

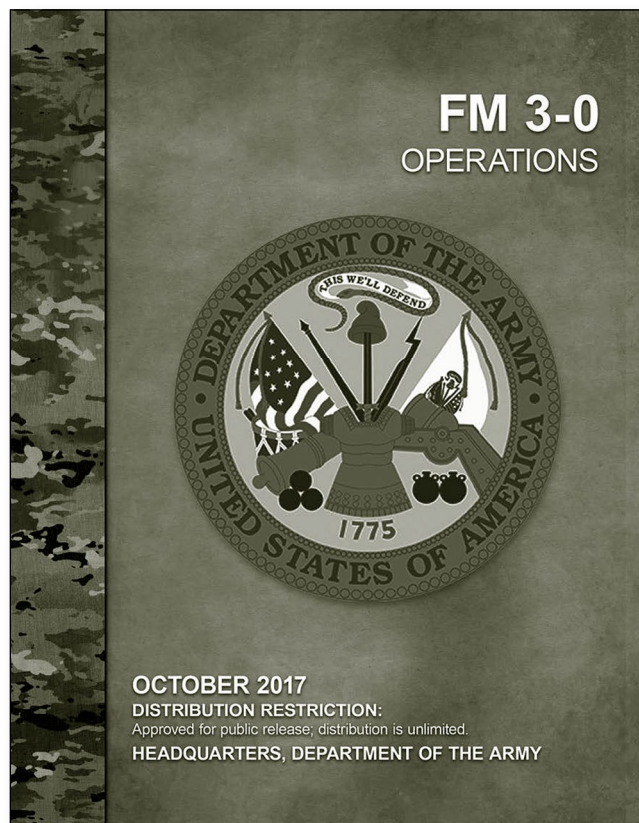
The Return of U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*

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When the U.S. Army rescinded Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, and published Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, in 2011, the world was a different place.¹ The likelihood of large-scale ground combat against an enemy with peer capabilities seemed remote. While the Russians had intervened in Georgia with ground forces in 2008, there were few indications that they would engage in further physically aggressive behavior. Chinese maritime claims in the South China Sea seemed to have little to do with Army concerns. The Korean Peninsula remained tense, but resumption of war seemed no more likely than at any other time since the 1953 armistice. The Army's two remaining armored brigade combat teams in Germany were directed to return to the continental United States, and the Army was downsizing while building momentum toward a decision that would make a significant portion of Army forces in Korea rotational as well.

The strategic environment has changed significantly since then. Russian aggression against the Ukraine and increasingly bellicose behavior by the North Koreans and Iranians are prime examples. The rapidly modernizing Chinese military added to the sense that the Army needed to quickly adapt to the increased possibility of large-scale ground combat against adversaries significantly more capable than al-Qaida, Iraqi insurgents, and the Taliban. As a result, the Army began training for large-scale combat operations during mission command training program exercises and at its "dirt" combat training



centers after a decade-long hiatus. It also discovered our current tactical doctrine for large-scale combat operations was inadequate.

In 2016, the Army chief of staff directed Training and Doctrine Command to write an operations manual that would provide the doctrinal basis for prevailing in large-scale ground combat against enemies whose military capabilities, in regional contexts, rivaled our own. While the Army had some doctrine that was relevant to fighting big wars, it lacked a single, up-to-date, unifying doctrinal manual focused on large-unit tactics for use against contemporary threats. There was also a definitive need to address Army operations along the continuum of conflict and the roles the Army fulfills for the joint force as our adversaries challenge the status quo in various regions around the world.

