

# **The Hybrid Threat Concept: Contemporary War, Military Planning and the Advent of Unrestricted Operational Art**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

THE HYBRID THREAT CONCEPT: CONTEMPORARY WAR, MILITARY PLANNING AND THE ADVENT OF UNRESTRICTED OPERATIONAL ART., by Major Brian P. Fleming, United States Army, 69 pages.

Hybrid threat actors seek to master unrestricted operational art in order to reconcile overmatch and protect or advance their interests. As interest-based rational actors, hybrid threats translate strategic intent into unrestricted distributed operations. The hybrid threat concept represents the evolution of operational art and a potential paradigm shift as a doctrinal and organizational Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). Baptized in its modern form after the 1991 Gulf War, the hybrid threat construct is a sophisticated amalgam of unrestricted threat activities that have resisted codification and generated a labyrinth of contradictory explanation. As an unrestricted collective methodology, the hybrid concept bypasses the cognitive boundaries of traditional threat characterization and the application of organized collective violence. United States military operational and strategic planners who choose to ignore emerging hybrid threats or meet them with intellectual contempt are accepting strategic risk, as they aim to set conditions for strategic opportunity and prevent the U.S. tendency to dominate the battlefield.

This study demonstrates the tendency for hybrid threat actors to increase in frequency and diversity of ways and means in the pursuit of their interests in the next decade. The hybrid threat construct offers a framework to describe the evolving character of contemporary threat actors, challenge conventional threat assessment methodologies and understand the anomalies in the contemporary operating environment. As such, the hybrid construct presents numerous implications for visualizing the future operational environment and for how the U.S. military will formulate strategy, policy and resource investment priorities in the near future.

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## Acronyms

AOR – Area of Responsibility

ARFORGEN – Army Force Generation Process

AUSA – Association of the United States Army

COCOM – Combatant Command

COFM – Correlation of Forces and Means

COG- Center of Gravity

COIN- Counter-Insurgency

CONPLAN – Contingency Plan

CW- Compound Warfare

DOD - Department of Defense

FCOC- Future Character of Conflict

FM- Field Manual

FSO- Full Spectrum Operations

GAO – Government Accountability Office (U.S.)

GCC- Geographic Combatant Command

GDF- Guidance for the Development of the Force

GEF – Guidance for the Employment of the Force

IDF – Israeli Defense Forces

IW – Irregular Warfare

JCS- Joint Chiefs of Staff

JFC – Joint Force Commander

JFCOM- Joint Forces Command

JOPP – Joint Operations Planning Process

JP – Joint Publication

JSCP – Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan

JSPS – Joint Strategic Planning System

MDMP – Military Decision Making Process

MOD – Ministry of Defense (United Kingdom)

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSS – National Security Strategy

NDS – National Defense Strategy

NMS – National Military Strategy

OPLAN– Operational Plan

PLA – People’s Liberation Army

QDR– Quadrennial Defense Review

RAND – Research and Development Corporation

RMA – Revolution in Military Affairs

TRADOC – Training and Doctrine Command (U.S. Army)

USMC – United States Marine Corps

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## Introduction

In the post-Cold War strategic landscape, the U.S. military has collectively struggled to characterize contemporary threat actors that do not aptly conform to existing threat models and methodologies. Several concepts have come to fruition since 1991 to help explain and understand contemporary threats in an environment devoid of competitive superpowers. However, many of the threat activities in the operational environment have remained resistant to universal codification. Since the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, the term “hybrid threat” has emerged as the vehicle to characterize the increased complexity and non-linearity of threat actors that contest the status quo. The proliferation of threat actors that innovatively combine regular and irregular capabilities simultaneously, and rapidly transition between them to create strategic effects has brought the hybrid threat concept to fruition and much debate. This study contends that the hybrid threat construct represents the evolution of operational art and is potentially a doctrinal and organizational revolution in military affairs with implications for U.S. military strategy, planning, policy and resource investment priorities.

Traditionally, all combatants have employed combinations of warfare and used all tools they have available in order to achieve their desired end-states out of necessity. Throughout history, warfare has involved the use of conventional and irregular forces that are strategically coordinated, but often geographically separated and otherwise not integrated operationally. However, the versatility and simultaneity of contemporary threat actors that demonstrate increased sophistication in their employment of technology and combinations of types of warfare present new challenges that can offset or in some cases neutralize conventional U.S. military superiority. This development in military affairs in the last two decades has created friction amongst military strategists and operational planners.

The contemporary hybrid threat actor is a practitioner of unrestricted operational art that aptly combines regular and irregular capabilities simultaneously into a unified operational force

to achieve strategic effects. Historically, threat actors that combine types of warfare to achieve their end-states have always existed in some form or fashion. Nation-state actors have habitually used irregular capabilities to set conditions for conventional forces. Illustrative of this is World War II, where French resistance forces worked in conjunction with conventional Allied forces in France. However, the hybrid threat organization can also integrate its capabilities to an even greater extent where conventional and irregular forces form a composite operational force to set conditions and achieve strategic effects. This idea has generated immense debate.

The debate over hybrid threats is underpinned by a terminology gap and the absence of a universally accepted definition. In a 2008 article, the Army Chief of Staff characterized a hybrid threat as an adversary that incorporates “Diverse and dynamic combinations of conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal capabilities.”<sup>1</sup> The United States Joint Forces Command defines a hybrid threat as, “Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a tailored mix of conventional, irregular, terrorism and criminal means or activities in the operational battle space. Rather than a single entity, a hybrid threat or challenger may be a combination of state and non-state actors.”<sup>2</sup> Most recently, the U.S. Army codified the term in its 2011 operations doctrine as, “The diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects.”<sup>3</sup> However, these extant definitions are not universally accepted and resistance to the hybrid threat concept persists. For the purposes of this study, a hybrid threat is defined as an adversary, state or non-state that adaptively and rapidly incorporates diverse and dynamic combinations of

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<sup>1</sup> George C. Casey, "America's Army in an Era of Persistent Conflict," *Army Magazine* (October 2008), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Russell W. Glenn, “Thoughts on Hybrid Conflict,” *Small Wars Journal* (2 March 2009). <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/03/thoughts-on-hybrid-conflict/> (Accessed August 30, 2010), 2.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-0 Operations C-1* (GPO, Washington, DC: February 2011), 1-5.

conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal capabilities, as well as non-military means, simultaneously across the spectrum of conflict as a unified force to obtain its objectives.<sup>4</sup>

Resistance to the hybrid threat concept centers on the abstractness of the idea. Critics argue that the hybrid threat construct is unsuitable as it is merely irregular warfare phased with regular conventional operations. Some see it as a subset of irregular warfare and therefore not as a unique threat in the operational continuum. Critics contend that there is insufficient evidence to support the idea and there are several comparisons to compound warfare. Others mischaracterize the concept as a catchall for the milieu of non-linear threat activities in the operational environment or confine its applicability to non-state actors. To this end, the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah is the oft-cited example of a hybrid threat, leading to robust examination of Hezbollah tactics, Israeli weaknesses and the uncertainty of its applicability to other environments thereby marginalizing the hybrid threat concept. Therefore, the failure to construct a universally accepted concept for a hybrid threat has led to adversarial discourse.

Through the lens of the protection of interests, military planning doctrine and military intelligence discourse since the end of the Cold War has sought to describe the contemporary environment and potential threats within it. However, the resultant broad description of the environment only masks potential threats. Even though both U.S. Army and Joint planning constructs, the Military Decision Making process (MDMP) and Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP), rely heavily on describing the threat, the military community has collectively failed to produce a consistent threat model to plan against and has struggled to codify threat activities in its strategic documents.

As the military tried to define the threat in the post-Cold War landscape, numerous ideas emerged to better conceptualize the seemingly growing complexity of threat actors within the

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<sup>4</sup> Brian P. Fleming, Major, U.S. Army, "Hybrid Threats," Headquarters Department of the Army G-3/5/7 Information Paper, (Washington, DC, 20 April 2009).

environment that did not conform to traditional enemy characterization. These include the Three Block War, Fourth Generation Warfare, Contemporary Operating Environment, Network-Centric Warfare and most recently revisiting population centric Counter-Insurgency (COIN). The hybrid threat concept synthesizes relevant aspects of these constructs in conjunction with a pragmatic application of unrestricted operational art. For the purpose of this study, unrestricted operational art is defined as the coherent and relational bridging of strategic goals to distributed and simultaneous unrestricted tactical actions and activities across time, space and purpose.

This new concept is essentially a U.S. forces perspective on how to deal with complex operational environments where an adversary employs unrestricted operational art, combining all available tools to achieve objectives. It accounts for the anomalies that arise in the threat spectrum that have habitually eluded characterization. Regardless of semantics, in this era of persistent conflict, U.S. military leadership recognizes that conflicts in the future will not be exclusively characterized in the constructs of conventional or irregular warfare. Adversaries will skillfully leverage and employ combinations of traditional, irregular, and disruptive methods in order to achieve operational and strategic advantage. Therefore, the hybrid threat construct offers a framework to describe the evolving character of contemporary threat actors, challenge conventional threat assessment methodologies and highlight the dynamics of the contemporary operating environment.

Hybrid threats provide both challenges and opportunities for military operational and strategic planning. The chaotic and complex character of hybrid threats has proven difficult for analysts and planners to fit into traditional threat methodologies. Forecasting a hybrid threat has been elusive due to the complex and broad nature of capabilities that enemies may employ, as well as institutional resistance to the concept. As a perceived hydra practicing unpredictable and unrestricted warfare, the hybrid threat concept has been dismissed by many and exploited by others to suit parochial agendas. This does not mean that hybrid threats are impossible to forecast. The hybrid threat concept is a more realistic way to view contemporary threat actors

and not the oft-used ambiguous uncertainty in the operational environment portrayed in U.S. strategic planning documents. Hence, operational and strategic planners can adopt an appreciation for hybrid threats in their planning methodologies and contingency plans.

While forecasting a hybrid threat is a difficult task, it is not an impossible one. Extant threat actors have a strategic culture that guides their decision-making and thereby facilitates an understanding of their intentions. In conjunction with a prudent analysis of the environment and realistic assessment of U.S. vulnerabilities set against the backdrop of the threat actor's strategic culture, a hybrid threat can be forecasted thus providing an understanding of their capabilities and intent. To this end, applying the appropriate level of war: strategic, operational or tactical, is instrumental to recognizing how the hybrid threat arrays its options for achieving its end-state.

The hybrid threat construct has broader implications than the simple grouping of threat actors into a linear bin. Traditional threat characterizations have sought to simplify the complexity of potential enemies often leading to over or under-estimation of threat capabilities and intent. The hybrid threat idea is more about conceptualizing a realistic threat description that portrays how potential enemies will array their capabilities in order to counter symmetric advantage to achieve their strategic objectives. The emerging hybrid concept will persist and replicate across the spectrum of war. As such, embracing the hybrid concept holds much potential for gaining clarity in visualizing future operational environments and for formulating more appropriate strategy, policy and resource investment priorities in the near future.

This monograph assumes that there is an order to the diverse array of threat activities in the operational environment and therefore these activities can be characterized. Another assumption underpinning this work is that hybrid threat actors are rational and therefore operate out of perceived self-interest. This monograph is limited to the narrow amount of existing literature on the emerging concept of hybrid threats and the classification limitations of open source analysis. Several delimitations shape the focus of this monograph. It will not discuss hybrid war or warfare and deliberately will not address other U.S. service planning

methodologies. This study seeks to understand hybrid threats at the operational and strategic level and not the tactical level. This monograph will not detail tactical solutions to hybrid threats or propose any changes to the doctrine of Full Spectrum Operations (FSO).

In sum, this study seeks to understand the dynamics of hybrid threats and aims to provide insights that may prove useful for future U.S. military planning. The research question guiding this monograph is to determine if the hybrid threat concept is a valid threat model for U.S. operational and strategic planning. As such, it will methodically examine the emergence of hybrid threats and the competing narratives on the subject as it relates to contingency and campaign planning. The results of this analysis have significant implications for how the U.S. military will organize to meet future adversaries.

## **Methodology**

This monograph will utilize an historical research approach to determine the context and background information that brought hybrid threat actors to fruition and the associated problems they cause for U.S. military operational and strategic planning. Additionally, this monograph will employ a constructive approach to achieve greater understanding of hybrid threats and find solutions to the problems they pose. The four major components that this monograph will address are the emergence of unrestricted operational art and the hybrid threat's potential as a doctrinal and organizational RMA, provide a review of U.S. military operational and strategic planning constructs, discuss the implications of hybrid threats on U.S. military planning and explore the dynamics of appreciating and forecasting hybrid threat actors.

This study provides an overview of the existing conceptualization of hybrid threat actors and details their emergence in the operational environment. This research will provide a context for hybrid threats and outline their characteristics by analyzing events and actors. Exploring the inability to understand the anomalies in the operational environment since the end of the Cold War, this monograph seeks to identify a rationality to explain the logic of unrestricted operational

art and the hybrid threat's unconstrained activities. This will be discussed in concert with the potentiality of it being a framework that can be observed, conceptualized and forecasted.

As a potential doctrinal and organizational revolution in military affairs, this analysis will further determine the effects of hybrid threats on U.S. military planning. By means of the criteria for an RMA, this monograph will determine whether a hybrid threat is a doctrinal and organizational RMA warranting a paradigm shift in military thinking. Using theory reinforced by analysis, this study will determine the core components of hybrid threats and differentiate the temporal contextual components that have limited other analysis on the topic. Next, by means of current U.S. military doctrine, this study will briefly outline the components of strategic and operational planning to provide a working understanding of the methodology used by the U.S. military to formulate campaign and contingency planning at the operational and strategic level. The narrative will then evaluate these methodologies, determine whether they are apt for planning against a hybrid threat, and assess their relevance.

Lastly, this study will discuss the implications of the synthesis of this information, propose several conclusions, and determine whether further research is warranted. This monograph will amalgamate the hybrid threat model with U.S. military planning constructs and provide analysis to optimally understand, respond to and defeat hybrid threats. Moreover, this study will examine the potential proliferation and replication of hybrid threats in the future. Through explanation and understanding, the fusion of the components of this monograph will provide insight and offer a framework to both conceptualize and deal with hybrid threats. The synthesis of information within this study concludes with viable recommendations for the U.S. military to counter hybrid threats and maintain advantage.

## **Literature Review**

The literature associated with this monograph primarily consists of works laying out the intellectual underpinnings of the hybrid threat concept and its application to U.S. military

operational and strategic planning. For the purpose of this monograph, the existing literature is organized into four categories. The first category focuses on the conceptual approach to war that provides the foundation to understanding hybrid threats and the interest-based thinking that led to their emergence. The second category consists of theoretical approaches to dealing with chaos and complexity, the factors that facilitate understanding hybrid threats. The third category focuses on comprehending strategic and operational planning constructs the U.S. military utilizes to formulate war plans in relation to existing and potential threat actors. The fourth category consists of the literature that explains, discusses and constructs the idea of hybrid threats. This encompasses conceptually understanding hybrid threats, the strategic and operational thought that shapes the discourse on the topic and its relevance to the U.S. forces in the contemporary operational environment.

The central theme in Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz's seminal work, *On War*, is that war is an extension of policy and its nature and character are shaped by the aim of that policy. Clausewitz posits, "War is an act of force to compel the enemy to do our will" and that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means."<sup>5</sup> As such, Clausewitz sought to articulate a practical theory on how to understand war without ignoring its complexities. He aimed to discover the essential, timeless elements of war and distinguish them from its temporary features. His realistic, dialectic, and descriptive approach underpins the concept of hybrid threats. Clausewitz's assertion that violence and political impact are the two permanent characteristics of war has direct correlation to the hybrid threat concept.

Chinese military theorist Sun Tzu's *Art of War* is a classic of Eastern military thinking. His influential writing on strategy and tactics in war devotes a great deal of effort to gaining knowledge about the enemy and his vulnerabilities. Sun Tzu declares that all warfare is based on

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<sup>5</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

deception and articulates the notion of exploiting the enemy's weak points, while simultaneously coercing the enemy to attack one's strong points.<sup>6</sup> Sun Tzu discusses avoiding enemy strength and striking at his weakness in the metaphor, "As water shapes its flow in accordance with the ground, so an army manages its victory, in accordance with the situation of the enemy...as water has no constant form, there are in warfare no constant conditions. Thus, one is able to win the victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine."<sup>7</sup> He further elaborates on the idea of maneuvering forces for the purpose of making the enemy respond in ways of one's choosing. The principles of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and Clausewitz's maxims form a substantial intellectual buttress for the hybrid threat construct.

Historian John Lewis Gaddis' *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* details how historical methods explain human activity more specifically than the generalizations of social science. Illustrative of hybrid threats, Gaddis' work discusses chaos and complexity theory, which study systems too complex to accurately predict, but which exhibit underlying patterns that facilitate understanding.<sup>8</sup> Through the notion that past processes exist in current structures, Gaddis offers a framework to explain the hybrid threat concept. Like Clausewitz, Gaddis assumes that there are interactions of multiple variables in war, which simplistic models are inadequate in characterizing.

Physicist Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* suggests that paradigms exist to allow scientists to solve problems and when they no longer support the process, they are discarded for a new paradigm. Previously existing theories help shape new paradigms. Kuhn's work declares that there may be multiple competing views prior to a paradigm being adopted, but

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<sup>6</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 106.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>8</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78.

not afterwards, as a consensus forms within the community.<sup>9</sup> Kuhn's concept of paradigms is essential to determining if the hybrid threat represents a new paradigm in military thinking. Consequently, Kuhn's concept of a paradigm shift nests with Gaddis, as well as the concept of a revolution in military affairs.

