army has historically succeeded in maritime environments, quoting Navy Fleet Adm. Chester Nimitz on the importance of territorial control. Nimitz stated,

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(Figure from Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012)

**Figure 2. The First and Second Island Chains**

"The optimum pressure is exerted through that absolute control obtained by actual physical occupation."<sup>11</sup> Over eighty years later, the threat and nature of war has changed dramatically. While occupying land is still an objective, using dedicated land forces to gain and maintain an advantage in LSCO conducted in a maritime environment should be subject to qualitative scrutiny:

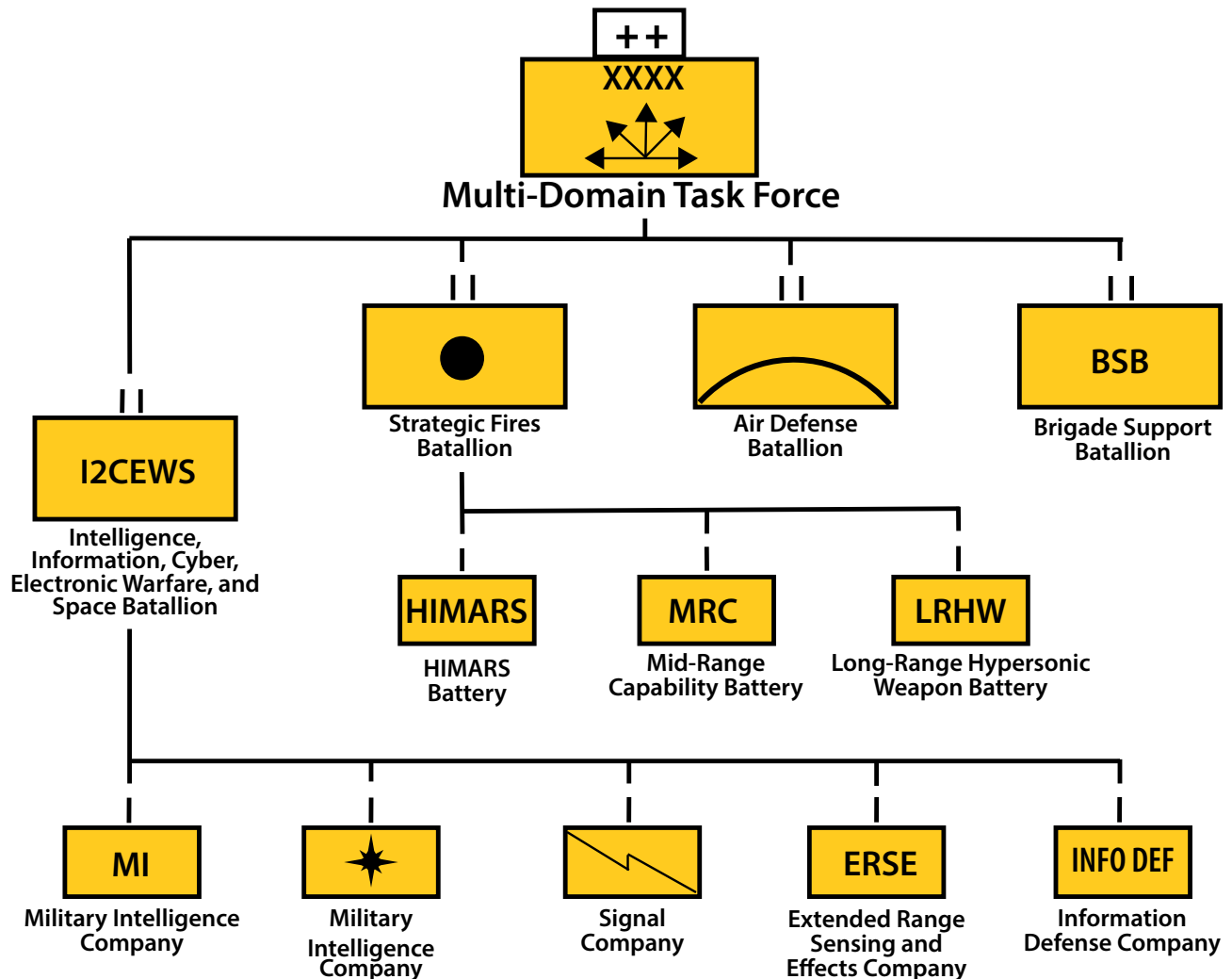
**Does chapter 7 prescribe steps for prompt and sustained land combat?** No, it does not. FM 3-0 makes one concession concerning the expectations of speed in a maritime environment and another concerning general endurance in combat. First, remoteness due to increased distances between landmasses (and reliance on joint force air and sea logistics assets) eliminates the Army's ability to be prompt to combat.<sup>12</sup> Second, in general, FM 3-0 expects all Army forces to be prepared to operate without some or all joint capabilities (e.g., sustainment) when facing a peer threat.<sup>13</sup> These two