Previous versions of FM 3-0, *Operations*, and its predecessor, FM 100-5, contained useful ideas relevant to current problems, but none adequately addressed all the challenges of today’s operational environment. Reasonably informed professionals can and do argue which challenges are the most serious, but most might agree that they fall into three general categories. The first, and arguably most important, is that the Army’s culture needed to change. The focus on regularly scheduled deployments of brigade combat teams, higher echelon

gains to achieve the desired political purpose, comes from the demonstrated readiness to prevail in large-scale ground combat against the most lethal threats. This is why the core of FM 3-0 addresses large-scale ground combat operations at the brigade, division, and corps level. It describes the tactics and procedures used during both the defense and the offense, and those familiar with previous editions of FM 3-0 or FM 100-5 are unlikely to be surprised by what they read in those three chapters. There are no new tactical tasks,

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headquarters, and supporting formations to conduct counterinsurgency operations (COIN) from static bases against enemies with limited military capabilities created a view of ground combat incongruent with the realities of fighting large-scale combat against a peer threat. Few leaders with significant experience training or fighting against peer threats remain in our tactical formations, and those with experience at more senior levels were out of practice after a decade or more focused on COIN. The new FM 3-0 addresses the need to change our Army culture by describing the operational environment and threat, emphasizing the important roles of echelons above the brigade level during operations, and addressing the training readiness considerations in each warfighting function during large-scale ground combat.²

The second category of challenges is improving our Army’s readiness to prevail in large-scale ground combat against opponents with peer capabilities. Our Army and our doctrine became optimized for limited contingency operations that primarily focused on operations where counterinsurgency and stability tasks made up the bulk of what both units and headquarters were expected to do. Since 2003, seldom have units larger than a platoon been at risk of destruction by enemy forces, and no units faced enemy forces able to mass fires or maneuver large-scale forces effectively. The problem is that the ability to effectively shape security environments and prevent conflict through credible conventional deterrence, or to consolidate

but there is a renewed recognition and deeper discussion of the tactics required to employ capabilities within and across multiple domains to enable freedom of action for subordinate echelons.

What is new from previous editions, however, are the chapters focused on operations to shape, operations to prevent, and operations to consolidate gains. A large proportion of the Army engages in these operations around

the world continuously, and how well the Army does so has a significant

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influence on both the likelihood of large-scale ground combat and the strategic outcomes of that combat should it occur. FM 3-0 thus addresses the operations the Army conducts across the continuum of conflict as it fulfills its strategic roles as part of the joint force, recognizing that it is the demonstrated capability to prevail in large-scale ground combat that enables the effective prosecution of missions supporting the other strategic roles. As a result, the manual also contains a renewed emphasis on the roles of the Army's corps and division echelons to employ capabilities as formations.

Corps and divisions play a central role in large-scale ground combat, which is not and cannot be a brigade combat team (BCT)-centric endeavor. When properly constituted, trained, and led, echelons of command unburden subordinate formations by narrowing their focus, reducing their spans of control, and maintaining the broader perspective in time and space necessary for effective planning. The division is the first echelon able to effectively plan and coordinate the employment of all multi-domain capabilities across the operational framework. The same is true for the corps during operations that require multiple divisions. Each higher echelon has a perspective that should look at time, geography, decision-making, and the electromagnetic spectrum differently. This is not a new military idea but reflects a significant change from the formative experiences of the majority of our Army's leadership during a time when divisions and corps were serving in the roles of joint headquarters or more focused at the operational versus tactical level.

The third category of challenges pertains to the reality that the U.S. Army does not enjoy overwhelming advantages against every opponent it may be required to fight. FM 3-0 recognizes that some adversaries have equal, or even superior capabilities that may put Army forces at a position of relative disadvantage, particularly in a regional context. Some threat capabilities, particularly integrated air defense systems and long-range surface-to-surface fires, severely impede freedom of action in the air and maritime domains, meaning that the other services may not be able to help solve ground tactical problems as quickly or easily as they did in Iraq and Afghanistan. Against some opponents, U.S. Army cannon and rocket artillery is likely to be both outranged and significantly outnumbered, which would present a tactical problem even if friendly forces were not contested in the air domain. The potential combination of relative disadvantage

in the ground, maritime, and air domains has implications for how Army forces conduct operations against enemy formations designed around long-range fires systems, which employ maneuver arms in support of fires more often than the other way around. Understanding the various methods our adversaries and potential foes employ (systems warfare, isolation, preclusion, information warfare, and sanctuary) is therefore critical to devising tactical plans to defeat them, and it is important to understand that these methods are likely to manifest themselves differently in each situation.

