



ANNEX 3-0 OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

OPERATIONS AND WAR

Last Updated: 09 November 2012

While not all US military operations involve war, conflict underpins the existence of all military Services. Therefore, an understanding of doctrine should also include an understanding of war and its consequences. The most fundamental and crucial purpose of military forces is their employment as an instrument of national power to deter or win wars. War—a violent struggle between rival parties to attain competing [objectives](#)—has been a deeply rooted part of human experience from the earliest times,¹ and remains an instrument of policy used by nation states to achieve political objectives. War is one means nation states, sub-national entities, or supra-national groups may use to achieve disputed aims—part of a continuum of conflict that extends from stable peace to major war.

Typically, US military doctrine frames warfare as traditional or irregular. Traditional warfare is “violent confrontation between nation states or coalitions and alliances of nation states”, typically involving conventional, regulated military forces vying with each other force-on-force (Joint Publication [JP] 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States). Examples include most of the major campaigns in World War (WW) II and Operation DESERT STORM. [Irregular warfare](#) (IW) involves both state and non-state actors vying with each other for legitimacy and influence over a particular population. Thus, the focus of IW is not primarily on the military or destructive capability of an adversary (state or non-state).

Military forces should be prepared to conduct operations across the [range of military operations](#) (ROMO), but they are ultimately tested by their ability to prevail in war. To prevail in war, military commanders have, over time, evolved the art of [strategy](#) development. Although this art was first developed to enable success in traditional war, its principles and key considerations are also applicable to other forms of conflict, including IW.

The advent of air forces, while revolutionizing many aspects of armed conflict, did not fundamentally change the nature of war or the enduring insights that guide strategy. The opening of the space and cyberspace domains to military action has not fundamentally changed these insights either, even while it increased the complexity of—and opportunities available through—military operations.

¹ See Harry H. Turney-High, *Primitive War: Its Practice and Concepts*, for numerous examples.