concessions limit the Army's expectations of promptness and sustainability for land combat in a maritime environment.

**Does chapter 7 prescribe steps that respect the principles of war and directly support strategy?** Yes, but only partially. FM 3-0 gives broad latitude in considering the principles of war. In one respect, FM 3-0 states that the nine principles (objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity) are "the most important factors that affect the conduct of battle," while at the same time are "not a checklist that guarantees success."<sup>14</sup> As they pertain to Army operations in maritime environments, however, three principles are difficult, if not impossible, to fully apply in LSCO. Units lose *simplicity* of land operations when they require multiple means of air and sea lift to tactically position critical equipment. During these logistical movements, units concede *surprise* since adversaries can interpolate fighting positions by the volume of heavy lift assets traversing a given maritime area of operations. Ultimately, commanders compromise *security* since, from the very outset, a threat has developed the friendly logistical

and tactical situation to the point that an isolated unit is immediately in the defense after a short offensive operation. This inability to apply a third of the principles of war in the maritime environment weakens the Army's direct support to the *National Defense Strategy* (NDS), as future forces must be, among other qualities, both sustainable and survivable.<sup>15</sup>

**Does chapter 7 prescribe steps that allow Army commanders to initiate combat on favorable terms?** No, it does not. FM 3-0 highlights the fact that victory in combat is attributable to maneuver and attrition.<sup>16</sup> This fact opposes an Army unit that has limited to no maneuver options due to its location on an atoll or small island. Static, concentrated forces concede protection as they are easy targets for an enemy.<sup>17</sup> With consistent joint sustainment expected to be unavailable during combat operations, half of an Army commander's six warfighting functions in a maritime environment are unavailable.



(Figure from Army Multi-Domain Transformation, Chief of Staff Paper #1 [2021])

**Figure 3. Multidomain Task Force Structure**

Academically, semantic qualifiers and operational exceptions could explain some of the doctrinal shortfalls identified in the qualitative analysis. LSCO, however (or more succinctly, war), is inherently chaotic and a uniquely human endeavor.<sup>18</sup> A practical analysis wherein actual Army units, employed in a maritime LSCO scenario, would be appropriate to consider to fully appreciate the potential impact of the application of FM 3-0. As discussed below, see figure 2 for a map of the First Island Chain.<sup>19</sup>