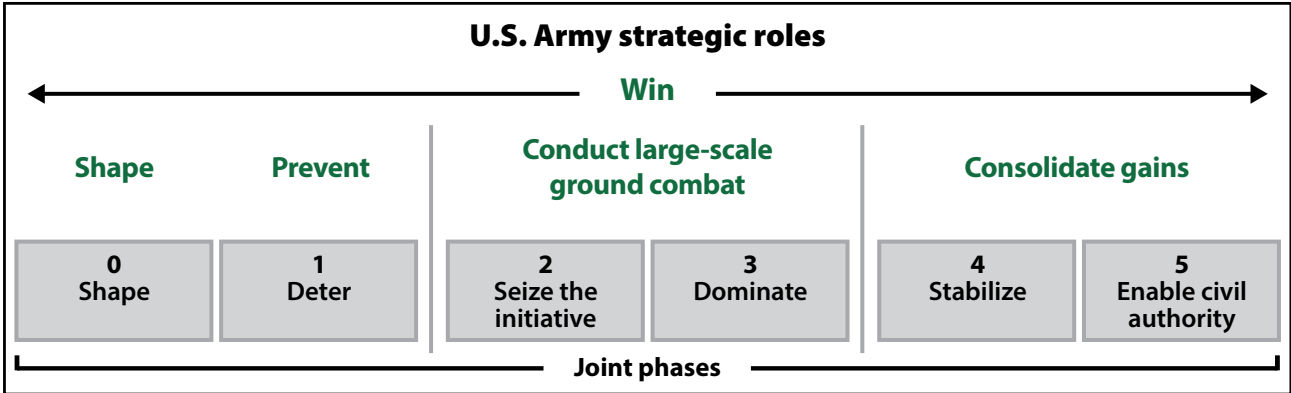
Unlike AirLand Battle, which was focused on one enemy, or previous iterations of FM 3-0, which really didn't focus on any particular threat, this edition of FM 3-0 is focused on peer or near-peer adversaries (Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea) in the current operational environment. For that reason, the operational challenges our Army faces span the range of military operations across all domains, and they needed to be addressed. FM 3-0 is not optimized for any one type of operation or single threat, but rather benchmarked against the most potent adversary capabilities and methods that have proliferated worldwide, and accounts for what the Army is required to do—from large-scale ground combat to shaping the security environment through regional engagement, and all operations in between. FM 3-0 does not change the Army's foundational operational concept, which remains unified land operations. What it does is better account for the reason behind the operations we conduct to clarify the interrelationship between strategic purpose, planning, readiness, and the tactical tasks assigned to units.

Organization and Purpose

FM 3-0 arranges operations by purpose, in accordance with the four Army strategic roles. The Army *shapes the operational environment, prevents conflict, conducts large-scale ground combat, and consolidates gains*. Army forces do this as part of the joint force, generally in a multinational context, for a joint force commander. Previous versions of FM 3-0 and FM 100-5 did not adequately emphasize the critical linkage between tactical tasks and achieving the strategic purpose for which we conduct them. Categorizing types of operations by purpose aligns with the joint phasing construct found in JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, while emphasizing that there is not always a direct linear relationship between those phases

(see figure 1).³ Chapters 3 (Operations to Shape) and 4 (Operations to Prevent) of FM 3-0 describe operations conducted short of large-scale ground combat, when adversaries seek to use methods below the threshold of

when we follow through to ensure the enemy cannot constitute other forms of resistance to protract the conflict or change its nature in ways that thwart our purpose. In short, FM 3-0 provides a context for commanders and



(Graphic from U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0, Operations)

Figure 1. Army Strategic Roles and Their Relationships to Joint Phases

armed conflict to upset the status quo or subvert friendly nations. Chapters 5 (Large-Scale Ground Combat), 6 (Defense), and 7 (Offense) focus on large-scale ground combat, and chapter 8 (Operations to Consolidate Gains) addresses the echeloned transition from large-scale ground combat to the final achievement of the operational or strategic purpose.