Historians Macgregor Knox and Williamson Murray created the framework to describe military revolutions and revolutions in military affairs (RMA) in their 2001 book, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution 1300-2050*. This framework is the military corollary to Kuhn's discussion of paradigms. Understanding Knox and Murray's theory allows a military professional to better utilize Kuhn's paradigm in a military approach to revolutions in military affairs. According to Knox and Murray, an RMA requires the "Assembly of a complex mix of tactical, organizational, doctrinal, and technological innovations in order to implement a new conceptual approach to warfare or to a specialized sub-branch of warfare."<sup>10</sup> These RMAs are often tied to or are part of a larger military revolution, which the authors describe as a phenomenon that fundamentally changes the framework of war.

Military revolutions result from massive social and political changes that compel societies and governments to restructure and fundamentally alter the manner in which their military organizations prepare for and conduct war.<sup>11</sup> However, RMAs are not the major societal upheavals, but rather, smaller and deliberate processes where armed forces seek to gain advantage over adversaries. For example, following the First World War military revolution, strategic bombing, carrier warfare, radar, and Blitzkrieg operations were the resulting RMAs. The emerging hybrid threat concept may potentially be a doctrinal and organizational RMA in the post-Cold War and post-Gulf War era.

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 15.

<sup>10</sup> MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

United States conceptual military planning in the post-Cold War era has struggled to develop an understanding of the operational environment and frame the military problems within it. *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operations Planning (JP 5-0)*, is the primary planning framework for U.S. military forces in the joint realm and promulgates JOPP as its primary planning methodology. Borrowing heavily from MDMP, JOPP focuses joint planning activities through operational design and provides decision-makers with the necessary information and alternatives for OPLAN development. Therefore, JP 5-0 is the framework for joint military planning and provides a planning methodology, which asserts that operations attain strategic purpose through synchronized actions that achieve strategic effects. Within JOPP, threat identification, analysis and assessment underpin operational planning.

*Field Manual 5-0, The Operations Process (FM 5-0)*, is the U.S. Army's keystone manual for planning and the exercise of command and control in full spectrum operations. The 2010 version is representative of the evolutionary thinking Army doctrine has developed after an expeditionary decade of operational deployments. The manual advocates creative thinking to enable adaptive approaches to the battlefield characterized by uncertainty and greater decentralization and describes the Army's operating concept of Full Spectrum Operations (FSO). As such, it provides a methodology to understand ill-structured problems and develop approaches to solve and/or manage these problems. In theory, FM 5-0 and JP 5-0 lend themselves well to planning against a hybrid threat.

The National Defense Strategy (NDS) is a document produced to identify and explain the Department of Defense's plan to support the strategic objectives outlined in the National Security Strategy (NSS). It provides general guidance to the military on the role it will play in carrying out NSS strategic objectives. Using the enduring national interests of the United States and defining the strategic environment and the categories of threats within it, the NDS is a synthesized framework for the identification and achievement of military objectives in support of the NSS. As such, the guidance furnished by the NDS informs and influences the creation of

other critical planning documents, namely the Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF) and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP).

The GEF provides near-term guidance, every two years, to Combatant and Functional Commanders to shape their development of theater specific campaign plans. The GEF is a document that provides guidance related to strategic end-states for all theaters and functions. Predicated on strategic assumptions that allow for future planning and prioritized contingency scenarios, the GEF integrates multiple strategic planning documents. The GEF provides guidance based on strategy-centric planning, rather than threat or contingency-centric planning. Consequently, guidance is based on strategic objectives rather than potential sources of contingency or conflict.

As a key strategic document, the JSCP is devoid of discussion of hybrid threats and focuses on mission sets. The JSCP translates the strategic end-states provided by the GEF into specific planning guidance to Combatant Commanders, Functional Commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The JSCP directs planning for specific missions, based on military capabilities that will become branch plans to the theater and functional campaign plans. Furthermore, the JSCP provides guidance on the allocation of forces for security cooperation, global defense posture and steady-state operations.

The 2010 Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) discusses the hybrid approaches adversaries may employ that blur the lines between traditional modes of conflict.<sup>12</sup> The QDR is the apex document that describes U.S. military doctrine. It is published every four years and analyzes U.S. strategic objectives and military threats. The QDR directly shapes U.S. strategy and force structure, as it is closely tied to budgeting and resource allocation. Therefore, the NDS, JSCP, GEF and QDR maintain numerous implications for conceptualizing

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 8.

the composite nature of the hybrid threat construct, as they broadly depict conditions in the environment and do not convey meaning unambiguously.

Compound warfare is the intellectual basis of the interest-based hybrid threat concept. Historian Thomas Huber is credited with coining the term “compound warfare” in 1996 to describe the phenomenon of regular and irregular forces fighting in concert.<sup>13</sup> Huber defines the term as the, “Systematic, deliberate combining of regular and irregular forces.”<sup>14</sup> In *Compound Wars: That Fatal Knot* Huber further explains compound war as an intellectual framework to understand the phenomena of regular conventional forces and irregular unconventional forces operating under unified direction to accomplish an end-state. He discusses the coordination and relative simultaneity of these forces operating cohesively on the battlefield.<sup>15</sup> He argues that a, “Conventional force and unconventional force used prudently together provide a mutual accommodation that an adversary employing a conventional force alone can hardly hope to match.”<sup>16</sup> Huber’s watershed theory implies that a compound force’s complementary capabilities influence their opponent to allocate resources to deal with the panoply of threat situations in their area of operations, thus reducing his concentration.

The concept of a hybrid threat is most often associated with contemporary military theorist Frank Hoffman’s 2007 work, *The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Hoffman’s insightful, powerful, and useful theory attempts to bridge the gap between the linear characterizations of either regular or irregular warfare in the contemporary operational environment. Embracing a more nuanced and evolved theory related to compound warfare, he argues that hybrid threats have and will

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas M. Huber, “Compound Warfare: A Conceptual Framework,” in Thomas M. Huber, ed., *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002), vii.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vii-viii, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

continue to emerge in the operational environment.<sup>17</sup> Hoffman builds upon much of the theory that has emerged since the end of the Cold War that attempts to characterize the threat and operational environment. To this end, his synthesis has generated much debate on the hybrid threat concept and is regarded as an authoritative, yet controversial discourse on the matter.

Frank Hoffman's article *Hybrid Warfare and Challenges* illustrates how, "Hybrid challengers have passed from a concept to a reality, thanks to Hezbollah."<sup>18</sup> Hoffman details the application of hybrid methods by Hezbollah to illustrate his main points, to include the blurring and blending of forms of war in combinations of increasing frequency and lethality.<sup>19</sup> He describes how hybrid threats will target U.S. vulnerabilities, employing all forms of warfare potentially simultaneously. This aligns with his article "Hybrid vs. Compound War," which succinctly describes Hezbollah's hybrid manifestation:

Hezbollah's defiant resistance against the Israel Defense Force in the summer of 2006 may be a classic example of a hybrid threat. The fusion of militia units, specially trained fighters and the anti-tank guided-missile teams marks this case, as does Hezbollah's employment of modern information operations, signals intelligence, operational and tactical rockets, armed UAVs and deadly anti-ship cruise missiles. Hezbollah's leaders describe their forces as a cross between an army and a guerrilla force, and believe they have developed a new model.<sup>20</sup>

Frank Hoffman discusses the compound war concept and acknowledges its relevancy. In a 2009 article, Hoffman declares that his analysis has greatly benefited from Huber's work on compound wars, calling it a "Much-underappreciated gem."<sup>21</sup> Hoffman's comparison of hybrid and compound war is based on Huber's assumption that the "Complexity of the admixture of approaches gives distinct advantages to the Compound War (CW) operator because it forces the

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<sup>17</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars" (Monograph, Arlington: The Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 27.

<sup>18</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Issue 52, 1st Quarter 2009), 34.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>20</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid vs. Compound War: The Janus Choice of Modern War: Defining Today's Multifaceted Conflict," *Armed Forces Journal* (October 2009), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

intervening power to both concentrate and disperse at the same time. This increases the command-and-control, logistics and security problems for the CW commander, making him risk averse and slower.”<sup>22</sup> As such, Hoffman contends that Huber’s definition assumes that there are separate forces working in concert with their activities coordinated, either limitedly or inadvertently, at higher levels.<sup>23</sup> Highlighting the difference between hybrid and compound wars, Hoffman posits:

In my study of CWs, the irregular forces are used as an economy of force, to attrite the opposing force and to support a strategy of exhaustion. They are employed to create the conditions for success by the conventional force. The forces operate in different theaters or parts of the battle space but never fuse or combine in battle. Hybrid threats, on the other hand, appear to have a greater degree of operational and tactical coordination or fusion. It does not appear that any separate force exists or that conventional combat power is decisive in the traditional sense.<sup>24</sup>

In response to Hoffman’s interpretation of the compound warfare concept, Huber asserts that Hoffman “Mischaracterizes and trivializes it.”<sup>25</sup> Huber contends that Hoffman’s hybrid concept of the fusion of methods and modes of warfare is interesting and useful, but the dynamics he describes are not historically new and are simply insurgency.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Huber argues that Hezbollah and Hamas are robust insurgencies that resourcefully use insurgent methods with new technologies, but have no conventional force to create a form of compound warfare. In contrast, Hoffman posits that, “Compound is when there are two separate forces and hybrid can be either a single force that does all four modes of conflict or like Hezbollah where distinctive forces come

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Huber, “Huber Comments on Hybrid Warfare and Compound Warfare,” CGSC Blog response, 12 February 2009, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<http://usacac.army.mil/blog/blogs/hist/archive/2009/02/12/huber-comments-on-hybrid-warfare-and-compound-warfare-for-dmh-faculty-and-others-interested.aspx> (Accessed 1 December 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

together.”<sup>27</sup> Despite the fact that Huber and Hoffman have competing ideas on compound warfare and hybrid threats, both illustrate the potential for future threat actors to combine regular and irregular methods to achieve their end-states.

Defense analyst Dr. Russell Glenn expands the debate between compound warfare and hybrid threats. He interprets compound warfare as, “...Synergy and combinations at the strategic level, but not the complexity, fusion, and simultaneity we anticipate at the operational and even tactical levels in war where one or both sides is blending and fusing the full range of methods and modes of conflict into the battle space.”<sup>28</sup> This means that hybrid threats take modern insurgency to the next level in what Hoffman calls the fusion of methods and modes of warfare within the battle space. Conversely, Huber asserts that a hybrid threat is, “A new term for an old phenomenon” and “represents what insurgents have always tried to do to a superior force.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, Huber’s coordination and simultaneity of regular and irregular forces complements, yet competes with Hoffman’s fusion of modes of warfare.

The manifestation of contemporary compound warfare where threat actors employ combinations of warfare types is best depicted by Hoffman. In describing the combinations of multiple modes of war in order to seek greater synergy and impact, he declares:

Multiple types of warfare will be used simultaneously by flexible and sophisticated adversaries who understand that successful conflict takes a variety of forms that are designed to fit one’s goals at that particular time...Non-state actors may mostly employ irregular forms of warfare, but will clearly support, encourage and participate in conventional conflict if it serves their ends. Similarly, nation-states may well engage in irregular conflict in addition to conventional types of warfare to achieve their goals.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Author’s discussion with Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Threats.” Personal e-mail correspondence to Frank Hoffman. 15 December 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Glenn, “Thoughts on Hybrid Conflict,” 5; Hoffman, “*The Rise of Hybrid Wars*,” 20.

<sup>29</sup> Author’s discussion with Dr. Thomas Huber, 30 November 2010, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

<sup>30</sup> Hoffman, “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars,” 5.

While Hoffman's unique insights into the hybrid concept are compelling, they are oriented more to the tactical and operational level than strategic application. In keeping with interest-based thinking, Professor Erin Simpson's "Thinking About Modern Conflict: Hybrid Wars, Strategy and War Aims" provides a more strategic perspective on hybrid threats that highlights the strategic ends and de-emphasizes the ways and means. Simpson reviews the relationship between time, cost, and strategy, and contends that resource endowments and geography are integral to developing strategic choices.<sup>31</sup> She asserts that hybrid conflict is neither new nor identical to the ideal types of conflict U.S. planners prefer. Simpson states that hybrid conflict is "Likely to increase in frequency and understanding them will continue to be a key national security concern. Unfortunately, the analytic framework currently in use makes it difficult to discern the meaningful similarities and differences between these wars and those fought before them."<sup>32</sup> Simpson's strategic level analysis advocates a shift away from the rubrics that focus on actors and tactics toward one that emphasizes aims and strategy. Her thinking nests well with Max Boot's assertion that the infusion of new technology and blurring of the boundaries of regular and irregular warfare create more strategic effects to contend with.<sup>33</sup>

The 1999 Chinese publication of *Unrestricted Warfare* represents a potential paradigm shift in how nation-state actors plan to deal with U.S. technological military advantages. Senior Colonel Qiao Liang and Senior Colonel Wang Xiangsui present innovative alternatives to traditional military engagement using a wide and unrestricted variety of means. They contend that new approaches to military action have been brought to fruition out of the necessity of creating alternative paths to deal with the rising cost, both political and economic, of conventional

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<sup>31</sup> Erin Simpson, "Thinking about Modern Conflict: Hybrid Wars, Strategy, and War Aims," *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the The Midwest Political Science Association*, (Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois, April 07, 2005), 17.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (New York: Random House, 2006), 472.

warfare. The authors assert, “The existence of boundaries is a prerequisite for differentiating objects from one another. In a world where all things are interdependent, the significance of boundaries is merely relative.”<sup>34</sup> Through this lens, Qiao and Wang identify the vulnerabilities of U.S. military and civilian networks and the rules and norms of law that constrain the U.S. in its approach to war.

Qiao and Wang conceptualize unrestricted warfare as transcending ideology and exceeding the boundaries that restrict warfare within a specified range.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the authors explore the use of elements of the environment such as legal considerations, in which they advocate leveraging legal frameworks to place an opponent at a disadvantage. This form of “lawfare” is viewed as a potent means to achieve objectives as favorable policy change can be achieved through proxy. This is in lieu of undesirable direct military confrontation in the pursuit of strategic or operational objectives. As such, Qiao and Wang advocate the following concept:

Forming a composite force in all aspects related to national interest. Given this type of composite force, it is also necessary to have this type of composite force to become the means which can be utilized for actual operations. This should be a "grand warfare method" which combines all of the dimensions and methods in the two major areas of military and non-military affairs so as to carry out warfare. This is opposite of the formula for warfare methods brought forth in past wars.<sup>36</sup>

Army lawyer Margaret Bond describes hybrid war from a broad strategic perspective through the lens of failed states and ungoverned spaces. In a strategy paper, Bond asserts that hybrid war projects, “All elements of national power along a continuum of activities from stability, security, and reconstruction operations to armed combat.”<sup>37</sup> In Bond’s view, hybrid war is a tailored mix employed in a, “Comprehensive and highly-nuanced variety of military

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<sup>34</sup> Senior Colonel Qiao Liang and Senior Colonel Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing, China: People’s Liberation Army, 1999), 180. Of note, family names are first in Chinese culture.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret S. Bond, *Hybrid War: A New Paradigm for Stability Operations in Failing States* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, March 30, 2007), 4.

activities, resources, programs, and applications.”<sup>38</sup> Key to her thesis is the realization of the emerging environment and the need for military planners to deal with threats that manifest within it. Bond’s work provides a vantage to synthesize the operational and tactical level hybrid and unrestricted concepts presented by Hoffman, Qiao and Wang.

National security strategist Nathan Freier discusses the hybrid character of challengers in the strategic environment as detailed in the 2005 National Defense Strategy. In a U.S. Army War College monograph, Freier contends that the 2005 NDS recognized real change in the environment and marked a significant shift in American defense thinking about the threat actors in the post-Cold War era.<sup>39</sup> He illustrates how the combination of mounting irregular and catastrophic challengers, as well as the continued existence of substantial traditional capability, indicates that active challengers will often blend into complex hybrids.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Freier’s article, “The Defense Identity Crisis: It’s a Hybrid World,” offers a practical vantage point from which to view the emerging hybrid concept through the lens of defense thinking and processes. He declares that, “Newly emergent defense trends do not automatically merit exquisite definitions, new doctrine, or new operating concepts.”<sup>41</sup> Freier’s realistic analysis provides a practical framework for planners to view hybrid threats.

In a 2008 article, retired Army Colonel John McCuen discusses hybrid conflict in terms of a struggle for control and support of the combat zone’s indigenous population.<sup>42</sup> Expanding the hybrid concept to the operational and strategic levels of war, McCuen applies the hybrid construct beyond the military domain to embrace not only the psychological domain, but the use

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<sup>38</sup> Bond, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Nathan Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century: Irregular, Catastrophic, Traditional, and Hybrid Challenges in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 63.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Nathan Freier, “The Defense Identity Crisis: It’s a Hybrid World,” *Parameters* (Vol. 39, No. 3, Autumn 2009), 81.