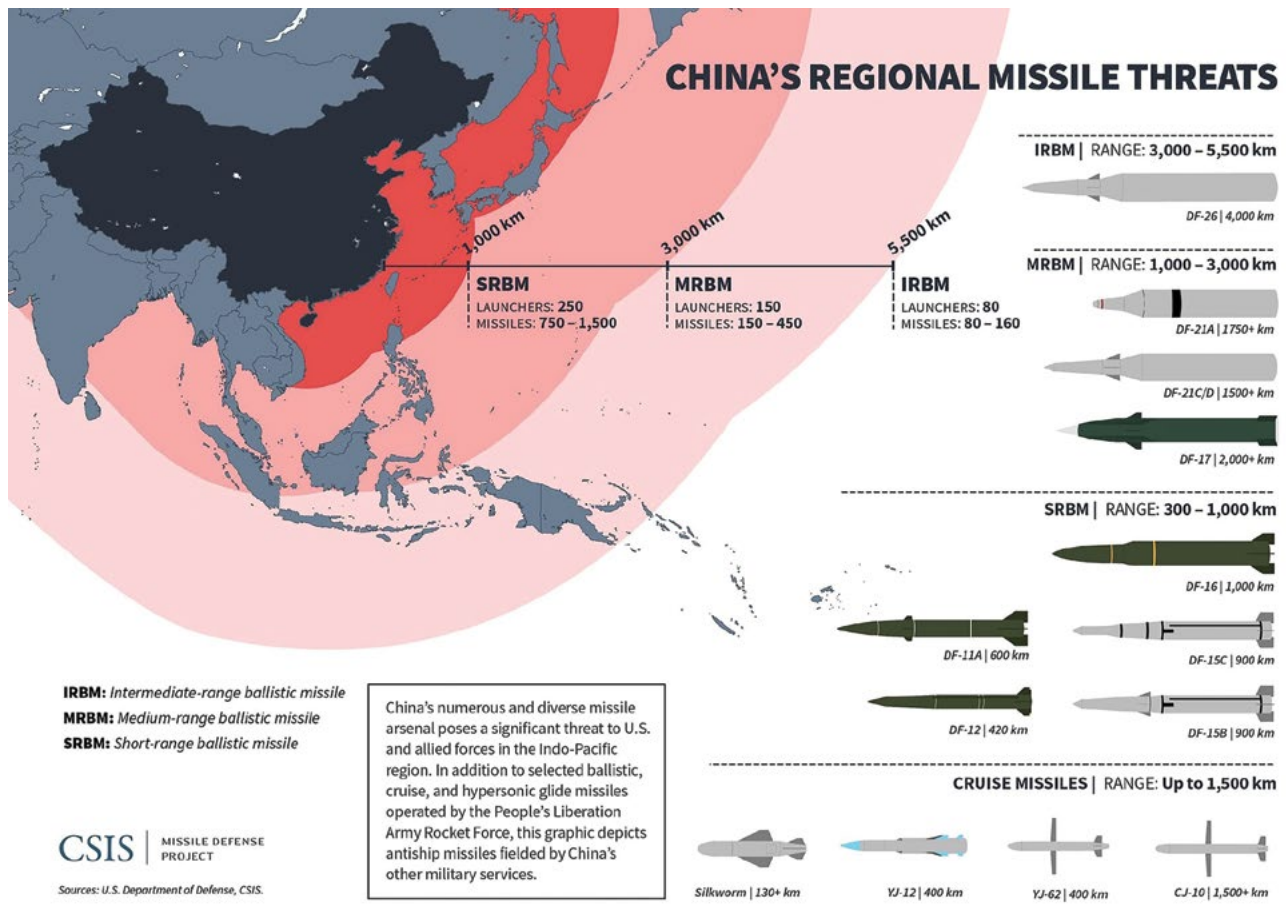
### Practical Analysis: The MDTF in the First Island Chain

**MDTF overview.** The Association of the United States Army views the MDTF as the “centerpiece in

the Army’s operationalization of MDO.”<sup>20</sup> As a theater-level asset, the MDTF includes organic kinetic and nonkinetic units designed to disintegrate threat antiaccess/area denial (A2/AD) systems during conflict (see figure 3).<sup>21</sup> MDTF operations are designed to be geographically distributed to augment an Army component or joint force commander. Distributed operations increase MDTF survivability and maximize its capabilities when coupled with joint force support.<sup>22</sup> As of July 2023, two MDTFs are operating in the Indo-Pacific theater.

**Operational environment overview.** As the leading nation-state in the Indo-Pacific theater, the PRC makes it clear that LSCO against a “strong enemy” (presumably the United States) should be its military





(Figure courtesy of Missile Defense Project, Center for Strategic and International Studies)

**Figure 4. People's Republic of China Missile Coverage**

focus for future conflict.<sup>23</sup> Of the large-scale, operational-level efforts that the People's Liberation Army (PLA; the military arm of the PRC) conducts, over half of these employ joint fires and maritime maneuver:<sup>24</sup>

