Multidomain Operations:

The Latest Evolution of Operational Doctrine

By Captain Carlos J. Valencia and Major Philip S. Cooney

Doctrine represents the total collection of U.S. Army knowledge gained over 247 years of war, uneasy tensions, and peace. Over the past 40 years, the world and the operational environment (OE) in which we find ourselves have significantly changed, as various advancements have been made by peer threats. Loitering munitions, electronic warfare, unmanned systems, and nonnation state actors (among other technologies and factors) have revolutionized how war is now fought and how the Army must adapt to meet these threats. After a nearly 20-year focus on counterinsurgency operations, the Army began shifting its doctrinal focus back toward large-scale combat operations in 2017, with the publication of Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*.[1] The 2022 edition of FM 3-0 introduces the new Army operational concept (multidomain operations), which retains the focus on large-scale combat operations, builds on the importance of integrating joint and multinational capabilities, and expands on the combined arms approach—with an emphasis on creating complementary and reinforcing effects with capabilities from multiple domains.[2]

Multidomain operations refer to the combined arms employment of joint and Army capabilities to create and exploit relative advantages to achieve objectives, defeat enemy forces, and consolidate gains on behalf of joint force commanders. Multidomain operations constitute the Army contribution to the joint fight. All operations are multidomain operations, regardless of joint force capabilities contributed at each Army echelon. This is because Army forces employ organic capabilities in multiple domains and continuously benefit from capabilities that they do not control; examples include benefits gained from the Global Positioning System and from combat aviation support from the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Air Force. Multidomain operations demand a mindset that focuses on how Army forces view the OE and threats. But what does the modern OE look like, and how do the domains fit in?

An OE is a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities that bear on the commander's decisions. Within the context of an OE, a domain is a physically defined portion of the OE that requires a unique set of warfighting capabilities and skills. The OE includes portions of the land, maritime, air, space, and cyberspace domains as impacted through three dimensions (human, physical, and information). The land, maritime, air, and space domains are defined by their physical characteristics, and cyberspace—a manmade network of networks—connects them, as represented by the dots shown in Figure 1.

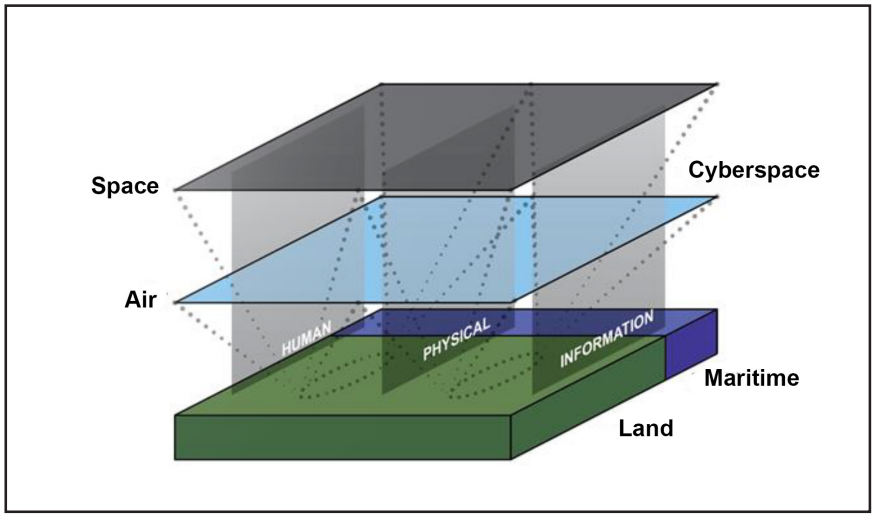


Figure 1. The OE

Leaders must understand how these three dimensions impact the OE. From a simple machine gun team crew action to a major offensive campaign, all operations affect the physical world, the humans who reside in it, and the information by which it is conceptualized. Additionally, multidomain operations aim for Army leaders to think beyond previous planning considerations and emphasize the integration of the Army capabilities across the five domains in order to compound effects with sister Services and deter and defeat peer threats at the lowest cost.

An additional change to the updated version of FM 3-0 is the introduction of the strategic situation, which stems from the competition continuum introduced in Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*.[3] The strategic situation describes how the Army conducts itself across the range of military operations in three

strategic contexts—competition below armed conflict, crisis, and armed conflict. Together, these three strategic contexts form a progressive continuum along which the Army must be prepared to proceed in order to match an adversary's escalating violence and increases in U.S. national interest. In competition below armed conflict, nation or nonnation states with unaligned interests use various peaceful and malicious methods to compete with one another and gain an upper hand. The traditional Army contribution to unified action during this strategic context of competition below armed conflict consists of military engagement and security cooperation while preparing for armed conflict. As events or incidents that threaten U.S. national interests occur, the strategic context gradually moves toward crisis; this may require Army intervention, and Soldiers may be deployed to forward locations to deter conflict and prepare for war. If all else fails, then nation or nonnation states may begin using lethal force to achieve their goals; and in response, the Army conducts combat operations, exploiting its preparations from the competition and crisis strategic contexts to defeat the adversary. Competition below armed conflict, crisis, and armed conflict are not terribly foreign concepts, but the strategic situation helps leaders better conceptualize operations as the Army operates in different strategic contexts around the world.