<sup>42</sup> John J. McCuen, “Hybrid Wars,” *Military Review* (March-April 2008), 107-113.

of all instruments of national power in the pursuit of strategic ends.<sup>43</sup> Synthesizing McCuen's ideas, Army planner Sean McWilliams asserts:

Hybrid wars are a combination of symmetric and asymmetric war in which intervening forces conduct traditional military operations against enemy military forces and targets while they must simultaneously and more decisively attempt to achieve control...To accomplish this he proposes a shift to a new paradigm of thinking about war and warfare. He believes that previous definitions, while advancing the understanding of hybrid war as a concept, are of little utility in fighting and winning such conflicts. McCuen believes that under a hybrid war paradigm achieving strategic objectives requires success in all of these diverse conventional and asymmetric battlegrounds.<sup>44</sup>

Dr. Russell Glenn's *All Glory is Fleeting: Insights from the Second Lebanon War* analyzes the metamorphosis Hezbollah<sup>45</sup> underwent to become a hybrid force that achieved significant strategic effects during their 2006 war with Israel. Glenn declares that, "Hezbollah is more than a military force, and therein lies its real strength. It has political, social, diplomatic, and informational components that provide bedrock support for its military organization."<sup>46</sup> He further explains, "The key to Hezbollah's strength is a capability many developed nations seek as they pursue their international objectives: an effective "comprehensive approach."<sup>47</sup> As a counterargument to the wealth of literature that describes the Hezbollah model as the hybrid template, Glenn posits, "Both Blitzkrieg and the Maginot Line were unique approaches to mid-20th-century security challenges, but no one sought to adopt the latter in the wake of World War II. Hybrid warfare may not merit adoption as a doctrinal concept even if it proves sufficiently

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<sup>43</sup> Sean McWilliams, "Hybrid War Beyond Lebanon: Lessons from the South African Campaign 1976 to 1989" (Monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2009), 16.

<sup>44</sup> McWilliams, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Hezbollah (or Hizbollah; Hizbu'llah) began as a resistance force in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Over time, they transformed from a right wing resistance movement violently opposed to U.S. and Israeli intervention in Lebanon to a highly sophisticated and legitimate mainstream political party with a paramilitary resistance wing similar to that of Sinn Fein in Ireland. Hezbollah is classified as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department and are often viewed as an Iranian proxy force utilized to advance its regional agenda.

<sup>46</sup> Russell W. Glenn, *All Glory is Fleeting: Insights from the Second Lebanon War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

unique were Hezbollah's success due more to Israel's difficulties than its adversary's performance."<sup>48</sup> In sum, Glenn declares, "Hybrid in its several forms fails to clear the high hurdle and therefore should not attain status as part of formal doctrine."<sup>49</sup>

The British Army embraces the concept of hybrid threats and utilized much of Hoffman's work as the foundation for their doctrinal thinking on the topic. The United Kingdom's (UK) Ministry of Defence *Future Character of Conflict Paper* (FCOC) discusses that future conflict will be increasingly hybrid in character. The paper explains that hybrid threats are not code for insurgency or stabilization. It is about a, "Change in the mindset of our adversaries, who are aiming to exploit our weaknesses using a wide variety of high-end and low-end asymmetric techniques...In future conflict smart adversaries will present us with hybrid threats (combining conventional, irregular and high-end asymmetric threats) in the same time and space."<sup>50</sup>

The thinking of the British Army on the hybrid concept bridges the tactical, operational and strategic levels. Their comprehensive and theoretical approach to the future threat environment expands and refines the hybrid concept. The FCOC paper asserts:

We are likely to see concurrent inter-communal violence, terrorism, insurgency, pervasive criminality and widespread disorder. Tactics, techniques and technologies will continue to converge as adversaries rapidly adapt to seek advantage and influence, including through economic, financial, legal and diplomatic means. These forms of conflict are transcending our conventional understanding of what equates to irregular and regular military activity; the conflict paradigm has shifted and we must adapt our approaches if we are to succeed.

The acquisition by such hybrid adversaries of highly capable equipment, even in limited numbers via an under-regulated arms trade, will cause a disproportionate level of disruption and affect our freedom of action in all environments. Truly adaptive adversaries will also seek to play our own media and political systems to their advantage and they will adjust their tactics accordingly. In short, military

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>50</sup> United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Future Character of Conflict* (HQ Land Forces, London, 2010), 13. <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/MicroSite/DCDC/> Hereafter referred to as "UK FCOC Paper."

success will be exported rapidly. Some argue that this is not a new phenomenon. However, it is clear that a range of responses will be required.<sup>51</sup>

The Australian military has also identified the potential paradigm shift in future threat activities. In *Square Pegs for Round Holes*, author Michael Krause posits, “In the future, we can expect to see a blurring of irregular, conventional and high-tech warfare into a hybrid form of complex irregular warfare in which an adversary uses all means available that have a reasonable chance of success.”<sup>52</sup> Highlighting the dynamics hybrid threats pose, Krause asserts that there is a need to embrace the complexity of the environment and develop joint and multi-agency solutions to hybrid problems or, “We are destined to maintain and upgrade our high-end, industrial-age square pegs and be condemned for trying to force them into contemporary and increasingly complex round holes.”<sup>53</sup> The Australian view nests well with the emerging U.S. and UK thinking on the hybrid concept.

In sum, the existing literature regarding hybrid threats illustrates the propensity for actors to utilize all means available to achieve their ends. Based in Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, the emerging concept of hybrid threats evolved from Huber’s compound warfare theory and the struggle to conceptualize the non-linear threat activities that persist in the post-Cold War environment. The literature lends itself well to several conclusions. First, since 1991 a potentially new threat paradigm has come to prominence causing significant frustration for military planners to both identify and deal with. Second, as a potential organizational revolution

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 13. In addition, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also has a working definition for a hybrid threat. In a GAO document, NATO asserts: “A hybrid threat is one posed to any current or potential adversary, including state, non-state and terrorist, with the ability, whether demonstrated or likely, to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively, in pursuit of their objectives.”<sup>51</sup> This is in keeping with current U.S., UK, and Australian thinking on the hybrid construct. See Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Hybrid Warfare*, GAO-10-1036R, September 10, 2010. Briefing to the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC. Hereafter referred to as “GAO.”

<sup>52</sup> Michael Krause, *Square Pegs for Round Holes: Current Approaches to Future Warfare & the Need to Adapt* (Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper No. 132, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2007), 21.

<sup>53</sup> Krause, 38.

in military affairs, hybrid threats represent a paradigm shift in threat characterization that necessitates further explanation and understanding. As such, the consternation emanating from the hybrid threat debate centers on the use and misuse of the 2006 war in Lebanon as a case study for hybrid threats. Therefore, the nuanced anomalies caused by hybrid threats in the operational environment represent a shift in military affairs that requires further analysis to fill the gap.

## **The Emergence of the Hybrid Threat**

The idea of a threat actor that combines conventional forces governed by the rules and norms of traditional military custom in the international environment with unconventional forces conducting guerilla style operations has existed for some time. Historically, overmatched actors have targeted the vulnerabilities of their opponent and capitalized on their available means to accomplish their strategic ends. While this prudent implementation of operational art has met varying results historically depending on the actor, contemporary coordination and organization of conventional and unconventional ways and means offers a potential paradigm shift in threat characterization, organization and military thinking. To this end, many senior defense officials, such as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, have referenced the emerging hybrid threat concept in professional discourse within the military community and national security circles.<sup>54</sup>

Often referenced on the periphery, the term “hybrid threat” has not been explicitly used or defined in U.S. Army doctrine until February 2011. This is because the hybrid threat concept is often confused with hybrid warfare, resulting in doctrinal and intellectual resistance to the concept. A GAO report asserts that DOD has no plans to officially define the term “hybrid

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<sup>54</sup> See GAO. Additionally, See Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2009). Gates asserts: “When thinking about the range of threats, it is common to divide the high end from the low end, the conventional from the irregular...the categories of warfare are blurring and no longer fit into neat, tidy boxes. One can expect to see more tools...being employed simultaneously in hybrid and more complex forms of warfare...tomorrow’s conflicts may not be easily categorized into simple classifications of conventional or irregular...the dimensions of conflict are converging.”

warfare” as it does not consider it a new form of warfare. Yet DOD officials agree that the term encompasses all elements of warfare across the spectrum of conflict.<sup>55</sup> The U.S. military’s use of the term hybrid, “Describes the increasing complexity of future conflict as well as the nature of the threat.”<sup>56</sup> This leads to selective understanding and exploitation.

This inconsistency is reflected in civilian defense intellectuals attempting to define the term. In the proceedings of the 2009 Hybrid Warfare Conference Dr. Russell Glenn provides a definition discussed for a hybrid threat to apply to the tactical, operational, and strategic level of war. He defines a hybrid threat as an, “Adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs some combination of political, military, economic, social, and information means, and conventional, irregular, catastrophic, terrorism, and disruptive/ criminal conflict methods. It may include a combination of state and non-state actors.”<sup>57</sup> However, critics of the concept mischaracterize hybrid threats as an irregular threat by default and ignore the anomalies that the construct attempts to capture and illustrate. The resultant discourse reflects the degree of intellectual debate and frustration surrounding the hybrid threat concept.

This discourse merits a working understanding of hybrid threats in order to facilitate explanation, as well as highlight shortcomings in U.S. military planning. Unrestricted by rules and norms of international behavior, hybrid threats may be theoretically expanded to include non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and individual actors. Therefore, from a historical vantage, Sun Tzu’s metaphor of water having no constant form provides a prism through which to view the brackish mix of ways and means hybrid threat actors use to accomplish their objectives.

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<sup>55</sup> GAO, 11. The term “hybrid threat” is not used in the latest versions of the NDS, NMS, NSS, QDR, Guidance for the Development of the Force (GDF), GEF, or FM 2-0 Intelligence.

<sup>56</sup> GAO, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Glenn, 5.

## Military Problems in the Operational Environment

Frank Hoffman views hybrid threats as not being the core of the hybrid debate. To Hoffman, the hybrid construct is about conceptualizing the post-Iraq and Afghanistan operating environment. His work illustrates the further blurring and greater integration or combination of modes of conflict. Highlighting the intellectual friction surrounding the hybrid concept, he asserts: “The hybrid construct was deduced from looking at the enemy instead of simply planning as if the enemy doesn’t get a vote. Hybrid threats are the problem, not an operating concept that presents a solution.”<sup>58</sup> Hoffman’s remarks echo the consternation of contemporary threat analysis and U.S. strategy to find solutions to military problems in the post-Cold War era.

Properly defining and framing a problem is instrumental to creating a solution to deal with it. The problem that exists for the U.S. military in the operational environment is the emergence of a non-linear threat that negates many of its advantages in doctrine, firepower, and technology. In the broader future environment the military problem for the U.S. Army is, given an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, how do Army forces deter conflict, prevail in war, and succeed in a wide range of contingencies?<sup>59</sup> The hybrid threat contests the U.S.’s ability to solve or manage this problem.

As a military problem, dealing with hybrid threats necessitates an understanding of what a hybrid threat is and how it developed into its contemporary form. In the contemporary strategic environment, non-Western threat actors have sought to reconcile overmatch in order to protect or advance their interests. As such, the hybrid threat organization views its problem as, given existing conditions and international norms of behavior, how does it accomplish its strategic objectives against a conventionally superior force over time and space? The hybrid threat

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<sup>58</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, “Further Thoughts on Hybrid Threats,” *Small Wars Journal* (March 3, 2009) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/03/further-thoughts-on-hybrid-thr/>, 3. (Accessed 10 September 2010).

<sup>59</sup> United States Army, *TRADOC Pam 525-3-1 U.S. Army Operating Concept 2016-2028* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 19 Aug 2010), iii, 11.

solution is to practice unrestricted operational art devoid of limitation and constraint to set conditions to gain a marked advantage. Therefore, in order to properly frame the emergence of the hybrid construct, it is first necessary to define and understand the phenomenon of war in a theoretical context and its evolving character since 1991.

## **War: A Realist Theory**

War is a multifaceted social phenomenon that has produced numerous theories to understand, explain, and predict both its nature and character. War is a social activity that exists on the violent periphery of social science discourse. According to Clausewitz, war is an act of policy in which the means can never be considered in isolation from the purpose.<sup>60</sup> For the purpose of this study, war is defined as interest driven, organized collective violence oriented toward a strategic end, utilizing ways and means acceptable within an actor's strategic culture juxtaposed against the strategic environment.<sup>61</sup> This means that interests in relation to the strategic environment and strategic culture drive war.<sup>62</sup>

The description of war often becomes focused at the tactical level with boundaries created, by design or inadvertently, in order to simplify the narrative of the chaotic and complex nature of war. As stated earlier, Clausewitz contends that war is "An act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" and that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means."<sup>63</sup> In the abstract, the hybrid threat construct is an expansion of Clausewitz's secondary trinity,

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<sup>60</sup> Antulio Echevarria, *Clausewitz & Contemporary War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 193.

<sup>61</sup> Brian P. Fleming, Major, U.S. Army, "Theory of War Paper" (School of Advanced Military Studies: Fort Leavenworth, KS, August, 2010.) For the purposes of this study, war is applicable to both state and non-state actors.

<sup>62</sup> Building on Thucydides, Colin Gray asserts that war is motivated by "fear, interests or honor." This monograph asserts that fear and honor are subsets of interests. Correspondingly, Gray declares, "War is a legal concept, a social institution, and is a compound idea that embraces the total relationship between belligerents. In contrast, warfare refers to the actual conduct of war in its military dimension." See Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, Robert B. Strassler, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 43. Colin Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (Routledge: New York, 2007), 7.

<sup>63</sup> Clausewitz, 87.

consisting of the people, the army and the government, to explain war's fruition through interests, strategic culture and the strategic environment. From a military lens, Historian Brian Linn asserts, "A military institution's concept of war is a composite of its interpretation of the past, its perception of present threats, and its prediction of future hostilities."<sup>64</sup>

War transpires when actors leverage the environment in an attempt to maintain equilibrium or obtain change favorable to their interests.<sup>65</sup> As the set of military, economic, and cultural goals an actor strives for in the conduct of foreign policy, interests are necessary for war to come to fruition. Interests are the center of the universe of war. Through the realist lens, interests underpin all the actions an actor makes or chooses not to make in the international forum. Illustrative of this concept, the national interests of the U.S. are characterized as defense of the homeland/national survival, economic prosperity, favorable world order, and promotion of values. Accordingly, these interests form the basis of U.S. foreign policy and its approach to war, lending themselves to theoretical application to other nation-state actors and, by extension, to non-state actors.<sup>66</sup> A hybrid threat actor, either state or non-state, pursues interest-based objectives and therefore can be theoretically strategically predictable.

Strategic culture is fundamental to interests and instrumental to war's fruition. Strategic culture is a concept used to describe consistent patterns of strategic behavior exhibited by an actor, either state or non-state. Strategic culture is defined by theorist Thomas Mahnken as, "The set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to

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<sup>64</sup> Brian McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 233.

<sup>65</sup> Harry R. Yarger, *Strategic Theory for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2006), 25.

<sup>66</sup> As an example of U.S. interests, defending the homeland/national survival refers to protection against attack on the territory and people of the U.S. in order to ensure survival with fundamental values and political systems intact. For further discussion of U.S. interests, see Yarger, 50; Donald Nuechterlein's *Essays on American Politics and Foreign Policy*, <http://donaldnuechterlein.com/2000/major.html>.

other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives.”<sup>67</sup> It is comprised of pre-dispositions in diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and social attitudes exhibited by a society. As the genesis of strategic decision-making, this collective behavior determines appropriate ends and means for achieving foreign policy end-states. Both the strategic environment and strategic culture shape national interests and the conception of the use of organized collective violence to protect or promote those interests.<sup>68</sup> In keeping with Clausewitz, it is within this context that the concept of war emerges in the form of policy.

Underpinned by strategic culture, policy priorities and thus war are the “Reflection of interests in the strategic environment.”<sup>69</sup> Policy priorities identify problems that require strategy to determine objectives, concepts, and resources within acceptable risk to create outcomes favorable to national interests against the milieu of the strategic environment.<sup>70</sup> *Joint Publication 1-02* defines strategy as, “A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>71</sup> Seeking to protect or advance national interests, this synthesis of strategic end-states, concepts, and resources serves as the blueprint for war.

Strategy is often codified in overarching strategic documents to provide guidance for governments or non-state organizations to organize for war. The U.S. National Security Strategy or al-Qaida’s numerous *Fatwas*, often, “Reflect a preference for future conditions within the

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas Mahnken, “United States Strategic Culture,” *Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Comparative Strategic Studies Curriculum*, 13 November 2006, 1-5; See also Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, 2006), 7-8.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. strategic culture emanates from the U.S. Constitution, fortuitous geography, exceptionalist political ideology, capitalist values, Protestant ethics, technological prowess and an expeditionary mentality for the use of its military. See Anita Arms, “Strategic Culture: The American Mind” in *Strategy & Its Theorists* (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College 1999), 329-57; Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Mariner Books, 1998), 4.

<sup>69</sup> Yarger, 65.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 1-02*, 350, Under “Strategy.”

strategic environment.”<sup>72</sup> Dutch strategist Frans Osinga states that, “Strategy is the essential ingredient for making war either politically effective or morally tenable.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, as rational actors with strategic interests, hybrid threat actors may present new challenges to deal with operationally, but remain predictable from a strategic vantage point.

Predicated on a realist world view, war is organized collective violence motivated by interests as the result of the synthesis of interests and strategic culture within the strategic environment. Dutch intellectual Bart Schuurman posits, “Clausewitz shows that war is not governed by any particular logic, but that it is a combination of elements reflecting its diverse nature.”<sup>74</sup> Manifested in policy and strategy, interests are the continuity of war over time and space and thus underpin the emergence of the hybrid threat’s unrestricted form of operational art. (See Appendix A)

### **Unrestricted Operational Art: The *Sine Qua Non* of the Hybrid Threat Concept**

Operational art is a paragon to frame the hybrid threat’s unrestricted activities and distributed maneuver. Understanding the hybrid threat’s unrestricted form of operational art requires a comprehension of operational art and the emergence of the idea. Doctrinally, *Joint Publication 5-0* defines operational art as the “Application of creative imagination by commanders and staff supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces. Operational art integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war...without operational art, campaigns and operations would be a set of disconnected engagements.”<sup>75</sup> Metaphorically, operational art relates to an ocean current that directs the movement of water through various configurations and strength. As such, operational art is the bridge between strategy and tactics.