- The PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) is a branch of the PLA dedicated to deterring “third-party intervention” in China’s regional area of influence using both conventional and nuclear fires.<sup>25</sup> As the land-based fires coordinator for the PLA, the PLARF possesses hundreds of ballistic missiles that can easily range any target in the First Island Chain (see figure 4).<sup>26</sup>
- The PRC is also actively pursuing two complementary efforts to ensure it can deny its adversaries maritime freedom of maneuver. First, the PLA Navy (PLAN) is moving closer to its long-term enterprise goal of employing of four hundred combat ships and modernizing its fleet with larger,

multirole platforms capable of antisurface, antiair, and antisubmarine missions.<sup>27</sup> Second, the PRC is openly communicating its intent to control access to the waterways surrounding the First Island Chain. The PLAN has recently increased the frequency of its maritime exercises in the vicinity of the Bashi Channel (which runs between the Philippines’ northern island of Luzon and the Taiwanese island of Orchid) and the Miyako Strait (which runs between the Japanese Islands of Miyako and Okinawa), to include the employment of electronic warfare, bomber, and early warning aircraft.<sup>28</sup> These two waterways are the primary maritime gateways to the internationally contested First Island Chain.

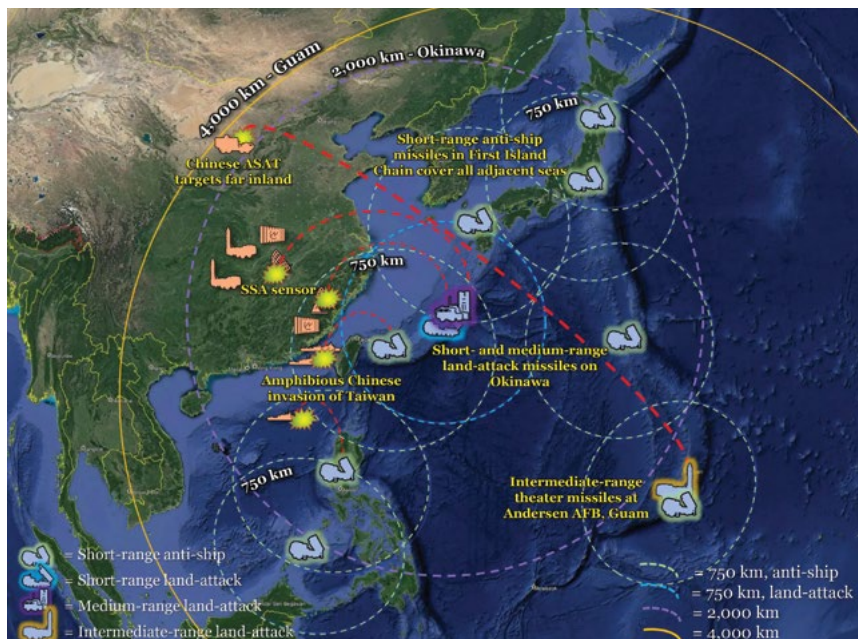
**Practical analysis.** The intended audience for FM 3-0 is all Army commands and staffs from brigades through theater armies.<sup>29</sup> Since the Army currently

trains and equips theater-level, MDO-focused assets in the Indo-Pacific maritime environment, it is valuable to analyze the notional employment of MDTF assets in a LSCO scenario in the First Island Chain (as depicted in figure 5) and test the applicability of chapter 7 through the lens of the qualitative framework presented earlier.<sup>30</sup>

***Does chapter 7 prescribe steps for prompt and sustained land combat by an MDTF in the First Island Chain?*** At present, it does not.

“Prompt” and “sustained” are relative terms pertaining to MDTFs, depending on whether two assumptions become fact. First, an MDTF could promptly provide kinetic fires from the First Island Chain, assuming ally and partner nations allow pre-positioning of personnel and equipment. Second, an MDTF could provide sustained kinetic fires from the First Island Chain assuming that resupply is available within a seventy-two-to-ninety-six-hour consumption rate for cannons and rockets during LSCO.<sup>31</sup> Short of those assumptions are the current facts: neither foreign basing nor combat sustainment is assured for an MDTF in a First Island Chain scenario, and foreign policy engagement by Congress is still required to station pre-positioned MDTF elements.<sup>32</sup> As for sustained combat by a unit that is designed to be both distributed and joint capabilities dependent, MDTFs will have to depend on the sustainment priorities of the U.S. Navy and Air Force, who should expect to be heavily engaged with the PLAN and PLARF during LSCO.