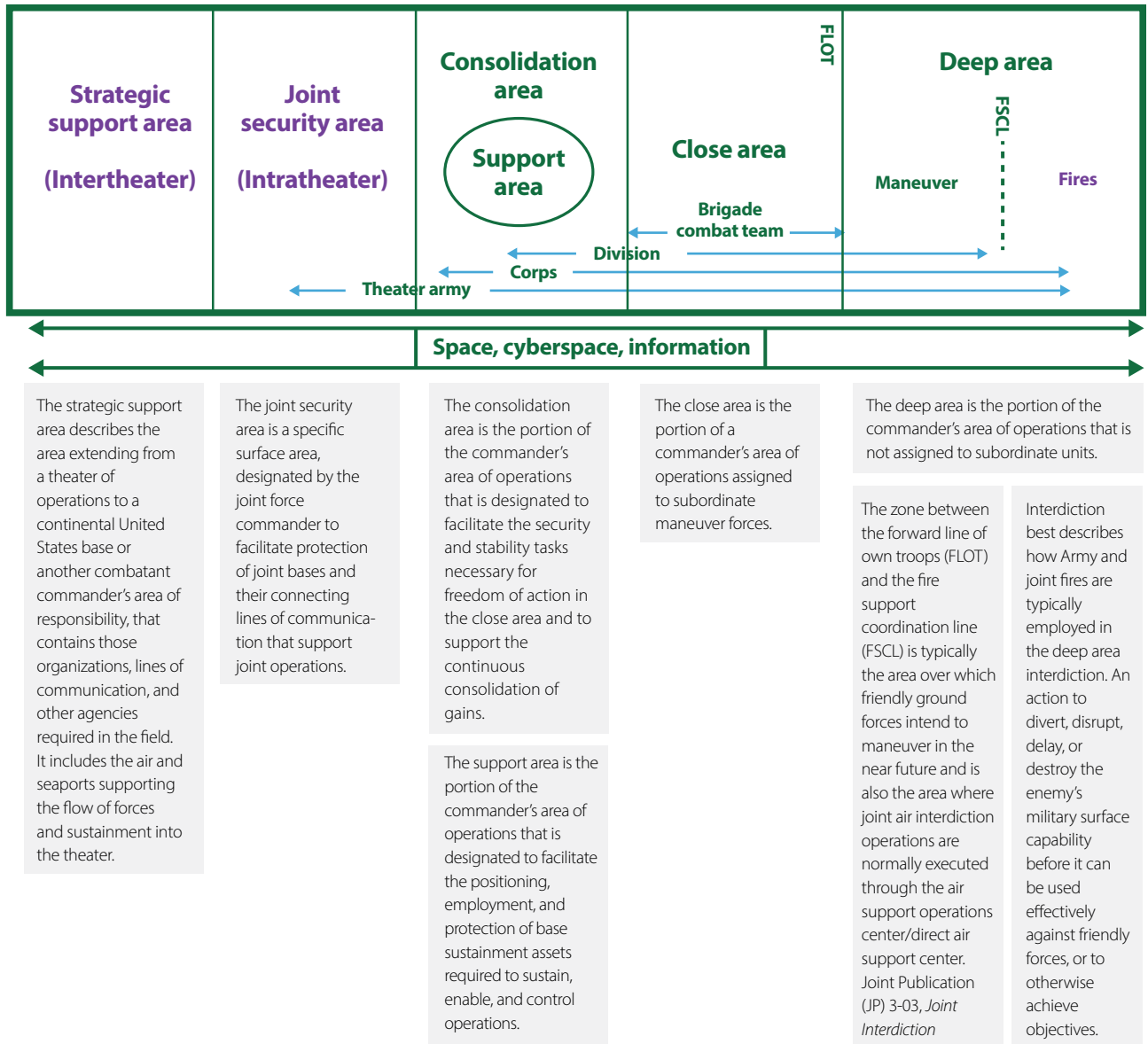
Achieving the strategic purpose of operations is the underlying theory of victory in FM 3-0 and is addressed at the end of chapter 1. There are few acceptable permanent solutions to conflict at the strategic level. The majority of conflicts in the world are managed over long periods of time, with each side trying to increase and exploit positions of relative advantage. In effect, the joint force is either winning or losing a competition that provides opportunities to achieve favorable results during operations short of armed conflict, during armed conflict, and during the transition that occurs after armed conflict. The Army, acting in performance of its strategic roles as part of the joint force, conducts operations across the conflict continuum to ensure the United States maintains a position of advantage relative to actual and potential threats. Operations to shape or prevent are successful when they defeat an adversary’s purpose, such as an attempt to destabilize the desired status quo or subvert a friendly state. We win during large-scale ground combat by destroying or defeating the enemy’s conventional capabilities and will to resist. We effectively consolidate gains

their staffs to successfully practice operational art appropriate for the range of military operations.