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<sup>72</sup> Yarger, 65.

<sup>73</sup> Osinga, 10.

<sup>74</sup> Bart Schuurman, “Clausewitz and the ‘New Wars’ Scholars,” *Parameters* (Spring 2010), 94.

<sup>75</sup> Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0*, IV-1.

Some perceive that modern operational art first appeared conceptually in the Soviet Union during the 1920s in response to the shifting context of strategy, the changing nature of operations and the evolving nature of military structures.<sup>76</sup> The Soviet Army of the 1920s encompassed theorists and practitioners who sought explanations for the complexities underlying victory and defeat in modern war.<sup>77</sup> Through the use of theory and scientific method, the Soviets developed new concepts for the conduct of complex industrialized military operations.<sup>78</sup> Accordingly, the term “operational art” is credited to the Soviets and their theoretical exploration of deep operations that mobilized a diverse array of combat power and orchestrated the effects of an overall operation sequentially and simultaneously in three dimensions.<sup>79</sup> As a practitioner of unrestricted operational art, the contemporary hybrid threat operates from the same principles the Soviets envisaged for conventional war. They aggregate a combination of simultaneous and sequential military actions to attain political and military objectives potentially in five dimensions, with the emergence of military activities in space and cyber space.

Regardless of the historical debate on the first manifestations of operational art, most skillful commanders practiced some form of operational art since the advent of armed conflict comprising larger battlefields and greater dispersion of forces. The increased complexity associated with modern war necessitates thinking beyond the immediate situation. In the modern sense, the demand for unifying distributed actions within a theater to achieve strategic objectives is found in Napoleon Bonaparte’s organizational innovations for his *Grande Armée*, U.S. Grant’s

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<sup>76</sup> Bruce W. Menning, “Operational Art’s Origins”, in Michael Krause and R. Cody Phillips (eds.), *Historical Perspectives on Operational Art* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 2005), 18.

<sup>77</sup> See Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy* (Moscow: Voyennyi Vestnik, 1927); N. Varfolomeev, “Strategy in an Academic Setting,” *War and Revolution* (November 1928).

<sup>78</sup> Menning, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Krause and R. Cody Phillips, *Historical Perspectives of Operational Art* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 2006), 9.

command of the Federal Army during the U.S. Civil War, and Helmuth von Moltke's brilliant operations during the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>80</sup>

In contemporary war, operational art continues to link strategic goals to tactical actions. Operational art is the synthesis of operations across time, space, and purpose. It is characterized as the employment of military forces, sequencing of tactical actions and logistical operations to attain strategic goals. Moreover, operational art is the creative use of distributed operations for the purposes of strategy or the conduct of operations in order to attain operational and strategic aims.<sup>81</sup> This means that operational art lends coherency to a military campaign.

Focusing on the lateral distribution of forces, operational expert James Schneider contends that the hallmark of operational art is the integration of temporally and spatially distributed operations into one coherent whole.<sup>82</sup> Unified by a common aim, practitioners envision all operations in a theater as a logical pattern of synchronized and simultaneous but dispersed activity, through time and space across the extent of a theater. Schneider argues that operational art is the mechanism to integrate and manage a campaign of distributed operations, a coherent system of spatially and temporally extended relational movements and distributed battles, whether actual or threatened, that seek to seize, retain or deny freedom of action.<sup>83</sup>

The hybrid threat's application of operational art is predicated on the purposeful linkage of tactical actions and operations to achieve strategic purposes. Australian defense experts Justin Kelly and Michael Brennan state that operational art, "Ensures that tactical actions contribute to

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<sup>80</sup> See David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); and Gordon Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965).

<sup>81</sup> James J. Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundation of the Operational Art* (Theoretical Paper No. 4. Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2004), 16-21, 34.

<sup>82</sup> James J. Schneider, "The Loose Marble and the Origins of Operational Art," *Parameters* (March 1989), 87.

<sup>83</sup> Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil*, 64.

the attainment of the purpose of a war.”<sup>84</sup> Hybrid threat tactics serve its strategy, as tactical action without strategic purpose is merely senseless violence.<sup>85</sup> The U.S. Army experience in Vietnam and the difficulty linking battles to a larger strategic context is illustrative of the absence of operational art.<sup>86</sup>

For the purpose of this monograph, operational art is defined as the coherent and relational bridging of strategic goals to distributed and simultaneous tactical actions across time, space and purpose. This is within the context of a campaign and not a single battle or tactical engagement. Hybrid threats first determine their strategic objectives in both military and political terms and then design a military campaign at the operational level to achieve those objectives.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the hybrid threat’s mastery of the operational level of war, within the greater system of war, is key to achieving its strategic end-states.<sup>88</sup>

The hybrid threat bridges strategy to tactics in an asymmetric and unrestricted manner devoid of military customs and accepted norms. This is converse to the traditional restriction of operational art’s application to conventional war and the rules of land warfare. The context for the hybrid threat’s dynamic use of unrestricted operational art is manifested in organizational innovation at the operational level. The hybrid threat actor utilizes this concept to inspire unrestricted innovative maneuver against a militarily superior opponent. Hence, the hybrid threat actor seeks to expand and refine the limits of operational art in order to reconcile overmatch in the pursuit of interests.

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<sup>84</sup> Justin Kelly and Michael Brennan, “The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 56 (January 1, 2010), 109-116, 116.

<sup>85</sup> Kelly and Brennan, 116.

<sup>86</sup> Richard M. Swain, “Filling The Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1988), 1.

<sup>87</sup> Newell and Krause, *On Operational Art*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 3.

Hybrid threats skillfully exploit constraints imposed on U.S. forces. These include rules of engagement, political will, global media coverage, military traditions, norms of warfare, as well as cognitive and geographic boundaries. This adverse reality underpins the hybrid threat's understanding of the conceptual self-imposed boundaries U.S. forces maintain. While rudimentary, this approach is potent in negating U.S. conventional dominance and exploiting its vulnerabilities often through deception.

Ultimately, the hybrid threat actor orchestrates the employment of unrestricted operational art. Hybrid threats are reflective of Sun Tzu as they create changes in the situation by dispersal and concentration of forces and means.<sup>89</sup> From a realist perspective, warfare will always consist of whatever ways and means are practical and acceptable within strategic culture to obtain outcomes favorable to the combatant's interests. Yet, linear characterization pervades U.S. military thinking predicated on muddy boots fundamentalism and anti-intellectual reductionism.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, further cogent analysis is needed to understand how a hybrid adversary achieves strategic envelopment through unrestricted operational art.

### **Explaining Hybrid Threats: An Assessment**

The 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars illustrated the contemporary inability of non-Western militaries to conventionally contest Western forces. In conjunction with the end of the Cold War, the 1991 Gulf War was the baptism and impetus for the contemporary hybrid threat to come to fruition. The stunning U.S. military power projection and resulting victory in high intensity conflict, unrestricted by Cold War constraints, caused potential adversaries of the U.S. to rethink how they would engage a militarily superior force. Utilizing unrestricted operational art, the hybrid threat model is predicated on the apt sequencing of operations across time, space and purpose for a common aim.

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<sup>89</sup> Sun Tzu, 106.

<sup>90</sup> Linn, 7.

Hybrid threat actors seek to master unrestricted operational art through bypassing the cognitive and moral boundaries and laws of warfare that underpin U.S. defense thinking.<sup>91</sup> With respect to asymmetric means, Clausewitz expert Dr. Antulio Echevarria asserts that the 2008 *National Defense Strategy* highlights that, “U.S. dominance in conventional warfare has given prospective adversaries, particularly non-state actors and their state sponsors, strong motivation to adopt asymmetric methods to counter our advantages. Likewise, the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* revealed a similar rationale with respect to the history of U.S. military preparedness by stating: “The wars we fight are seldom the wars we would have planned.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, U.S. formulation of military plans and activities must account for this reality.

Recognizing the emergence of hybrid threats in the operational environment, the contemporary characterization of hybrid threats first manifested in national security focused think tanks and then in the Armed Services. The U.S. Army Chief of Staff provided context of hybrid threats in the operational environment:

There are not going to be clear threats and clear solutions...I don't see us ever getting back to that. And, the hybrid threats are fuzzy...but, basically what they're saying is: people that oppose us (one) aren't going to confront us head on, and (two) they are going to come at us asymmetrically -- as you would expect any enemy to do. And they're going to use every means available to them -- and one of the things we saw in Lebanon in 2006 was that you have non-state actors now that have the instruments of state power...and as we saw on September 11th that can produce catastrophic results.<sup>93</sup>

The British Army's concept of a hybrid threat represents a more nuanced European view, but keeps with predominant U.S. vantage points focusing on the 2006 Hezbollah example of a non-state group leveraging advanced technology therefore posing a formidable challenge. Yet, the British clearly understand that the compound or hybrid threat is either state or non-state:

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<sup>91</sup> See DoD Directive 2310.01E, Geneva Conventions and Martens Clause to the Hague Convention.

<sup>92</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Preparing for One War and Getting Another?* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, September 2010), 1.

<sup>93</sup> Author's discussion with U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General George Casey, 17 September 2010, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Warfare is an enduring element in the international system although its character changes over time. A feature of this evolution is the emergence – some argue re-emergence – of compound, or hybrid threats. These occur where states or non-state actors choose to exploit all modes of war simultaneously using advanced conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and disruptive criminality to destabilise an existing order. Such threats emanate from state and non-state actors that have access to some of the sophisticated weapons and systems normally fielded by regular forces. Conflicts are increasingly characterised by a blend of traditional and irregular tactics, decentralised planning and execution, and state or non-state actors who may use both simple and sophisticated technologies in new ways.<sup>94</sup>

Unconstrained by the norms of the conventional war, the decentralized hybrid threat assesses his operational combat power and that of his opponent in new ways. The hybrid threat's seemingly ad hoc organization and decentralized command and control maintains a non-linear framework, best depicted in Huber and Hoffman's work, as well as the Chinese concept of unrestricted warfare and comprehensive national power. However, the German mission orders concept of *Auftragstaktik* developed in the First World War to deal with the fog of war provides precedent for flexible and decentralized operations within a clear understanding of the underlying mission.<sup>95</sup> Acting independently within the commander's intent, forces are devoid of reliance on centralized control. Conceptually, this methodology, in conjunction with the decentralized interest driven state and non-state activities of Fourth Generation Warfare and Mao's People's War, lends itself to operational and strategic understanding of hybrid threats.

A hybrid threat actor is a practitioner of unrestricted operational art and the concept essentially assigns vocabulary to practicality and common sense. Hybrid threats comprehend the reality of their environment and the inherent complexity and interrelation within it. As a rational actor translating strategic intent into tactical action, hybrid threats aim to set conditions for strategic opportunity and prevent the tendency of the U.S. system to dominate the battlefield. Therefore, like water that exists in liquid, gas or solid form, the hybrid threat has no consistent

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<sup>94</sup> UK FCOC Paper, 1-8.

<sup>95</sup> See Werner Widder, "Auftragstaktik and Innere Führung: Trademarks of German Leadership," *Military Review* (Sep-Oct 2002), 3-6.

state, but transforms and adapts to the conditions it finds itself in to operate, survive and achieve favorable advantage.

The hybrid threat concept is a sophisticated amalgam of unrestricted activities. Like boiling water that is compelled to transform into gas in the form of steam and later re-emerge as a liquid depending upon conditions, the hybrid construct has no constant form but maintains habitual components. A hybrid threat is characterized as possessing decentralized command and control, distributed military and non-military activities, combines traditional, irregular, terrorist and disruptive criminal methods, exploits complex operational environmental conditions, and operates with intention to sacrifice time and space in order to achieve decision by attrition.<sup>96</sup> As such, the timing, tempo, speed and rhythm of the hybrid threat's distributed activities allows for the generalization from particulars.

Hybrid threats rapidly transition and blend conventional and asymmetric capabilities in accordance with the vulnerabilities of the opponent they face and the results they desire to achieve. Likewise, the combination of ways and means selected coincides with the perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities of their opponent. The term hybrid describes both its organization and their means, as they successfully blend strategic intent combined with decentralized planning and execution.<sup>97</sup> Thus it differs from insurgency and represents the potential convergence of threat activities into a unified force.

Hybrid threats shape the environment through their unrestricted activities to create and preserve conditions for the achievement of their strategic objectives. As a master of setting conditions for strategic success, the hybrid threat essentially practices a Fabian strategy<sup>98</sup> as no

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<sup>96</sup> Glenn, *Proceedings from the 2009 Hybrid Warfare Conference*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," 28.

<sup>98</sup> A Fabian Strategy is a military approach that avoids direct confrontation in order to wear an opponent down through ways and means of attritional warfare and resource depletion over time. Fabius Maximus aptly utilized this approach to defeat Hannibal and the Carthaginians during the Second Punic War from 218-202 BC.

feasible alternative strategy can be devised to mitigate U.S. conventional military superiority. The hybrid threat selects and/or creates its engagement areas to produce a U.S. inability to close and fix with it in decisive engagement. The infusion of new technology, information warfare and globalization increase the potency of this approach.

Hybrid threat actors seek to master the operational level concepts of simultaneity and depth. They maximize their effectiveness through the simultaneous application of military and non-military power against an adversary. Moreover, the hybrid threat actor seeks to physically and psychologically overwhelm its adversary throughout his area of operations, creating competing and simultaneous resource demands in order to contribute to conditions that bring about their defeat and/or withdrawal. As such, hybrid threats achieve synergy through the employment of an unprecedented synthesis of conventional and unconventional forces and capabilities, as well as the resources of other viable non-military entities where available.

These activities transpire across the range of military operations in a synchronized and integrated fashion, resulting in more effective combat power and operational effectiveness through synergistic action. Hence, the hybrid threat arranges its operations in order to determine the best organization of its hybrid force and component operations to accomplish its objectives. This arrangement often will be a combination of simultaneous and sequential operations to achieve full-spectrum effects and end-state conditions. Hence, capabilities, environmental conditions, strategic culture, and interests define its unrestricted force mix.

The correlation of forces and means (COFM) is a concept for analyzing conventional military conflict that allows operational planners to make force structure assessments during the planning process. It allows operational planners to identify force correlations, informs course of action development and reinforces decision making. The Soviets mastered the concept during the Cold War and defined the term as, “An objective indicator of combat power of opposing sides which makes it possible to determine the degree of superiority of one side over another. This is determined by means of comparing the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of subunits,

units and formations and the armaments of one's own forces and those of the enemy.”<sup>99</sup> Despite its utility for force optimization in conventional war, the COFM methodology in theory lacks the ability to quantify other variables that influence the battlefield such as asymmetric and non-military means. Thus, the framework is practical for a collective correlation of an opponent's conventional forces to better formulate operational plans. However, non-linear, asymmetric, and non-military means are integral to contemporary correlation and enemy Order of Battle analysis.

The hybrid threat organization conceptually uses a COFM methodology when dealing with a superior opponent in order to determine how to array its forces. Through unrestricted operational art, the hybrid threat essentially expands on a COFM's concept and applies it to both symmetric and asymmetric means. This subjective and objective assessment of combat power on both friendly and enemy forces allows for the determination of the necessary characteristics to mitigate advantages of a militarily superior opponent and exploit its vulnerabilities. Hybrid opponents learned key lessons from detailed analysis of U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. These include how to array their forces to deny U.S. advantages in firepower and maneuver, the importance of information operations and U.S. sensitivity to civilian casualties, the limitations of U.S. logistics and personnel, and the extent of U.S. strategic depth and operational reach.

As the cognitive force that generates the hybrid system and determines the directions and patterns of its actions, the strategic aims of the hybrid threat dictate its operational design. A necessary precondition to hybrid organization, the hybrid threat understands its center of gravity (COG) and the center of gravity of the U.S. at the operational and strategic level. Joint doctrine defines the COG as, “The source of power that provides morale or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.”<sup>100</sup> To create conditions for strategic success, the hybrid actor capitalizes on

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<sup>99</sup> *Soviet Dictionary of Military Terms* (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1988), 255. Under “Correlation of Forces and Means.”

<sup>100</sup> Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0 Joint Operations Planning* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006), GL-6; IV-8.

COG analysis to understand friendly and enemy capabilities, weaknesses, structures, and interdependencies. Conversely, the hybrid threat is frustrating to analyze because its COG is elusive and thereby very difficult to impact. Echevarria asserts that a COG should be the focus of enemy capability or, “Look for connections among the various parts of an adversary in order to determine what holds it together.”<sup>101</sup>

It is important to understand that strategy has no end-state, only the continued favorable conditions to protect or advance an actor’s interests.<sup>102</sup> Hybrid threats may be the contemporary manifestation of insurgency or represent a new threat construct. Regardless, this means that U.S. planners cannot view a hybrid threat through a position of weakness and uncertainty due to the complexity of the hybrid organization’s capability and intent. U.S. planners must analyze its strategic aims, center of gravity and strategic culture in order to provide strategic warning. This may prove difficult, lead to synchronization shortfalls in U.S. military planning and cognitive irrelevance in contesting a hybrid threat. Therefore, U.S. military planning needs to account for the hybrid threat’s interest-based unrestricted operational art as a potential paradigm shift in enemy doctrine and organization.