***Does chapter 7 prescribe steps for an MDTF in the First Island Chain that respect principles of war and directly support strategy during LSCO?*** In both cases, only partially. Chapter 7 highlights the A2/AD mission as critical to success during LSCO in a maritime environment.<sup>33</sup> While MDTF elements can leverage the other principles of war when operating in the First Island Chain, the commander compromises simplicity, surprise, and security before employing fires or air defense artillery units in combat. A significant



(Figure courtesy of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments)

**Figure 5. A Notional Network of Land-Based Long-Range Missile Batteries in the First Island Chain**

consideration for the MDTF is how High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), Patriot, and/or Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries will arrive in theater for combat employment. Beyond the political complexity of gaining access to a maritime site in the First Island Chain is the logistical complexity of transporting prime movers, launch tubes, ammunition stores, and personnel to remote sites without detection. FM 3-0 cautions that friendly forces must assume constant threat observation during combat, so surprise and security are unavailable to a unit that cannot expect joint support during kinetic operations.<sup>34</sup> Strategically, the concept of posturing MDO-focused units toward the PRC meets the literal intent of the NDS. However, the required sustainability and survivability of MDTF elements in this scenario would be lacking.

***Does chapter 7 prescribe steps that allow an MDTF in the First Island Chain to initiate combat on favorable terms?*** No, it does not. FM 3-0 reminds readers that static forces are easy to destroy by an adversary.<sup>35</sup> FM 3-0 offers a vignette from the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War that aptly describes how a force's static

fires and air defense artillery assets can be exploited to destructive effect by an opposing force's successful reconnaissance and probing operations.<sup>36</sup> While HIMARS, Patriot, and/or THAAD batteries are ideally suited for movement on paved roads, maneuver becomes an issue once kinetic A2/AD operations commence. Maneuvering on a small island or atoll, with limited access or unpaved roads, especially without joint engineer support or resupply, would leave MDTF elements cutoff from the joint warfighting functions of protection and sustainment.

## The Pacing Challenge as a Strategic Counterargument

Qualitatively and practically, there are compelling reasons for removing chapter 7 from FM 3-0. But the inclusion of a chapter on operations in maritime environments in a field manual for land-based forces is a clear acknowledgement of the pacing challenge identified in the *NDS*. Based on the PRC's coercive activities in the Indo-Pacific region, the secretary of defense directs the entire Department of Defense to act urgently to strengthen deterrence.<sup>37</sup> The Army is obviously posturing itself to align with the *NDS* through the formation of MDTFs and now the publication of MDO-focused doctrine. It is only prudent that the Army details the requirements, special considerations, and difficulties associated with land operations in a maritime environment, particularly during LSCO.

There are, however, two counterpoints that make the inclusion of chapter 7 in FM 3-0 problematic as it is currently written. First, the Army writes field manuals to be procedural and prescriptive for Army commanders. Chapter 7 indeed provides broad discussions on requirements, special considerations, and difficulties Army forces could encounter in a maritime environment. Yet, the chapter does not tell the commander "how"; the procedures that a commander would need to operate in a maritime environment are noticeably absent. Second, according to FM 3-0, a leader's assumption of risk must be informed by their understanding of the operational environment.<sup>38</sup> As demonstrated earlier in the doctrinal and practical analyses, the broad application of principles of land warfare in a maritime environment during LSCO leads to large gaps in protection and sustainment; risks that are inherently unacceptable.

## Recommendation

Rather than limiting the discussion of land operations in a maritime environment to an eighteen-page chapter, the Army should remove chapter 7 from FM 3-0, and expand its themes, concepts, and organization in a separate doctrine publication. This proposed publication should be an MDO-focused ADP that provides foundational principles for Army operations in all domains, environments, and operational categories. If all operations are truly MDO, a single Army publication should give thorough consideration equally to operations in space, cyberspace, air, and maritime environments. As the service advocate for MDO, the Army would benefit from leading an effort to develop such a relevant publication.