Old and New

Any discussion about new doctrine for large-scale ground combat operations tends to generate the discussion that the U.S. Army is pining for the “simpler” days of the planning for the Soviet threat in Europe as an escape from the challenge of COIN. Another is the Army is seeking to bring back large-scale combat as a justification for maintaining force structure. Neither is the case. Chapter 1 describes a very different operational environment than that of thirty-five or even five years ago. The intellectual approach is to specifically account for today’s adversaries and the broad categories of operations the Army conducts to confront them as part of the joint force. Incorporating the Army chief of staff’s guidance with regard to preparing the Army for large-scale land combat against an opponent with peer capabilities was critical, and FM 3-0 makes it clear that there are linkages between what the Army does during operations short of conflict and what it needs to do if it is to prevail in war. FM 3-0 accounts for both what is enduringly fundamental and what has changed in the context of current environmental realities, Army organizations, and Army capabilities.

There are several big ideas that are not necessarily new to operations but have not been adequately addressed in recent doctrine or experience. We specifically



(Graphic from U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*)

Figure 2. FM 3-0 Operational Framework for Unified Land Operations

sought to account for the importance of friendly and threat capabilities across multiple domains and the information environment. As a result, we modified the operational framework to approximate the extended battlefield framework found in the multi-domain battle concept (see figure 2).⁴ Doing so recognizes the realities of the operational environment, current Army and joint capabilities, and the planning considerations essential for winning. The new operational framework adds the strategic support area, joint security area (JSA), consolidation area, and deep fires area to the previously designated deep, close, and support areas.

The strategic support and joint security areas encompass where Army activities occur outside the areas of operation for which Army tactical level commanders are responsible. Army forces transit and operate in those areas, but the areas themselves are primarily the purview of the other services, combatant commanders, and joint headquarters because they largely encompass domains other than land. We added them because Army forces are heavily influenced by what happens there and have planning responsibilities for Army activities in those areas and the information environment. The deep fires area is that part of the deep area that is beyond where Army

forces would immediately plan to maneuver with ground forces and where primarily joint and Army cross-domain capabilities would be employed. The strategic support area, JSA, and deep fires area actually describe what already existed in fact but were not accounted for in previous large-unit tactical doctrine. It is the consolidation area that reflects the biggest change to the operational framework in terms of how Army forces look at areas of operation at the corps and division level.

power necessary to consolidate gains as large-scale combat ended in a particular area of operations. While this is still the case in Korea, and likely to be true when fighting as part of NATO, there are other places in the world where Army forces would need to consolidate gains ourselves, at least initially. This is especially important when we conduct high tempo offensive operations that bypass significant enemy maneuver forces to avoid being fixed while inside the range of enemy long-range

“ When we plan operations and allocate forces, we must account for the requirement to consolidate gains as part of making accurate, responsible staff estimates. ”

The consolidation area was designed to solve an age-old problem during operations. The Army has long wrestled with the security challenges behind its forces while maintaining tempo in the close and deep areas, particularly during offensive operations when brigade combat team rear boundaries shift forward and increase the size of the division support area beyond the capability of the units operating there to control terrain, secure populations, or protect themselves against bypassed enemy forces. The typical solution was to assign combat power from brigades committed to operations in the close and deep areas to the maneuver enhancement brigade (MEB) during exercises, which was satisfactory as long as the division bypassed only small enemy formations and the training scenario was metered to keep the enemy forces from being too aggressive. Actual experience against Iraqi forces during the first few months of Operation Iraqi Freedom indicated this approach entails significant risk both during and after execution of large-scale ground combat operations. The enemy cannot be allowed time to reconstitute new forms of resistance to protract the conflict and undo our initial battlefield gains. Against more capable threats, we need to address the problem directly by planning for and employing the necessary *additional* combat power beyond what is required for the close and deep areas to consolidate gains during large-scale combat operations.