### **An Organizational Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)**

Revolutions in military affairs represent the adaptation of the military to fundamental changes in social, political, and military landscapes. In response to political and strategic conditions that cause specific problems at the operational and tactical levels, RMAs result in innovation in technology, doctrine or organization.<sup>103</sup> Murray and Knox contend, “Revolutions in military affairs require the assembly of a complex mix of tactical, organizational, doctrinal, and technological innovations in order to implement a new conceptual approach to warfare or to a

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<sup>101</sup> Antulio Echevarria, *Clausewitz’s Center of Gravity: Changing Our Warfighting Doctrine-Again!* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), vii.

<sup>102</sup> See Everett Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Policy in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>103</sup> Murray and Knox., 176, 179-180.

specialized sub-branch of warfare.”<sup>104</sup> Effectiveness and validity of RMAs can only be determined in application, or it remains only a theory.

Emerging RMAs are a threat to the established status quo and thus organizations often fail to respond to them properly. Typically, an organization’s response to a paradigm shift threatening one of its core competencies is: denial, escape or diversion, or acceptance and pertinent action.<sup>105</sup> Denial is often the selected course of action. This is evidenced in the British and French militaries being aware of the claims made by proponents of what would become the Blitzkrieg RMA, but choosing to deny fundamental change was transpiring.<sup>106</sup> This phenomenon is not limited to the military, as many business practices undergo the same experience. Only through exploring new concepts and developing new insights can successful and relevant military innovation emerge and consequently plan and prepare for.

Organizational and doctrinal RMAs have manifested in the past. The German Blitzkrieg RMA was an organizational response to static land warfare dominated by infantry and artillery.<sup>107</sup> The Blitzkrieg paradigm shift represented a profound change in the conceptualization of land warfare.<sup>108</sup> Both Heinz Guderian and Hans von Seeckt played key roles in the development of the Blitzkrieg RMA in response to lessons from the First World War and French military superiority imposed by the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles. Utilizing highly mobile armored forces, infiltration tactics, and combined arms synchronization, the Blitzkrieg concept

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Hundley, *Past Revolutions, Future Transformations: What Can the History of Revolutions in Military Affairs Tell Us About Transforming the U.S. Military?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 50.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>107</sup> See Dennis Showalter, “German Operational Art,” in John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld, eds., *Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2010); Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, Abridged, Constantine Fitzgibbon, tr. (New York; Ballantine, 1972); James S. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

<sup>108</sup> Hundley, 11. The term Blitzkrieg does not appear in German pre-war doctrine. It was produced by the British after the war to describe the innovative ways the Germans achieved operational success.

rendered the static defense irrelevant and created a new model for land warfare that was replicated by all modern armies of the time.

The Blitzkrieg RMA describes the creation of a new core competency of highly mobile armored formations penetrating deep into enemy territory and encircling an opponent through combined arms maneuver. This new development rendered the French defenses obsolete and its doctrine irrelevant, as they were unprepared and unable to react. This was a profound change in the fundamentals of land warfare and essentially rendered the actor with the dominant set of military capabilities obsolete.

The Germans achieved an enormous operational victory and gained the initiative through the exploitation of the Blitzkrieg RMA. However, this organizational and doctrinal RMA did not come to fruition immediately and remained controversial within the German high command for over a decade. The German Army began experimentation with armored warfare in the 1920s and developed the concept over time, culminating in its application in 1939-1940. Hence, Blitzkrieg has its own unique features that cannot be universally applied to other RMAs. However, as military operations are remarkably resistant to codification, understanding RMAs comes to fruition through close historical analysis of change.<sup>109</sup>

Similar to the emerging hybrid threat concept, the Blitzkrieg RMA has been the subject of intellectual discourse over whether it was something new. Critics contend that the German way of war has always demonstrated a preference for short and decisive campaigns.<sup>110</sup> Nothing had changed in their conceptualization of war, except for their change in organization and the introduction of improved technology, such as the aircraft and tank. Regardless of the paradigm discussion, Blitzkrieg was the result of the evolution of operational art. The Germans maintained

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<sup>109</sup> Robert M. Citino, *Blitzkrieg To Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 9.

<sup>110</sup> Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 311. Also, see Murray and Knox, 157-169.

a better grasp of the potential effects of their organization and new technologies than their competitors. The Blitzkrieg RMA was in many ways a return to the wars of movement and maneuver that von Moltke advocated half a century earlier.<sup>111</sup>

Military organizations are often threatened and are therefore reluctant to adapt to new changes in the environment and repeatedly choose to view change through established frameworks. Similarly, in the business world, paradigm shifts are often not brought about by the dominant players, as discontinuous innovations that destroy core competencies almost always come from outside the industry.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the implications of a hybrid threat organizational RMA directly confront the U.S. military intelligence establishment and the operational and strategic planning community.

A military organization can harness revolutions in military affairs and develop them into an advantage. As a cognitive obstacle, Qiao and Wang contend that the U.S. restricts its view of RMAs to technological advances.<sup>113</sup> Changes in doctrine and organization have the ability to change the battlefield without the addition of new technologies. Accordingly, U.S. military superiority has provoked an unexpected outcome that redefines the environment and provides new meaning in the form of consequences and implications. As such, the organizational RMA, when viewed through an unrestricted lens, has numerous implications for the legal and asymmetric aspects of warfare as they relate to the achievement of strategic objectives.

Visualizing a hybrid threat as an RMA through the lens of Kuhn's paradigm provides context to the hybrid concept. Conceptually, hybrid threats identified overmatch as their problem and developed an operational approach to deal with U.S. military superiority. Conversely, since the end of the Cold War, U.S. planning has focused on traditional Asian and Middle Eastern potential adversaries. Resistant to new ideas, U.S. analysis broadly identifies uncertainty in the

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>112</sup> Hundley, 17.

<sup>113</sup> Qiao and Wang, 24.

environment as the problem and not the resulting problems from its uni-polar military dominance and interaction with the environment.

In order for an emerging RMA such as Blitzkrieg or hybrid threat to gain acceptance within a military organization, a mechanism within the organization for experimentation with new ideas must be established. Most importantly, senior officers willing to sponsor new ways of doing things are essential for the concept to be properly accepted.<sup>114</sup> This means that a culture of productive thinking about how future threats will adapt to military superior opponents must be embraced. Therefore, the organization must be comfortable with new ideas and allow experimentation with concepts that may render habitual systems and processes irrelevant. U.S. military senior leadership has accepted that there is a new threat environment and has questioned the cognitive assumptions in contemporary threat analysis. However, the military has not come to consensus on the full scope of the hybrid construct.

The potential paradigm shift is the operational integration of capabilities and its subsequent command and control, manifesting in an organizational RMA. This is contrary to the often-technological prism the U.S. and the West views RMAs. The 2006 Second Lebanon War and certain aspects of the insurgency contesting U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan provides preliminary evidence of the emergence of the hybrid threat, yet substantial evidence remains insufficient to declare an RMA. The trend is towards a paradigm shift amounting to an RMA but no single threat has fully manifested all the potential advantages and nor fully mastered the unrestricted operational art necessary to declare an RMA. However, as a synchronized asymmetric and symmetric response, this potential paradigm shift in threat activities does not appear to be subsiding any time in the near future. Within the operational environment, the hybrid threat as a potential RMA lends itself to replication by others.

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<sup>114</sup> Hundley, 55.

The hybrid threat's assembly of a complex mix of organizational innovations and new conceptual approach will remain the model of choice for adversaries in future conflicts with militarily superior opponents. The U.S. Army astutely recognized this emerging trend. Forecasting a future environment flooded with persistent conflict involving unknown actors and range of capabilities, the U.S. Army chose to consolidate its approach to future threats. Regardless of acknowledgement, the environment and emergence of hybrid threats were the impetus for the paradigm shift in U.S. doctrine to the capabilities based Full Spectrum Operations (FSO). Similar to Noah's Ark, the Army is caching its capabilities on a cognitive ark waiting for the ambiguous flood water of an uncertain future to abate.

In sum, the hybrid threat organization is potentially a revolution in military affairs that will continue to mature in the coming decade. In periods of conceptual debate, military professionals should attempt to step back and assess the environment to determine if they are in the midst of a potential paradigm shift. The evolving nature of non-Western overmatched threats and the emergent changes in U.S. military doctrine mask the recognition of an RMA. While it may be difficult to recognize, planners can potentially identify an RMA and harness it to their advantage. This does not preclude conventional war, but provides a framework from which to view the sea change in how adversaries will combat militarily superior opponents with a paucity of conventional resources or capability in order to achieve their objectives, now and in the future.

### **Irregular Warfare (IW): Umbrella Term or Conceptual Albatross?**

Irregular warfare presents a competing explanation of the non-linear threat activities that underpin the hybrid threat framework. The lack of agreement on the description of hybrid threats often leads to characterizing it under the broad overarching term of irregular warfare. An umbrella term for many of the irregular, unconventional and asymmetric activities across the threat spectrum, irregular warfare accounts for the historical use of all non-conventional military activities in the pursuit of strategic end-states. Consisting of guerilla warfare, insurgent tactics, and the panoply of indirect asymmetric approaches, the purpose of IW is to erode the combat

power, influence and political will of an adversary. DoD Directive 3000.07 asserts that the DoD recognizes that, “Irregular warfare is as strategically important as traditional warfare.”<sup>115</sup>

The debate over the hybrid threat ranges over whether the hybrid threat is a subset of IW or is a separate category. Joint doctrine defines Irregular Warfare as, “A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.”<sup>116</sup> To this end, although DOD policy does not officially recognize the hybrid concept, it uses the hybrid notion to describe the increased complexity of conflict and has emerged in overarching strategic planning documents.<sup>117</sup>

There are several counterarguments to the hybrid threat concept and its implications for military strategy. Glenn expands upon the discourse on hybrid threats and advocates determining whether the hybrid concept is sufficiently original to merit addition to military intellectual discourse, as the arguments for hybrid warfare seem to lack sufficiency.<sup>118</sup> Accordingly, Glenn contends that irregular warfare may encompass the hybrid construct. Glenn posits:

It certainly seems that irregular warfare’s ‘full range of military and other capacities’ encompasses the hybrid threat’s ‘tailored mix of conventional, irregular, terrorism, and criminal means.’...Nor do any accepted analyses of irregular warfare known to this author preclude simultaneous and adaptive application of those capacities. From a purely doctrinal perspective, hybrid threats and the methods they employ seem at best a subset of irregular warfare. There is obviously the counterargument that the definition of hybrid threat taken here is flawed, that it fails to communicate the aspects of hybrid warfare that make it unique. If so, then the pursuit of a definition that better clarifies and reveals that uniqueness remains an unmet challenge.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Department of Defense Directive 3000.07* (Government Printing Office, Washington, DC: 2008), 2.

<sup>116</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: GPO, 12 April 2001), As amended through 31 December 2010, 189. Under “Irregular Warfare.”

<sup>117</sup> GAO, 11.

<sup>118</sup> Glenn, “Thoughts on Hybrid War,” 7.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

The irregular methods utilized by Hezbollah in the 2006 campaign against Israel are often characterized as a new form of warfare, necessitating a major transformation within the U.S. military. Hoffman contends that, “By definition, I don’t think that hybrid warfare is a subset of irregular warfare. It may just be a threat construct.”<sup>120</sup> Conversely, Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey Friedman of the Council on Foreign Relations posit that the hybrid challenges in the contemporary environment do not warrant the U.S. military to return to “A preclusive focus on major warfare as it did before 2003 or that a Hezbollah threat should replace the Red Army in the Fulda Gap as the focus for U.S. defense planning. Single-event (or single threat) specialization in a world where we could face multiple events (or multiple threats) is dangerous whichever event one would choose.”<sup>121</sup> Their analysis implies that all militaries incorporate irregular methods to their campaigns and that there is no consistent threat model for the U.S. military to plan. Thus, the thinking of U.S. Special Operations Command complements its position of hybrid threats being a complex variation of irregular warfare, asserting that, “Current doctrine is sufficient on traditional and irregular warfare to describe the current and future operational environment.”<sup>122</sup>

Counterarguments regarding the emergence of the hybrid threat and its relevance and/or importance for military planning inadvertently reinforce the paradigm shift hybrid threats have created in the operational environment. Acknowledging the hybrid threat’s organization and capabilities, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates aptly declares:

I think that this debate between conventional and irregular is quite artificial. Most of the people that I talk to are now increasingly talking about, instead of one or the other, a spectrum of conflict in which you may face at the same time an insurgent with an AK-47 and his supporting element with a highly sophisticated ballistic missile, where you -- where you have what we have been

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<sup>120</sup> Author’s discussion with Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Threats.” Personal e-mail correspondence to Frank Hoffman, 15 December 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army & Defense Policy* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 88.

<sup>122</sup> GAO, 2.

calling in the last year or so complex *hybrid warfare*. And so you really need to be prepared across a spectrum to deal with these capabilities.<sup>123</sup>

In keeping with Secretary Gates' vision of U.S. planning across the spectrum of conflict in order to deal with future adversaries, Hoffman's words best capture the importance of hybrid threats:

This hybrid threat construct appears valuable at this point in time for a number of reasons. It serves as: A concept to describe evolving character of conflict (for those looking for a better one or even aware of changes). A construct to challenge current 'conventional' thinking and the binary intellectual bins that currently frame our debate between Crusaders and Traditionalists. A concept that highlights and reinforces the true granularity or breadth of spectrum of human conflict, not as a new bin but as something more reflective of the broader continuum than just COIN. A concept that raises awareness of potential risks and informs ongoing threat/force posture debate in the QDR (the most important debate of all given very constrained resources).<sup>124</sup>

## Exploitation of Ambiguity

The hybrid threat concept has been varyingly interpreted and advanced by the Armed Services and their think tank proxies. This is similar to service interpretations of COIN and IW in the last decade. A retired Marine officer, Hoffman's work for the Potomac Institute advocates the USMC being most aptly suited for combating hybrid threats.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, in a U.S. Army funded study by the RAND Corporation, David Johnson examines the Hezbollah model hybrid threat. The author identifies the uniqueness of Israel's security situation, but compares the U.S. Army to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) through the lens of the need to prepare for full spectrum military challenges. Johnson illustrates the relevance of the Israeli experience in the 2006 war for the U.S. Army. He contends that:

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<sup>123</sup> Robert Gates, "DoD News Briefing With Secretary Gates From The Pentagon," 6 April 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4396> (Accessed 1 December 2010).

<sup>124</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "Further Thoughts on Hybrid Threats," *Small Wars Journal* (March 3, 2009) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/03/further-thoughts-on-hybrid-thr/>, 1-2.

<sup>125</sup> Hoffman states that, "Marines are well suited for this coming age." See *Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 48-49, 57.

These hybrid opponents create a qualitative challenge that demands combined arms fire and maneuver at lower levels, despite their generally small-unit structures. The Israelis had lost these skills after years of preparing for and confronting (understandably) terrorist attacks during the second intifada. The U.S. Army, focused as it necessarily is on preparing soldiers and units for duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, might be approaching a condition similar to that of the Israelis before the 2006 Second Lebanon War...expert at COIN and less prepared for sophisticated hybrid opponents.<sup>126</sup>

Through examining the experiences of the IDF in Lebanon and Gaza, the RAND study narrative advocates the continued relevance of heavy forces in military formations. It provides a well structured argument for mechanized and armored capabilities to prevail against sophisticated hybrid opponents. Johnson concludes, “The force mix in Gaza also shows that the Israelis believe that heavy forces are relevant and necessary in facing hybrid challenges like those in Gaza or Lebanon.”<sup>127</sup> Hence, the significance of armored forces in combating a hybrid adversary underpins Johnson’s conceptualization of the hybrid concept and its application to non-state, state sponsored and nation-state entities.

Regardless of its limitations, the RAND study provides a fruitful characterization of hybrid threat categories. The hybrid construct promulgated by Johnson consists of “Non-State Irregular” operating with cellular structure in small formations (squad size) and decentralized command and control; “State-Sponsored Hybrid” operating with moderate sized conventional formations (up to battalion size) with decentralized command and control; and “State” operating with hierarchical brigade or larger-sized formations with generally centralized command and control.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the utility of the RAND study is that it portrays hybrid threats across the entire operational spectrum and by default demonstrates the practicality of the Army’s operating concept of Full Spectrum Operations (FSO).

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<sup>126</sup> David E. Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 7-8.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

The oft-cited 2007 Maritime strategy reflects the Navy and Marine Corps acceptance of the hybrid threat concept. The document states that, “Conflicts are increasingly characterized by a hybrid blend of traditional and irregular tactics, decentralized planning and execution, and non-state actors, using both simple and sophisticated technologies in innovative ways.”<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the *Naval Operations Concept 2010* asserts, “We believe that both state and non-state adversaries are likely to employ a hybrid of conventional and irregular methods to counter the United States’ advantage in conventional military operations.”<sup>130</sup> The U.S. Marine Corps advocates threat based thinking in the *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*. The document claims that the lines between conventional and irregular war will be characterized by the blurring of what was previously thought to be distinct forms of war or conflict. This means that hybrid challenges will emerge in combinations of various approaches to include conventional war, irregular challenges, terrorism, and criminality.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, the U.S. Navy, Marines and Coast Guard have incorporated the hybrid threat construct into their strategic documents and are planning for hybrid threats through a maritime lens.

The U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff’s “Vector 2010” provides the Air Force vantage of hybrid threats. The document asserts that the Air Force will always be an integral part of joint and coalition operations and that, “As we look ahead, we are more likely to encounter more sophisticated hybrid adversaries” requiring the Air Force to “anticipate and plan for the emergence of more sophisticated, state sponsored irregular adversaries.”<sup>132</sup> Accordingly, the

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<sup>129</sup> General James T. Conway, USMC, Admiral Gary Roughead, USN, and Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st-Century Seapower* (Washington, DC: October 2007), 6.