## Conclusion

The Army can create the capstone MDO doctrine it needs if it considers addressing the doctrinal issues identified in this research. Regardless of why FM 3-0 focuses on only one of the four nonland environments, the results of the qualitative and practical analysis show the necessity to consider revising FM 3-0. The qualitative questions derived from major concepts in foundational doctrine challenge FM 3-0's ability to prescribe steps for commanders to conduct prompt and sustained land combat, adhere to principles of war, directly support strategy, and employ all warfighting functions to gain positions of relative advantage in a maritime environment. Considering a near-peer threat in the Indo-Pacific, areas of operation and actual MDO-focused Army units together in a LSCO scenario further amplifies the challenges of protecting and sustaining Army units. Even as chapter 7 aligns the Army with the *NDS*'s pacing challenge by considering the requirements, special considerations, and difficulties the PRC presents in a possible LSCO scenario, the chapter neither prescribes actual tactical procedures nor fully accounts for the inherent risk to sustainment and protection in a maritime environment. Removing the chapter and expanding its themes, concepts, and organization in a separate ADP that details the unique challenges of operating in all domains, environments, and operational categories would move the Army closer to the comprehensive MDO doctrine it needs. ■



## Notes

1. Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO] 2017 [obsolete]), x.
2. FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2022), 1-3.
3. *Ibid.*, 7-1.
4. Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2022), 1, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.
5. Figure from Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-01, *Doctrine Primer* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019), vi.
6. FM 3-0, *Operations*, v.
7. Mark Milley, foreword to ADP 1, *The Army* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019).
8. ADP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019), 2-1.
9. ADP 3-90, *Offense and Defense* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019), 1-4.
10. FM 3-0, *Operations*, 6-1.
11. *Ibid.*, 7-1.
12. *Ibid.*, 7-2.
13. *Ibid.*, 1-3.
14. *Ibid.*, 1-7.
15. OSD, *2022 National Defense Strategy*, 18.
16. FM 3-0, *Operations*, 1-3.
17. *Ibid.*, 3-11.
18. *Ibid.*, 1-6.
19. Figure from Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012), 40, [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2012\\_CMPR\\_Final.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2012_CMPR_Final.pdf). In a maritime security strategy, the People's Republic of China identifies chains of islands in the Pacific Ocean that extend in concentric arcs away from the mainland in order from nearest to farthest. The first chain includes the Kuril Islands, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Borneo.
20. Charles McEnamy, *Multi-Domain Task Forces: A Glimpse at the Army of 2035* (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, 2022), 3, <https://www.ausea.org/publications/multi-domain-task-forces-glimpse-army-2035>.
21. FM 3-0, *Operations*, 4-18; figure from James C. McConville, *Army Multi-Domain Transformation: Ready to Win in Competition and Conflict*, Chief of Staff Paper #1 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2021), 12.
22. McEnamy, *Multi-Domain Task Forces*, 7.
23. Caitlin Campbell, *China's Military: The People's Liberation Army (PLA)*, CRS Report R46808 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2021), 25.
24. Army Techniques Publication 7-100.3, *Chinese Tactics* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2021), 1-16.
25. Campbell, *China's Military*, 35.
26. *Ibid.*, 38; figure courtesy of Missile Defense Project, "Missiles of China," Missile Threat, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 June 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/china/>.
27. Sam LaGrone, "Pentagon: Chinese Navy to Expand to 400 Ships by 2025, Growth Focused on Surface Combatants," USNI News, 29 November 2022, <https://news.usni.org/2022/11/29/pentagon-chinese-navy-to-expand-to-400-ships-by-2025-growth-focused-on-surface-combatants>.
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30. Figure courtesy of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, as seen in Bryan Clark and Timothy Walton, "How US Allies Can Keep an Electronic Eye on China," *Breaking Defense*, 12 June 2019, <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/06/how-us-allies-can-keep-an-electronic-eye-on-china/>.
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32. McEnamy, *Multi-Domain Task Forces*, 13.
33. FM 3-0, *Operations*, 7-13.
34. *Ibid.*, 4-3.
35. *Ibid.*, 3-11.
36. *Ibid.*, 3-13.
37. OSD, *2022 National Defense Strategy*, iii.
38. FM 3-0, *Operations*, 8-5.