During the Cold War in Europe, the Army could depend upon its allies to quickly provide the combat

cannon, rocket, and missile fires. FM 3-0 says that corps and division commanders *may* designate a consolidation area to a subordinate echelon as an area of operations to facilitate freedom of action by unburdening units in the support, close, and deep areas. For a division, this would be typically executed by an additional BCT that must be accounted for when the theater army conducts force tailoring for the joint force commander. A corps would assign a division responsibility for its consolidation area, which would expand as its divisions moved forward and unit boundaries shifted to maintain momentum.

Consolidation areas are dynamic, as the units assigned them initially conduct offensive, defensive, and the minimal stability tasks necessary to defeat bypassed forces, control key terrain and facilities, and secure population centers. Over time, as the situation matures, the mix of tactical tasks is likely to be equal parts security and stability in each consolidation area. However, security-related tasks always have first priority. Planning and execution to consolidate gains must account for all potential means of enemy resistance and be approached as a form of exploitation and pursuit if we want to create enduring outcomes. It is critical to avoid giving enemies the time to reorganize for a different kind of fight.

As mentioned above, the forces assigned consolidation areas are additive and not intended to draw combat power away from the close area. When we plan operations and allocate forces, we must account for the requirement to consolidate gains as part of making accurate, responsible staff estimates. The requirement to consolidate gains doesn't go away when we ignore

it, and the longer the delay in addressing it the greater the impact on the force's ability to sustain tempo and the more challenging the requirement likely becomes overall. The Army has always been tasked to consolidate gains. It did so with varying degrees of success in the

perspective across the operational framework and are where the capabilities resident in each domain are orchestrated and synchronized to converge in time and space to enable freedom of action for subordinate echelons. It is they who identify and exploit windows of opportunity.



Brigade combat teams fighting in the close area generally lack the time or ability to effectively plan and employ multi-domain capabilities other than those already under their control.



Indian wars, after the Civil War during Reconstruction, during the Spanish-American War, during World War II and Korea, and in Vietnam, Haiti, Iraq, and Afghanistan. How successful we did it informs how the outcomes of those wars or conflicts are viewed today.

There are obvious implications to this idea. Follow-and-support units task organized to conduct combined arms operations are essential. The units could be in theater, or forces arriving later in the deployment process. Coalition units could often be well suited for assignment to consolidation areas. The biggest implication is that more forces are required and must be allocated to defeat the enemy on the battlefield and consolidate gains to attain a strategic objective than to just simply defeat the enemy on the battlefield.

Army Echelons and the Operational Framework

FM 3-0 recognizes the importance of cyberspace and space-enabled capabilities, electronic warfare, and the heavily contested information environment. It pulls key aspects of the latest doctrine in those areas into the operations conducted by theater armies, corps, and divisions. Converging those capabilities in support of ground forces to gain and exploit positions of advantage is a critical role played at the division level and higher. Brigade combat teams fighting in the close area generally lack the time or ability to effectively plan and employ multi-domain capabilities other than those already under their control. Mobility, lethality, and protection dominate the cognitive focus at the brigade and lower echelons during ground combat. Theater armies, corps, and divisions are far enough removed from the close fight to have a broader

How we think about the operational framework has changed. The first difference to consider is that we no longer discuss linear versus nonlinear constructs. Instead, FM 3-0 has contiguous and noncontiguous areas of operation to better account for the nonlinear nature of all operations, regardless of the physical lines on a graphic overlay. The next, and largest difference, is that each area of the operational framework has *physical*, *temporal*, *cognitive*, and *virtual* considerations that correlate with the focus of a particular echelon. Without an echelon-specific focus in time and space across multiple domains, the likelihood would be that everyone focuses on the close fight and current operations.