<sup>130</sup> General James T. Conway, USMC, Admiral Gary Roughead, USN, and Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG, *Naval Operations Concept 2010: Implementing the Maritime Strategy* (Washington, DC: 2010), 7.

<sup>131</sup> United States Marine Corps, *USMC Vision and Strategy 2025* (Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, DC: November 2008), 21.

<sup>132</sup> Norton A. Schwartz, USAF, “CSAF Vector 2010” (Department of the Air Force, Washington, DC: 4 July 2010), 4.

Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines contextualize the hybrid threat construct from a service lens underpinned by service parochial competition for resourcing and relevance.

In sum, the hybrid threat construct challenges assumptions about the environment and what the future will hold for U.S. military joint planning. No individual service designs military campaign plans, as Joint level commanders and their staff do. As an interest-based rational actor practicing unrestricted operational art, hybrid threats are a potential source of inter-service friction. Like a river persistently flowing down the easiest path, bypassing obstacles and changing its form to conditions, the hybrid threat adaptively leverages its organization to achieve conditions favorable for its interests. Dynamically shifting its organization and means, the hybrid threat exploits the predictable norms and rules of U.S. forces to obtain advantage. Therefore, it is important to understand the utility of the hybrid threat concept for military planning and the implications of unrestricted operational art.

## **U.S. Operational and Strategic Planning Constructs**

Strategy is a framework that identifies objectives, concepts and resources required to accomplish goals established by policy over time, space and purpose. Hence, strategy is a blueprint for action and subordinate to policy. As the reflection of interests in the environment, national security policy drives military strategic planning. Accordingly, U.S. strategic and operational planning is interest-based, not threat based. This means that U.S. strategic planning documents provide guidance for the development of subordinate plans based on objectives sought, vice potential threat actors in various contingencies.

U.S. contingency plans for war are developed in conjunction with U.S. military campaign plans predicated on potential threat scenarios that help structure uncertainty. As such, JOPP focuses the planning activities of the Joint force and provides decision-makers with the necessary information and alternatives for Operational Plan (OPLAN) development. These operational level plans attain strategic purpose through synchronized actions that achieve systemic effects.

Both campaign and contingency planning form the foundation for U.S. military organization, resourcing and the subsequent military activities in various theaters.<sup>133</sup>

*Joint Publication 5-0* is the operational level framework of joint planning and provides its planning methodology. It illustrates how Combatant and Functional Commanders develop Global and Theater Campaign plans that operationalize the strategic goals defined in the NDS, GEF and JSCP. These plans have a military end-state in mind and are developed collaboratively, as one or all of the commands may have requirements in another command's plans to support a specific mission. There are few constraints in the construction of these plans, but commanders are required to assess these plans regularly and report refinements to the Secretary of Defense for integration into future guidance.

A global campaign requires the accomplishment of strategic objectives in multiple joint areas of operation (AORs). A theater campaign encompasses the activities of a supported Geographic Combatant Command (GCC), which accomplish strategic or operational objectives within a theater of operations within the supported commander's AOR. Moreover, an OPLAN for a theater campaign is the operational extension of a commander's theater strategy and translates strategic concepts into unified action.<sup>134</sup> Lastly, a subordinate campaign plan describes the actions of a subordinate Joint Force Commander (JFC), which accomplish, or contribute to the accomplishment of, strategic or operational objectives in support of a global or theater campaign. Subordinate JFCs develop subsidiary campaign plans if their assigned missions require military operations of substantial size, complexity, and duration and cannot be accomplished within the framework of a single major joint operation. Subordinate campaign

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<sup>133</sup> In addition, the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) is the primary formal means by which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the other members of the JCS and Combatant Commanders, carries out his Title 10 responsibilities for strategic planning, providing best military advice to the President and formal input to the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System.

<sup>134</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0*, IV-3. Documents such as the *Joint Operating Environment 2010* inform concepts to guide future force development based on the nature of continuity and change in strategic trends. Planners derive military implications from these trends and seek to develop more strategic options.

plans are consistent with strategic and operational guidance and direction developed by the supported JFC.<sup>135</sup>

As a planning methodology, JOPP is highly focused on inter-state conflict, not asymmetric conflict. Illustrative of this is the very mechanical rather than organic systems approach it pursues in regards to war. Essentially, it precludes adversaries from having multiple centers of gravity (COG) and ignores the idea of adaptive systems in conflict. Acknowledging that a plan is only a concept, this methodology drives the practitioner to fight the plan, rather than the enemy. Oftentimes since the end of the Cold War, specialized operational constructs have been developed on an ad hoc basis to deal with a specialized enemy. Illustrative of this is the robust focus on targeting in Iraq and Afghanistan. This does not mean that JOPP is ineffective, but it relies on the skillful application of the construct to hybrid threat organizations by operational planners and commanders.

In sum, U.S. operational and strategic planning constructs present a comprehensive and nuanced planning methodology to protect and advance U.S. interests in a desired future state. As an interest-based construct, strategic guidance is developed to address potential threat actors in various forms of contingency at the operational level. However, these contingencies are often applied to conventional threats or asymmetric threats in the form of a strategic nuisance vice a hybrid threat practicing unrestricted operational art. The U.S. military must resolve the incongruities between threat intention and U.S. understanding. The military needs to develop a common understanding of hybrid threats, determine the impact of hybrid threats on existing campaign planning frameworks, and determine which operational approaches are most apt to prevail against hybrid adversaries. The implications of current U.S. military planning constructs are emblematic of the post-Cold War strategic confusion.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., IV-4.

## Implications of Hybrid Threats on U.S. Military Planning

Hybrid threats pose numerous challenges for the U.S. military. The military must acknowledge and contend with hybrid threat's range of unrestricted operational art, likely through tailored solutions for distinct challenges. In *The Echo of Battle*, Brian Linn analyzes the U.S. Army's strategic culture and how it conceptualizes war. Linn asserts that, "Appreciating a national way of war requires going beyond the narrative of operations, beyond debates on the merits of attrition or annihilation, firepower and mobility, military genius or collective professional ability. It requires the essential recognition that the way a military force conducts war very much depends on how it prepares for war."<sup>136</sup> This means that U.S. military planning and the Army's FSO doctrine must remain introspective to best deal with hybrid threats.

Describing the future threats the U.S. military will face, DOD officials described three challenges it expects to face in the near future: They are, "Rising tensions in the global commons; hybrid threats that contain a mix of traditional and irregular forms of conflict; and the problem of weak and failing states."<sup>137</sup> Hence, defense planning promotes the idea of political and military objectives being intricately nested. Emerging from the periphery of national security discourse to being integral to defense thinking, hybrid threats appear to be gaining wider acceptance despite intellectual debate on the issue.

The confederated discourse on hybrid threats demonstrates a propensity to apply an overdose of established frameworks to characterize threat activities in the operational environment. U.S. military planning constructs are practical and maintain utility in the contemporary operating environment, but require a new lens from which to view them. Hoffman contends that, "Traditionalist thinking too often oversimplifies and underestimates our

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<sup>136</sup> Linn, 184-5.

<sup>137</sup> Michele Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, "The Contested Commons," *Proceedings* (July 2009). Flournoy is the current Undersecretary for Defense for Policy.

enemies.”<sup>138</sup> U.S. planning constructs need to account for non-linear threats that manifest in hybrid combination. Chaos theorist Antoine Bousquet asserts, “Linear processes are the exception and not the rule. Nature is fundamentally non-linear.”<sup>139</sup> Therefore, the environment and thinking that bring hybrid threats to fruition must be incorporated and/or acknowledged in U.S. strategic and operational planning in order to mitigate potential threats to U.S. interests.

Even if accepted, the hybrid threat will likely be seen as more of a strategic nuisance or operational annoyance than a paradigm shift. The hybrid threat’s propensity for ad hoc activities creates a vortex of frustration for military planners comfortable with orthodoxy. Indicative of this is the seemingly repackaging of threat characterizations into linear bins and ambiguous discussion of the environment that allow traditional conceptual planning to continue. As such, predictive threat analysis has been absent from the U.S. military lexicon with the predominance of analysis manifesting in asymmetric despair masquerading as explanation. Thus, an undercurrent in defense strategic thinking is the desire for a return to a consistent threat paradigm.

Current defense threat analysis lacks a sophisticated application of alternative speculative analysis to explain observed non-linear phenomena. Intelligence professionals seek analytic consistency and logical argumentation, but fail to advance understanding with substantially incomplete assessments, as the language used in strategic documents does not convey meaning unambiguously.<sup>140</sup> This means that the shortcomings in analytic tradecraft beyond the present result in the avoidance of speculative analysis to explore potential threat developments with direct

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<sup>138</sup> Hoffman, “Further Thoughts on Hybrid Threats,” *Small Wars Journal* (March 3, 2009) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/03/further-thoughts-on-hybrid-thr/>, 1. (Accessed 10 Sep 2010).

<sup>139</sup> Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 169.

<sup>140</sup> Acknowledging uncertainty, intelligence documents often address trends, factors and drivers of conflict but not forecasting. See National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington, DC: GPO, November 2008), 71, 97; Also, DNI James Clapper provides a realist and pragmatic assessment of current trends, but avoids speculating on future threats. See James M. Clapper, “Statement for the Record on the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community for the Senate Committee on Armed Services,” March 10, 2011. [www.dni.gov](http://www.dni.gov) (Accessed 20 March 2011).

or near-term implications for U.S. interests. Intelligence that does not provide the potential for future action is useless.<sup>141</sup> Quality intelligence paints several pictures of possible realities.<sup>142</sup> The hybrid threat construct is an attempt to deal with the analytic uncertainty and provide a value-added alternative analysis linked to key assumptions that underpin the strategic environment.

The hybrid threat construct is consistent with Kuhn's concept of a paradigm accounting for anomalies within the strategic environment.<sup>143</sup> This means that as a potential organizational and doctrinal RMA, hybrid threats require re-thinking how the U.S. military prepares for war and plans to deal with future adversaries. To be accepted, a new paradigm must seem better than its competitors but does not need to explain all the facts.<sup>144</sup> This is critical as there is competing evidence to support the hybrid theory in the abstract, yet the environment displays a host of violent activities that resist linear codification. As such, Bousquet's claim is most appropriate in that chaos theory allows for the ability to, "Identify a structure and order to phenomena which previously appeared to have none."<sup>145</sup>

In 2006, Hezbollah demonstrated sophisticated and yet simple combinations of operations simultaneously to contest the Israelis. Hoffman argues that the IDF were surprised, "Not because they were not ready, but because they did not conceptualize or appreciate what Hezbollah was."<sup>146</sup> Likewise, Johnson contends that:

In Lebanon, the Israelis faced terrain and enemy conditions for which they were not prepared. An Israeli journalist, writing about the war, noted that in the years preceding the operation in Lebanon, 'At no stage was an Israeli unit required to face down an enemy force of a size larger than an unskilled infantry squad.' Hezbollah, although not ten feet tall, was trained and organized into small units

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<sup>141</sup> Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 180.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Kuhn, 23.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>145</sup> Bousquet, 169.

<sup>146</sup> Hoffman, "Further Thoughts on Hybrid Threats," 3.

and armed with sophisticated weapons. Hezbollah also occupied prepared defensive positions in Lebanon's difficult hilly terrain and urban areas.<sup>147</sup>

The implications of the post-Cold War era are clear. Echevarria declares: "America's superiority in conventional warfare is so great that it is driving our adversaries toward irregular methods. All of these examples share the basic assumption that we are now fighting (and will likely continue to fight) conflicts for which we have not prepared—precisely because we have not prepared for them."<sup>148</sup> National security analyst Matthew Rusling argues that, "A consensus is emerging that U.S. forces should prepare for hybrid wars where they may face unconventional fighters or insurgents, who are likely to be equipped with modern weapons and information technology."<sup>149</sup> U.S. military planning needs to account for this emerging development.

Synthesizing the U.S. military community discourse, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) declares, "Several academic and professional trade publications have commented that future conflict will likely be characterized by a fusion of different forms of warfare rather than a singular approach. The overarching implication of hybrid warfare is that U.S. forces must become more adaptable and flexible in order to defeat adversaries that employ an array of lethal technologies, to protracted population-centric conflicts."<sup>150</sup> While there has been no drought in thought since 1991, U.S. planning constructs remain relevant but perhaps intellectually stagnant and ill-suited for hybrid threats.

In preparing for war, hybrid threats are integral for U.S. Army operational and strategic planning. The U.S. military must approach conventional and irregular warfare not as separate kinds of conflicts, but as different priorities within the larger activity of war itself.<sup>151</sup> Army planners developed the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) process to provide combatant

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<sup>147</sup> Johnson, 3.

<sup>148</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Preparing for One War and Getting Another?*, v.

<sup>149</sup> Matthew Rusling, "For the Military, a Future of Hybrid Wars," *National Defense* (September 2008).

<sup>150</sup> GAO, 1.

<sup>151</sup> Echevarria, *Preparing for One War and Getting Another?*, ix.

commanders and civil authorities with a steady supply of trained and ready units that are task organized in modular expeditionary force packages and tailored to joint mission requirements.<sup>152</sup> These operational requirements focus the prioritization and synchronization of Army forces on a cyclic basis to address both emerging and enduring requirements. ARFORGEN in conjunction with FSO positions the Army well to combat hybrid threats, but the U.S. Army needs to further account for the implications of hybrid threats in conceptual and detailed operational planning.

U.S. planning constructs need to incorporate an appreciation for the hybrid threat's application of unrestricted operational art, as it integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war. Among the many considerations, operational art requires planners to answer the following questions about the hybrid adversary. What conditions are required for a hybrid threat to achieve its objectives or ends? What sequence of actions or ways is most likely to create those conditions? What resources or means are required to accomplish the sequence of actions? What is the likely cost or risk in performing the sequence of actions? This means that operational planners need to perform a detailed mission analysis and utilize a coherent red team approach to defeat the hybrid threat's unrestricted use of operational art.

## **Dynamics of Forecasting a Hybrid Threat**

As war is organized collective violence driven by interests, hybrid threats reconcile overmatch within the context of the operational environment, strategic culture and interests. Much of the current U.S. discourse assumes that a hybrid threat is a non-state actor and that Hezbollah in 2006 is the model. Hezbollah and Hamas are not the exclusive example of hybrid threats, as a hybrid threat is best characterized as non-Western. It is postulated that a hybrid threat is impossible to forecast, as the potential amalgamation of threat activity are an abyss of infinite combinations. As discussed earlier, forecasting a hybrid threat is a difficult task but not

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<sup>152</sup> Addendum F Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) *The Army's Core Process 2010* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010).

an impossible one. Existing threat actors have a strategic culture that guides their decision-making and thereby facilitates understanding their intentions, actions, reactions and counteractions. In conjunction with a prudent analysis of the environment and realistic red teaming of U.S. vulnerabilities set against the backdrop of the threat actor's strategic culture, a hybrid threat can be forecasted at the operational and strategic level thus providing an understanding of their capabilities and intent.

The strategic environment is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous presenting both threats and opportunities.<sup>153</sup> Possessing both linear and non-linear attributes, the environment serves as a system that seeks to maintain the status quo or find a new acceptable balance.<sup>154</sup> Chaos and complexity theory provide insight to the hybrid threat's underlying patterns of activity and facilitates understanding. These theories aim to understand the strategic environment the way it actually exists as interconnected and interdependent, and not as often depicted as a static linear cause and effect model. Emblematic of hybrid threats, "Patterns can emerge spontaneously, without interaction."<sup>155</sup> Therefore, like water flowing in a vast ocean, the environment is an interactive self-organizing complex adaptive system which appears understandable and predictable when viewed through an appropriate lens.

Predicated on strategic culture, the hybrid threat's interests are reflected in its actions within the strategic environment. In order to protect or advance its interests, the hybrid threat correlates its capabilities against those of its militarily superior adversary through an unrestricted lens. The hybrid threat's conceptualization of its operational level activities and resources to accomplish its end-states frame its approach to the political landscape and thus war. Professor Alan Beyerchen asserts, "Politics is about power and the feedback loops from violence to power

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<sup>153</sup> Gaddis, 71.

<sup>154</sup> Yarger, 17.

<sup>155</sup> Gaddis, 78.

and from power to violence are an intrinsic feature of war.”<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the hybrid threat views war as a prioritized, rational and purposeful collective human endeavor motivated by interests.

Hybrid threats have interests and those interests drive both their purpose for war and their strategic approach to contest the status quo. Understanding an actor’s interests and their habitual strategic decisions to protect or advance those interests is instrumental to understanding their capabilities and intent. Intelligence expert Cynthia Grabo asserts, “Warning analysis must begin with a realistic understanding of how much – or more accurately, how little – we know about what is going on in the areas of the world controlled by our enemies or potential enemies.”<sup>157</sup> This means that understanding an actor’s interests are key to understanding their approach to war, especially when facing overmatch.

Conceptualizing the infinite array of combinations a hybrid threat may orchestrate in the pursuit of interests is no simple task. Israeli theorist Azar Gat contends, “True study of war must take into account the full diversity and complexity of the conditions involved.”<sup>158</sup> As such, the hybrid threat’s strategic culture and operating environment play an enormous role in forecasting threat activity and providing strategic warning. As a complex adaptive system, the strategic environment presents both, threats and opportunities.<sup>159</sup> This means that although challenging, forecasting a hybrid threat is possible through understanding the environment, strategic culture of the state or non-state actor involved, capability shortfalls and most importantly, comprehending their interests.