Additional major updates and changes to FM 3-0 include—

- Establishing the dynamics of combat power—leadership, firepower, information, mobility, and survivability—which are generated by the warfighting functions.
- Identifying the four tenets of operations: agility, convergence, endurance, and depth. These tenets are attributes that should be built into all plans and operations, and they are directly related to how the Army operational concept should be employed. The new FM 3-0 introduces convergence as an outcome achieved by the concerted employment of capabilities from multiple domains and echelons against combinations of decisive points in any domain to create effects against a system, formation, or decision maker or within a specific geographic area.
- Describing nine imperatives as actions that Army forces must take to defeat peer enemy forces and succeed in OEs extended through all domains. The imperatives are—
  - See yourself, see the enemy, and understand the OE.
  - Account for being under constant observation and engaged in all forms of enemy contact.
  - Create and exploit relative physical, information, and human advantages in pursuit of decision dominance.
  - Make initial contact with the smallest element possible.
  - Impose multiple dilemmas on the enemy.
  - Anticipate, plan, and execute transitions.
  - Designate, weigh, and sustain the main effort.
  - Consolidate gains continuously.
  - Understand and manage the effects of operations on units and Soldiers.
- Providing an update to the operational framework by—
  - Expanding assigned areas and introducing and defining zone and sector areas.
  - Removing consolidation area, as the consolidation of gains now occurs throughout the entire operation, regardless of location.
  - Reintroducing main effort, supporting effort, and reserve, which replace decisive, shaping, and supporting efforts.
- Adding informational considerations to the mission variables, which are aspects of the three dimensions (human, physical, and information) that affect how humans and automated systems derive meaning from, use, act upon, and are impacted by information.
- Introducing influence as a ninth form of contact.
- Adding the theater strategic level as the fourth level of war.
- Adding chapters on Army operations in maritime-dominated environments and leadership during operations.

As with similar events of the past, the 2022 version of FM 3-0 will drive an evolutionary change across Army doctrine, including updates and changes to U.S. Army Chemical Corps doctrine. As the Army doubles down on its focus on large-scale combat operations, FM 3-0 should serve as a reminder of the three Chemical Corps core functions to assess, protect, and mitigate with regard to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats on the battlefield in order to support maneuver commanders in closing with and destroying the enemy. In the next few years, updates will be made to Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-37, *Protection*,[4] FM 3-11, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Operations*,[5] and various CBRN Army techniques publications so that they align with the new version of FM 3-0. CBRN leaders must lean forward, understand FM 3-0, and use the information contained therein when communicating with senior leaders and Soldiers. CBRN leaders and Soldiers will need to answer various questions posed by the update to FM 3-0, including—

- How do CBRN capabilities complement and reinforce other branch and Service capabilities across each of the domains?
- How do CBRN forces create effects through the different dimensions?
- How do CBRN capabilities contribute to competition below armed conflict, crisis, and armed conflict?

As Soldiers, we are no strangers to the three dimensions, as we work within those dimensions on a day-to-day basis, conducting our three functions in support of competition below armed conflict, crisis, and armed conflict. Understanding and excelling at these functions contribute to mission success in CBRN environments across all decisive-action tasks. These core functions may be executed individually, simultaneously, or sequentially and are applicable to all levels of our future OEs.[6]



FM 3-0 is a critical piece of doctrine that leaders must read in order to understand Army operations and how each branch of the Army contributes to the fight—and this version is no different.

Following the publication of FM 3-0, CBRN doctrine will be updated and sent throughout the Regiment for review. As drafts of the various publications appear in leaders' e-mail inboxes, we implore each of you to read them and provide your feedback; this is the only way that we can improve our doctrine.

Endnotes:

[1]FM 3-0, *Operations*, 10 June 2017, (now obsolete).

[2]FM 3-0, *Operations*, 1 October 2022.

[3]JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, 14 November 2000.

[4]ADP 3-37, *Protection*, 31 July 2019.

[5]FM 3-11, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Operations*, 23 May 2019.

[6]Ibid.

Captain Valencia is a doctrine analyst/writer for the Military Police Doctrine Branch, Doctrine Division, Fielded Force Integration Directorate, U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Texas, San Antonio.

Major Cooney is the chief of the CBRN Doctrine Branch, Doctrine Division, Fielded Force Integration Directorate, U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center of Excellence.