The operational framework considerations provide commanders and staffs a way to look at multiple domains and the information environment in the context of operations on land. The considerations are as interrelated as the domains in any specific situation and have different implications for different echelons operating in different areas of the operational framework. The physical and temporal considerations pertain to space and time, and have been with us a long time. Cognitive considerations are those things pertaining to enemy decision making, enemy will, our will, and the behavior of populations. Virtual considerations are in regard to activities and entities that reside in cyberspace, both friendly and threat. Taken together, the four considerations allow commanders and staffs to account for the reality that all battle is multi-domain battle and has been for a long time.

Maritime capabilities have influenced land combat for more than two thousand years. Air capabilities have done the same for more than a century, while space capabilities have been with us for more than

forty years. Even cyberspace has played a critical role for almost two decades. By explicitly expanding the operational framework beyond a tactically focused physical model, FM 3-0 accounts for the employment of capabilities unbound by range constraints during operations short of armed conflict, during small-scale contingencies, during large-scale ground combat, and as we consolidate gains to achieve enduring outcomes to our tactical operations.

The Way Ahead

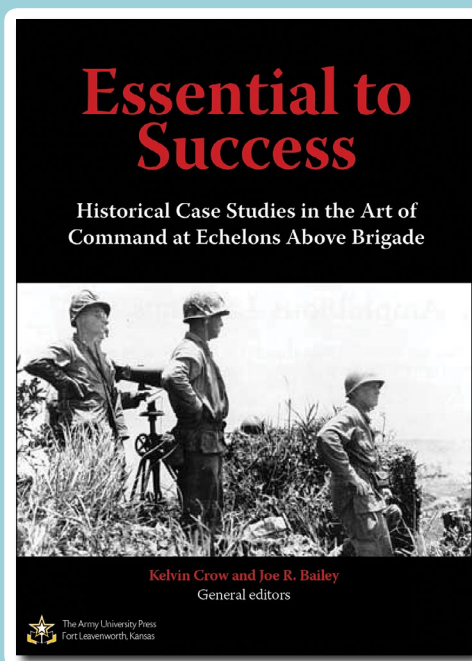
The new FM 3-0 has significant implications for the Army as it reorients on large-scale ground combat while simultaneously conducting other types of operations around the world to prevent peer and near-peer adversaries from gaining positions of strategic advantage. Many of the considerations necessary to achieve military success in the current operational environment are fundamentally unchanged, but what has changed is important. Army forces do not have the luxury of focusing solely on large-scale land combat at the expense of the other missions the Nation requires them to do, but at the same time, they cannot afford to be unprepared for those kinds of operations in an increasingly unstable world. Being prepared for large-scale ground combat generates credible deterrence and contributes to worldwide stability. Being prepared requires doctrine suitable for theater armies, corps, divisions, and brigades to conduct operations with the right mix of forces able to execute tactical tasks to achieve operational and strategic goals. We look forward to a spirited professional discussion across our Army as we integrate our new operational doctrine into the force. That professional discussion will undoubtedly inform more changes in the future and make us a better Army. ■

Notes

1. Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2008 [obsolete]). Change 1 to this version was published in 2011; Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2011 [obsolete]).
2. FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 6 October 2017).
3. *Ibid.*, figure 1-4.
4. For more on the multi-domain battle concept, see David G. Perkins, "Multi-Domain Battle: Driving Change to Win in the Future," *Military Review* 97, no. 4 (July-August 2017): 6–12.

Military Review

WE RECOMMEND



Essential to Success: *Historical Case Studies in the Art of Command at Echelons Above Brigade* is the latest book from Army University Press. Commissioned as a companion to the Army's 2017 version of FM 3-0, *Operations*, it contains twenty engaging and thought-provoking chapters by scholars and former large-unit commanders who analyze key decisions, enabling factors, and limiting factors in large-unit combat operations from the Second World War to current conflicts.

The U.S. Army's recent history of small-unit operations, combined with increased potential for large-scale combat against peer or near-peer rivals and advances in technology and social media call for a reassessment of command at senior levels. *Essential to Success* highlights situations faced by commanders of the past, and it explains and contextualizes the problems they faced, the decisions they made, and the outcomes of those decisions. The book invites readers, commanders, and their staffs to think critically and apply historical experience to large-scale ground combat of the future in an attempt to preserve American lives and valuable national resources.