Effectiveness is relational to context. Forecasting a hybrid threat consists of an intricate knowledge of the military thought that comprises its strategic culture. Appreciating the

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<sup>156</sup> Alan D. Beyerchen, “Clausewitz, Nonlinearity and the Unpredictability of War,” *International Security*, (Winter 1992), 89.

<sup>157</sup> Cynthia M. Grabo, *Anticipating Surprise: Analysis for Strategic Warning* (University Press of America, 2004), 33.

<sup>158</sup> Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 92.

<sup>159</sup> Gaddis, 71.

geographic environment, as well as the cognitive environment it resides in, and understanding the capability shortfalls it has in relation to the U.S. military is critical to any threat forecast. Most importantly, seeing the world through the eyes of the hybrid threat organization is critical to creating a prudent forecast of their future activities. To this end, intelligence theorist Richards Heuer posits: “If you play chess, you know you can see your own options pretty well. It is much more difficult to see all the pieces on the board as your opponent sees them, and to anticipate how your opponent will react to your move.”<sup>160</sup> This means that the concept of rationality is contextual. This is illustrated in appendices B, C and D of this monograph in depicting the state actors of China and Iran, as well as the non-state actor Hezbollah.

## Conclusion

The thaw of the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf War were the impetus for the contemporary hybrid threat to come to fruition. The residual consequences of the 1991 war caused potential U.S. adversaries to rethink how they would engage a militarily superior force, manifesting in new irregular methods. Unable to neither achieve its interests nor confront a militarily superior opponent, the hybrid threat expanded its range of options out of necessity. Consequently, the U.S. military has collectively struggled to characterize and conceptualize the contemporary flood of non-linear threat activities that resemble more of a spider web rather than a hierarchal layer cake. The resultant strategic confusion and semantic discourse have muddied the waters of threat analysis and conceptual planning.

The contemporary hybrid threat actor maintains a different character than previous combinations of threat activities. Baptized in its modern form after the 1991 Gulf War, this threat is an amalgam of activities that have resisted codification and generated a labyrinth of contradictory explanation. Hybrid threat actors manifest in a seemingly ad hoc basis, causing an

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<sup>160</sup> Richards J. Heuer Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Center for the Study of Intelligence: Central Intelligence Agency, 1999), 71.

ad hoc reaction on the part of the U.S. military with no unified definition, conceptualization, joint doctrine, or resource prioritization.

Existing literature regarding hybrid threats illustrates the propensity for actors to utilize all means available to achieve their ends now and in the future. Intellectually, the hybrid threat construct's economy of force, insurgent methods and combinations of regular and irregular methods to achieve their end-states is the synthesis of Huber's 1996 *Compound Warfare*, the 1999 Chinese publication of *Unrestricted Warfare*, and Hoffman's 2007 *The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. The hybrid concept introduced by Hoffman echoes throughout U.S. security policy discussion regardless of the historical precursors of the idea. Still controversial, the blurring and blending of forms of war in combinations of increasing frequency and lethality are most often associated with his analysis of Hezbollah's 2006 manifestation as a hybrid threat.

Professional discussion of the hybrid threat typology since the 2006 Second Lebanon War reveals numerous questions. Is the hybrid threat just the latest form of irregular warfare in the operational environment? Is it just insurgency? Will a new term emerge to replace it in the near future? The point that these analytical questions miss is that this maturation of threat organization has existed in various forms in the past, but since 1991, has evolved into a potent threat due to the infusion of new technology, information systems warfare and globalization. Planners must mitigate their antipathy and deal with the changing character of war. As war is one of the most imitative of human social activities, the hybrid threat construct will continue to persist in the operational environment until it becomes irrelevant, obsolete or a new paradigm replaces it.

The genesis of hybrid threats is the tension between interests and operational overmatch. Interests are necessary for war to transpire and are the continuity of war over time and space. As an interest-based rational actor practicing unrestricted operational art, the hybrid threat seeks to protect or advance its interests. Hence, the hybrid threat approach to war is the reflection of its interests in the strategic environment and its preference for future conditions. This new approach to military action is born out of the necessity of creating alternative paths to deal with the rising

political and economic costs of conventional warfare. Because war is organized collective violence driven by interests, hybrid threats reconcile overmatch within the context of the environment, strategic culture and interests.

Hybrid opponents determined that in order to accomplish their strategic objectives against a conventionally superior force over time and space, they would have to practice unrestricted operational art void of limitation and constraint. Therefore, hybrid adversaries developed an innovative organizational operational approach to deal with U.S. military superiority. This potential paradigm shift in threat activities demonstrates a propensity for imitation in the next decade for adversaries contesting a space against a militarily superior opponent in order to gain a marked advantage.

As an unrestricted collective methodology, the hybrid concept bypasses the cognitive boundaries of traditional threat characterization and the application of organized collective violence. The hybrid threat construct challenges assumptions about the environment and is more reflective of the broader continuum than the characterization of all irregular threat activities as insurgency or terrorism. From a realist worldview, the hybrid threat translates strategic intent into distributed operations. This study demonstrates the tendency for hybrid threats to increase in frequency and diversity of ways and means in the pursuit of their interests. Therefore, through the lens of survival and adaptation, the hybrid construct represents the inevitability of progress in military thinking, organization and collaborative synchronization. While not a replacement for conventional war, the propensity for hybrid threats to emerge in the environment over the next decade is immense.

Hybrid threat actors seek to master unrestricted operational art. As a rational actor translating strategic intent into tactical action, hybrid threats aim to set conditions for strategic opportunity and prevent the U.S. tendency to dominate the battlefield. Its highly-nuanced variety of military activities and array of capabilities as a composite force are directly related to its interests. Like water that ebbs and flows to conditions, hybrid opponents innovatively organize to

operate, survive and achieve favorable advantage. Therefore, as a practitioner of unrestricted operational art, hybrid threats are potentially a doctrinal and organizational revolution in military affairs, with significant implications for U.S. strategic and operational planning.

Service competition for resources is the largest impediment to aptly planning for a hybrid threat. The Armed Services and their affiliated think tanks contextualize the hybrid threat from a service specific lens. As such, there may be potential adverse effects yet to be realized by service parochialism as service exploitation to interpret and advance agendas has proven true in the past. The recent skewed service interpretations of COIN and IW in the last decade illustrate this point. DoD policy does not officially recognize the hybrid concept, yet it uses the hybrid notion to describe the increased complexity of conflict in its strategic planning documents. Accordingly, the hybrid concept may become a vehicle to advance pre-existing ideas and validate service specific programs of choice, thereby not generating new joint thinking and resulting in a kaleidoscope of detractors.

Regardless of exploitation, there is robust intellectual contempt for the hybrid concept within the U.S. Intelligence and planning communities. This resistance centers on the abstractness of the idea, its delineation and its service specific exploitation. Many intelligence professionals proselytize an “all or nothing approach,” that results in an inability to grasp the emerging nuances of non-linearity in adversaries. Interestingly, the hybrid threat concept and other speculative threat characterizations since 1991 have been predominantly generated by operators and not intelligence professionals.

Hybrid threats represent a potential paradigm shift in military affairs. In framing theory, Professor Paul Davidson Reynolds defines abstractness as a concept that is independent of a specific time or place.<sup>161</sup> Theory is an abstract statement, independent of space and time, inter-

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<sup>161</sup> Paul Davidson Reynolds, *Primer in Theory Construction* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1971), 14.

subjective, must be explicitly defined and rigorously examined, and have empirical reference manifested in facts.<sup>162</sup> The hybrid threat concept is abstract yet insufficient to meet linear constructs of characterization. As mentioned earlier, Glenn proclaims that, “Hybrid in its several forms fails to clear the high hurdle and therefore should not attain status as part of formal doctrine.”<sup>163</sup> The lack of practical evidence to assess with measures of effectiveness and measures of performance denies the ability to properly assess the hybrid RMA. Therefore, the hybrid threat concept is an emerging theory that requires additional evidence to be accepted as a new paradigm by the military community.

The hybrid threat represents a potential shift in military affairs that requires further analysis and supporting evidence. The potential of the hybrid threat paradigm is likened to an iceberg in that only the ten percent above the water line is understood and the largest and most dangerous portion lies below the surface. This means that there is a need to experiment further with the hybrid concept in order to determine if it is a doctrinal and organizational RMA creating a paradigm shift in military thinking and if it is a valid threat model for U.S. military planning. As a result, the validity of the hybrid threat RMA remains only a theory requiring further data to prove consistent with Kuhn’s concept of a paradigm accounting for anomalies within the strategic environment. Hybrid threats represent the evolution of military affairs and not yet a revolution.

The hybrid construct presents numerous implications for visualizing the future operational environment and for how the U.S. military will formulate strategy, policy and resource investment priorities in the near future. Regardless of the debate over the 2006 Second Lebanon War being sufficient evidence for the hybrid threat concept, it is important to note that Hezbollah did achieve tactical, operational and strategic success against Israel.<sup>164</sup> In reference to the war, Hoffman states that, “Among the problems recognized as undermining IDF performance

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>163</sup> Glenn, *Proceedings from the 2009 Hybrid Warfare Conference*, 8.

<sup>164</sup> Glenn, “Thoughts on Hybrid Conflict,” 7.

during that conflict was penetration of the country's military doctrine by an 'intellectual virus,' i.e., the introduction of new and opaque thinking that clouded rather than clarified the guidance provided those committed to Israel's security."<sup>165</sup> This means that avoidance of planning for unpleasant conflicts is not a wise course of action.

Planners must understand that intellectual change is occurring and rectify the disparity in description and understanding. The military community has been collectively devoid of producing a consistent threat model to plan against and has struggled to codify threat activities, resorting to depiction of ambiguous environmental conditions. Similarly, the findings of the Winograd Commission that evaluated the IDF performance in the 2006 war imply that the Israeli government and military avoided critical challenges before the conflict and thus were unprepared for the hybrid threat Hezbollah confronted them with.<sup>166</sup> Therefore, the implications for military planning are to retain the initiative and be out in front of the hybrid problem rather than merely respond to it at the enemy's choosing. U.S. planning constructs need to incorporate an appreciation for the hybrid opponent's application of unrestricted operational art, as it integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war.

Conceptualizing the infinite array of combinations a hybrid threat may orchestrate in the pursuit of interests is no simple task. Hybrid threats have a strategic culture that guides their decision-making and thereby facilitates understanding their intentions. Thus the hybrid threat, state or non-state, although non-linear, maintains consistent patterns of strategic behavior manifesting in pre-dispositions in diplomatic, informational, military and economic activities. This collective behavior determines appropriate ends and means for achieving its end-states. Accordingly, both the environment and strategic culture shape the hybrid threat's interests and the conception of the use of organized collective violence.

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<sup>165</sup> Hoffman, "Further Thoughts on Hybrid Threats," 7.

<sup>166</sup> Haninah Levine, "Summary of the Winograd Commission Interim Report," *Jerusalem Post*, April 30, 2007. As cited in Glenn, 17.

In order to defeat future hybrid threats, it is important to accept the reality of the environment and the complex interrelation within it. Seeking to control or contest a specific space, the hybrid threat terminology is not as important as the idea itself. Echevarria's insights on the discussion of the hybrid concept in relation to the social phenomenon of war are quite potent and illustrate the conceptual shortfalls of U.S. thinking:

Terms like 'hybrid war' are keen attempts to bring the two kinds warfare together. However, stripping away the sundry adjectives and viewing wars as war—rather than as battles writ large—would work even better. The many definitions of types of war and the various descriptors we attach to the term 'war' suggest we have not yet transitioned from a way of battle to a way of war. We still have difficulty thinking of war holistically, as something multifaceted and dynamic.<sup>167</sup>

Contemporary threat analysis is underpinned by a yearning to return to a consistent threat model and often explains irregular threat activities in simplistic terms of insurgency and terrorism. Strategists are reluctant to adapt and repeatedly choose to view change through sacrosanct established frameworks, often forcing square pegs into complex round holes. Thus, the hybrid threat will likely be seen as a strategic nuisance or operational annoyance rather than a paradigm shift.

The military must acknowledge and contend with a hybrid threat's range of unrestricted operational art. As the *sine qua non* of the hybrid threat construct, unrestricted operational art has numerous implications for U.S. operational and strategic planning. A prudent analysis of hybrid threats is necessary to maintain a marked advantage for U.S. interests in time and space. As such, military campaign and contingency planning must reflect an appreciation for hybrid threats, as they form the foundation for U.S. military organization, resourcing and the subsequent expeditionary military activities. However, the hybrid threat should not distract from simultaneously planning for more conventional threats.

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<sup>167</sup> Echevarria, *Preparing for One War and Getting Another?*, 25.

The hybrid threat construct represents the evolution of 21<sup>st</sup> century threat organization and characterization. It is a logical consequence of Western military dominance. The 2006 Second Lebanon War casts a long shadow on contemporary military thinking and is the oft-cited example of a hybrid threat. Some argue that hybrid threats are a subset of irregular warfare, as Israel did not conceptualize or appreciate that Hezbollah was a cross between an army and a guerrilla force. Hybrid threats are simply a more effective unrestricted distribution of resources and risk in time and space. This means that U.S. military intelligence must revisit Order of Battle analysis through an unrestricted lens and focus less on law enforcement centric targeting that has permeated the field in the last decade.

This analysis anticipates the propensity for the hybrid threat to increase in frequency and diversity of ways and means in the near future. This monograph recommends that analysts conduct a strategic culture analysis of potential threat nation-states, transnational groups, and regional groups to determine how each makes decisions in order to forecast their future strategic behavior. This is not to compel a cognitive limitation imposed by the constraints of nation-states forces, as nation-states may utilize proxy forces in irregular ways. This is critical, as the hybrid threat being a practitioner of unrestricted operational art is not bounded by cognitive self-limitations imposed on many Western nations. Additionally, this monograph recommends that all CONPLANS and COCOM campaign plans be updated to account for hybrid threats in COCOM AORs. This is critical, as the post war analysis of the IDF indicates a failure to update campaign plans was the foundation for failure in their 2006 war.<sup>168</sup>

U.S. military superiority has provoked an unexpected outcome that redefines the environment and provides new meaning in the form of consequences and implications that underpin the post-Cold War strategic confusion. The U.S. military must embrace yet avoid

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<sup>168</sup> Glenn, *Insights from the Second Lebanon War*, 15.

circular thinking on this topic as the U.S., UK, Australia, Israel and NATO embrace the emerging yet controversial hybrid threat idea. U.S. military operational and strategic planners that choose to ignore the hybrid threat or meet it with intellectual contempt are accepting strategic risk. Denial of the hybrid construct and what it represents is the equivalent of creating a cognitive Maginot Line to deal with a potential threat. This necessitates the U.S. military jointly understanding the hybrid threat construct in order to avoid a cascading path to irrelevance. To do otherwise, is to run the risk of, “Being dominant but irrelevant as the enemy chooses to fight us in a different way.”<sup>169</sup> This has significant implications for how the U.S. military will organize to meet future adversaries.

In thinking about hybrid threats, it is important for the U.S. military to recognize that it is not only in the post-Cold War era or post-9/11 era, but a “pre-something era.” The scalability and multi-faceted approach of the hybrid threat requires detailed strategic level war-gaming to prioritize both capabilities and response. This means that U.S. solutions to hybrid threats necessitate a “Synergistic whole rather than constructing many separate non-reinforcing parts.”<sup>170</sup> Hoffman’s assertion that the hybrid construct is more about conceptualizing the future operating environment has relevance and in many ways is the key take away from his expansive work on the hybrid concept. The hybrid threat in itself is not a significant issue. It is the implications for the future threat organization and doctrine in an increasingly sophisticated technological and informational environment. Hence, the hybrid threat is a potential watershed in the unlimited nature of organized collective violence. Just as the Blitzkrieg RMA is clear in retrospect, the hybrid threat organizational RMA is apparent just beyond the water’s edge.

In sum, this monograph proposes a theory to explain the phenomenon of post-Cold War threat activity and its implications for military planning. As a potential doctrinal and

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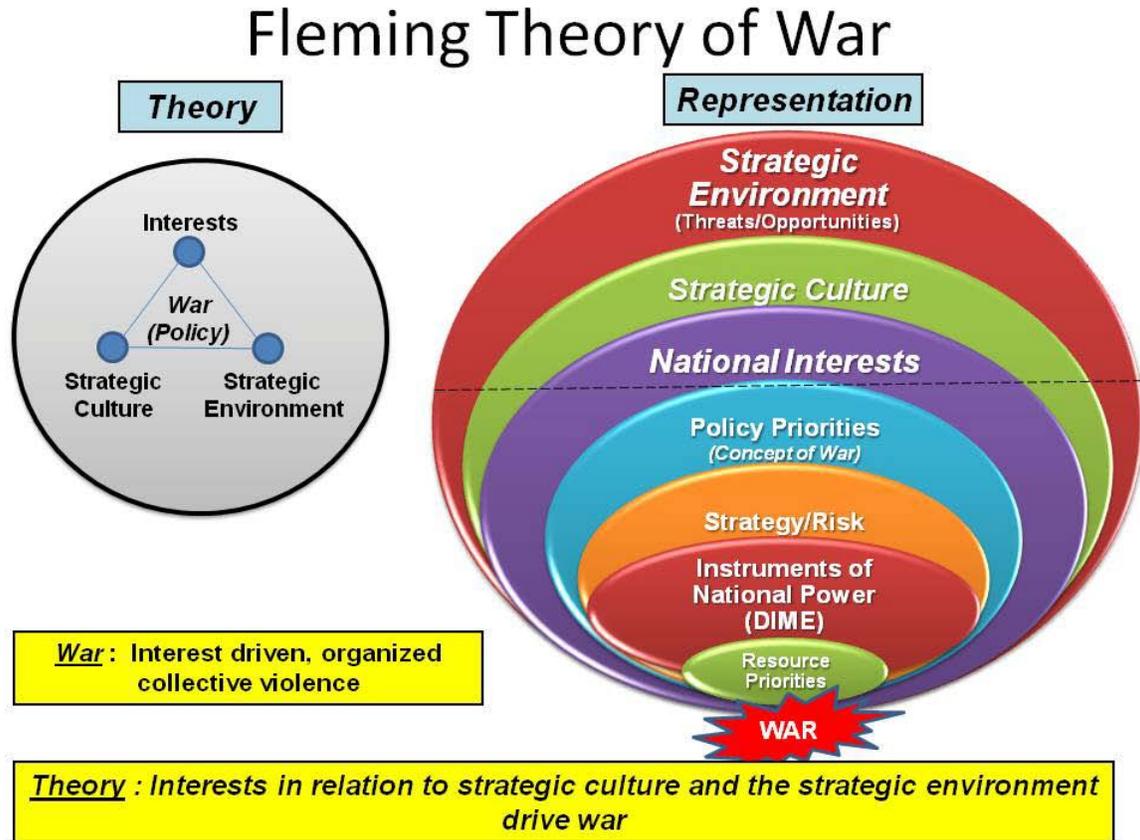
<sup>169</sup> General James Mattis, as quoted in Glenn, *Proceedings from the 2009 Hybrid Warfare Conference*, 3.

<sup>170</sup> Glenn, *Proceedings from the 2009 Hybrid Warfare Conference*, 24.

organizational revolution in military affairs, hybrid threat actors represent the evolution of operational art, with significant implications for U.S. military strategy, planning, policy and resource investment priorities. The hybrid threat concept is a valid threat concept for operational and strategic planning. A macrocosm of future threat organization, the hybrid threat is continuity from the past, yet a contextual response to contemporary overmatch. The hybrid threat optimally exploits the environment to prevent U.S. military dominance by contesting the space through unrestricted operational art and portends of replication in the future. The hybrid threat construct offers a framework to describe the evolving character of contemporary war, challenge conformist threat assessment ambiguity and understand the anomalies in the strategic environment. U.S. planning cannot cut the non-linear foot to fit the linear shoe.

## APPENDIX A: Theory of War

Figure 1. Theory of War



Source: Created by author.

## APPENDIX B: Potential State Actor Hybrid Threat - China

### Strategic Culture

As a state actor, China is a potential hybrid threat in response to U.S. military superiority. Chinese strategic culture is comprised of two philosophical themes in regards to the use of organized collective violence. The first is offensive in nature, emphasizing the use of violence to resolve security conflict and the second is more diplomatic, emphasizing Confucian-Mencian preferences of winning over an opponent through virtuous actions.<sup>171</sup> The second is a symbolic means for justifying Chinese strategic behavior and a practical means for deflecting the threat of a more powerful enemy. This means that China's traditional policy of active defense and non-alignment deters it from intervening regionally or globally. This is evidenced in China not entering into any military alliance with a foreign power and not forward stationing its troops outside of China.

Chinese thought is influenced by the understanding of the scheme of *yin* and *yang* and the five elements: water, fire, metal, wood, and earth. Hence, Chinese culture focuses on the interrelationships and interdependencies rather than on physical expression. The *yin* and *yang* concepts place "Greater stress on the mutual inclusion, mutual attraction, and mutual residing of the two sides which are in contradiction."<sup>172</sup> The tension between realist tradition and pacifist norms is instrumental to understanding Chinese strategic culture. This means that China maintains a peaceful non-expansionist, defensive-minded strategic tradition. Yet, Chinese leaders are more traditionally realist with a strategic posture of, "Beijing ready to employ military force assertively against perceived external or internal threats while insisting that China possesses a cultural aversion to using force, doing so only defensively and solely as a last resort."<sup>173</sup>

### Strategic Environment

A "Cult of the Defense" plays an important role in Chinese thinking about their security policy and shapes the way China views its interaction with its neighbors and the U.S. Separatist activities are a strategic nuisance to China, yet its near-term focus on preparing for military contingencies in the Straits of Taiwan is an important component of its modernization plans. However, China is also generating capabilities for other regional contingencies regarding resources or territory. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) capabilities are predicated on the concept of defense, but demonstrate modern information technology that enables the PLA to conduct military operations at greater distances from China's borders. This means that China's continued pursuit of area denial and anti-access strategies is expanding from traditional land, air, and sea to space and cyber-space. China's neighbors play an important role in Chinese conceptualization of threats and opportunities in its environment. Therefore, improvements in China's strategic capabilities have ramifications far beyond the Asia-Pacific region and are a major factor in changing East Asian military balance of power.

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<sup>171</sup> See Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Also see Dennis J. Blasko, "Chinese Strategic Thinking: People's War in the 21st Century," *China Brief*, Vol. X, issue 6 (March 18, 2010), 12.

<sup>172</sup> Li Bingyan, "Emphasis on Strategy: Demonstration of Oriental Military Culture," *Beijing Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, 20 October, 2002, 80-85. Open Source Center translation CPP20030109000170, <https://www.opensource.gov> (accessed 1 October 2010).

<sup>173</sup> Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 193.

## Interests

Chinese interests are to maintain its sovereignty and security, maintain a policy of conflict avoidance, maintain favorable stability in the region and promote economic prosperity through securing foreign investment, technological development, favorable trade policies and expanding its exports. China promotes Chinese culture and resists foreign influence on Chinese society. Accordingly, China seeks to protect its interests and advance them by cooperation and development, while at the same time resisting foreign discourse regarding human rights.

## Potential as a Hybrid Threat

China's continued investment in a host of surface, submarine, and anti-access capabilities portends of a hybrid irregular organization to contest U.S. forces in either the straits of Taiwan, on the Korean Peninsula or within the global commons.<sup>174</sup> The PLA is pursuing comprehensive transformation from a mass army designed for protracted wars of attrition on its territory to one capable of fighting and winning short-duration, high intensity conflicts against high-tech adversaries which China refers to as "local wars under conditions of informatization."<sup>175</sup> China's potential to compete militarily with the U.S. facilitated by its disruptive military technologies that are designed to counter U.S. military advantage.

China's expanding military capabilities lend themselves to a hybrid organization. Chinese views about the utility of asymmetric strategy manifested in the "Assassin's Mace" concept portends of a hybrid threat. As such, China's actions in certain areas increasingly appear inconsistent with its official policies, as Chinese military planners are pursuing transformation throughout China's armed forces. China is setting conditions for a force able to accomplish expanded regional and global objectives.

British analysis of a Chinese hybrid threat seeking to contest the West is well crafted. They assert that the Chinese have moved away from the mass conventional army concept:

In order to meet contemporary threats it has developed a major cyber-warfare capability and an anti-satellite programme, these combined with its nuclear programme are seen as major elements in its drive to become a world power. The Chinese military have closely studied the Western way of war and have critically examined Western campaigns in Kosovo, and both Iraq conflicts and have developed strategies that aim to counteract US and allied strengths. These techniques are likely to include disrupting or destroying the US's C2 nodes and neutralising American sea and land operating bases; the Chinese call this approach 'the assassin's mace', and it uses all the instruments at the disposal of the state in order to raise the costs of any US action to prohibitively high levels. Additionally, in pursuit of its regional aspirations, China has mechanised and digitised its land forces while attempting to create a blue water navy and a technically competitive air force, thus creating the ability to project conventional power, against other states, within the region.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> See "The Long March to be a Superpower: China's Military Might," *The Economist*, 4 August 2007, 20.

<sup>175</sup> United States, *Military Power of the People's Republic of China* (Office of the Secretary of Defense Annual Report to Congress: GPO, 2009), I.

<sup>176</sup> UK FCOC Paper, 17-18.

## APPENDIX C: Potential State Actor Hybrid Threat – Iran

### Strategic Culture

Contemporary Iranian strategic thought is predicated on the influences of ancient Persian and Islamic cultures and a proclivity to secure Iran's perceived rightful place as the dominant regional power in the Middle East. A habitual belief that the Persian culture is superior to its Middle Eastern counterparts underpins Iran's revolutionary interpretation of Shia Islam and distinct brand of Islamic exceptionalism. Moreover, recent events that shape Iran's strategic thinking are the 1979 Shia revolution, the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Viewed in context, Iran's perpetual quest to develop nuclear weapons is a facilitator of its quest to become a regional power.

### Strategic Environment

The 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War was a conventional conflict that continues to influence the strategic thinking of Iran in regards to the use of its military capabilities. The border issue has still not been properly settled and Iran continues to some extent be isolated by its regional neighbors. The majority of Iran's ground forces are concentrated along the Iran-Iraq border and the majority of Iran's air bases are located in the west of the country, close to the Iraqi border. Iran maintains a robust conventional army (500,000 active duty troops), with nearly a quarter being the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Moreover, a 2010 Jane's assessment asserts that Iran has been conservative in modernizing its conventional forces and that, "Iran's conventional military readiness, effectiveness, and capabilities have declined since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, and Iran has not been able to find a meaningful way to restore its conventional edge in the region."<sup>177</sup> Therefore, Iran's decision and/or inability to modernize its conventional forces are a predominant reason for its nuclear ambitions and prioritization of asymmetric capabilities.<sup>178</sup>

The strategically important Strait of Hormuz links the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, with a majority of the world's oil supply transiting through the strait. Iran has conducted military exercises in the strait intended to demonstrate its conventional and asymmetric capabilities. It is building a series of naval bases along its southern coast leading up to the Strait of Hormuz in order to create an "impenetrable line of defence."<sup>179</sup> Thus, Iran's focus has been on its conventional naval and ballistic missile capabilities as a means of projecting power on a regional scale. Yet, Iran is cognizant of its lack of strategic air assets. Iran's pursuit of a strategic missile inventory is critical to its regional security, as a deterrent to potential foreign aggression.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, based on its strategic geography, Iran is posturing itself to protect and advance its interests.

### Interests

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<sup>177</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Warfare* (Praeger, Westport, 2007), 3.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Hossein Aryan, "A New Line of Defence," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 28 January 2009.

<sup>180</sup> Robin Hughes, "Iran's Ballistic Missile Developments- Long-Range Ambitions," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 September 2006.

Iran's interests are to expand its sphere of influence beyond its immediate borders, maintain political ties with Europe in order to secure economic prosperity through oil exports, and become a regional hegemony. This is in addition to contesting Sunni dominance of the region and contesting the existence of Israel.

### **Potential as a Hybrid Threat**

Iran has a short-term ability to asymmetrically affect U.S. operations in the Gulf region. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Naval Force is potentially a hybrid force. The IRGC is a separate organization from the Regular Armed Forces, although its activities run in parallel and are coordinated by the Armed Forces General Staff. Designed primarily to deter U.S. military actions, the IRGC's navy has the capability to conduct hit-and-run operations; lay a variety of mines, target ships with shore-based missiles; raid offshore facilities and direct its speedboats at civilian and naval targets in the Hormuz choke point, using swarming tactics.<sup>181</sup>

Al Quds forces are central to Iran's ability to conduct asymmetric warfare within its regional sphere of influence. The Al Quds force is thought to comprise anywhere between 5,000 and 15,000 elite members of the IRGC and is responsible for extra-territorial operations. It allegedly trains, equips and finances foreign groups and organizations such as Iraqi-based militants, Hamas, Hezbollah and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. These conventional and asymmetric capabilities have enormous potential to become a hybrid threat. British thinking on the potential of Iran to contest the U.S. as a hybrid threat is succinct:

Iran, having weathered the bloody stalemate of its war with Iraq, has refocused its military efforts in a bid to avoid the strengths of its Western opponents. Whilst still aspiring to be the dominant regional power, and to that end retaining major combat forces and a nuclear and missile development programme, they have avoided areas where they are likely to be overmatched by the West. Areas such as air superiority and conventional naval competition have been abandoned and alternative systems have been developed, such as the combined use of submarines, mines, shore batteries, missiles and a wide variety of heavily armed small craft, all of which have been integrated so as to neutralise the more capable warships of the Western navies within the Persian Gulf and put both Theatre access and bases at risk.

However, to fully exploit the attributes of *hybrid* and *asymmetric* warfare they have trained, equipped and financed, amongst others, the Hezbollah organization which has proved extremely difficult to counter and has constantly provided Iran with ideological leadership of the region at little cost or risk. Iran has closely examined the abilities of the West and has tested its high and low-end *asymmetric* tactics. It will continue to incorporate innovative conventional and novel capabilities, as well as utilising the increasingly effective weapon systems purchased from Russia and China.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> See Kenneth Katzman, "Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses," *US Congressional Research Service*, 6 August 2009.

<sup>182</sup> UK FCOC Paper, 17-18.

## APPENDIX D: Potential Non-State Actor Hybrid Threat – Hezbollah

### Strategic Culture

Hezbollah is by its nature asymmetric and has potential for conventionality. Contemporary developments in Hezbollah since the 2006 war indicate a potential to strategically align with forces seeking to contest U.S. military presence in the Middle East and beyond.<sup>183</sup> Hezbollah is an entity born of non-negotiable religious militancy, but they have exhibited immense capacity for doing whatever it takes to survive. Many consider this pragmatic, but Shia Islamic doctrine allows for deception and false alliances. This allows Hezbollah to do things that look pragmatic on the surface, but which are entirely in accordance with Shia doctrine. They can ally with Christians in parliament, deal with infidel regimes such as North Korea, traffic drugs in the Latin American Tri-border area, and still be good Muslims waging true *jihad*.

### Strategic Environment

Hezbollah is based in Lebanon and is dynamically influenced by the geography of the region with Israel, its primary enemy in close geographic proximity. Yet, Hezbollah maintains significant funding streams from North Africa, the U.S., and Latin America, essentially anywhere a Lebanese diaspora exists. Additionally, they have relations with North Korea for their tunnel building consultation along with numerous regional entities such as Sunni Hamas.

### Interests

Hezbollah's interests are to maintain the armed Hezbollah militia. This allows them to honor their first obligation: *Jihad* against the Zionist entity without Lebanon being held accountable militarily. Next, they seek to maintain as influential a presence as possible in the Lebanese political sphere without becoming the state. By being a de-facto veto entity in the Lebanese parliament, they reap the benefits of political power without the responsibilities of governance. Hezbollah seeks to maintain military training/funding relationship with IRGC with logistical facilitation through Syria. This means that they seek to maintain good relations with Syria. Next, they stay true to their primary Shia religious concepts: loyalty to the Iranian Leader, *Jihad* and *Shihada* (martyrdom). Lastly, they seek to develop depth by refining and bolstering relationships for funding and support, in the event Iran is neutralized as a state power.

### Potential as a Hybrid Threat

Hezbollah will continue to be a strategic irritant and the apex innovator of hybrid ways and means. Already demonstrated in 2006 Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah continually seeks innovative ways to accomplish its objectives. Through a composite mix of symmetric and asymmetric capabilities fused at the operational level, Hezbollah in many ways is a fortified conventional army and guerilla force at the same time. Hezbollah's distributed operations and rapid transition of force mix demonstrates a potent combination that is emblematical of hybrid threats.

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<sup>183</sup> See Dima Adamsky, "Jihadi Operational Art: The Coming Wave of Jihadi Strategic Studies," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Vol. 33, 2010), 1-18.

## APPENDIX E: Implications of Hybrid Threats on Full Spectrum Operations

The environment that brings hybrid threats to fruition necessitates versatility on the part of U.S. forces to deal with adversaries that employ all means available to accomplish their objectives. Within the national security context, economic challenges in the next decade will uncompromisingly impact military organization. While there is no consensus on the characterization of potential threat actors in the operational environment, it is clear that adversaries will draw upon military and non-military means to design their contestation of U.S. military superiority in ways that may or may not have been observed thus far.<sup>184</sup> The prudent reaction to mitigate this threat is to implement a comprehensive joint interagency approach to U.S. military solutions. However, this mythological bureaucratic collusion is unrealistic as noble efforts have made marginal progress, but an idealistic comprehensive approach remains elusive. The U.S. military must seek to remain operationally flexible and adaptive to hybrid threats and restore military equilibrium. As such, the Army's doctrine of Full Spectrum Operations (FSO) is the most prudent and realistic solution to the challenges posed by hybrid threats, yet retains potential irrelevance in malign implementation.

Through the lens of the hybrid construct, FSO is a prudent way ahead for U.S. Army forces to meet potential future adversaries across the spectrum of conflict. Devoid of specific threat characterization, the Army has wisely chosen to prepare for the future, as the central idea in the *Army Operating Concept 2016-2028* is combined arms maneuver and wide area security. Yet, as a broad approach, FSO provides for shallow operational depth and portends that FSO was a solution looking for a problem. Similar to the interwar period arguments of non-clarity of the post war period, the U.S. Army sought consensus on a way forward during an era of persistent conflict and uncertain future. This means that a paucity of intelligence specificity drove the concept in conjunction with it being the product of force projection capability to deal with a range of threats, downsizing and economy of force in an ambiguous environment. Therefore, FSO is in practicality both necessary and sufficient to meet hybrid threats and remains relevant to prevent the hybrid threat from capitalizing on U.S. Major Combat Operations (MCO) skill atrophy after a decade in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. Army planners need to appreciate hybrid threats in conceptual and detailed planning in order for the operating concept of FSO to be relevant. The hybrid approach holds potential for future U.S. composite force packages, order of battle and comprehensive lines of operation.

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<sup>184</sup> Glenn, *Proceedings from the 2009 Hybrid Warfare Conference*, viii.

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