SEIZING THE INITIATIVE:
The Intellectual Renaissance that Changed U.S. Army Doctrine, 1970-1982

By Jonathan Lee Due

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Approved by

Advisor: Richard H. Kohn
Reader: Joseph Glatthaar
Reader: Wayne Lee
ABSTRACT

(Under the direction of Dr. Richard H. Kohn)

A series of reforms transformed the U.S. Army’s tactical and operational doctrine between 1970 and 1982. These changes emerged from a confluence of events in the early 1970s that marked a renaissance in American military thought. Later debates among key leaders and military thinkers continued to propel this intellectual revitalization that ultimately shaped the way that the Army would conceptualize future warfare. Thus, it was this conceptual “re-birth,” combined with related developments in education and training, that served as a turning point for the post-Vietnam American Army. This evolutionary process produced a broader conceptualization of doctrine that applied not only to war-fighting, but also to training, education, force structure, and weapons acquisition. Above all else, interpersonal dynamics, experience, leadership, and historically-inspired thought determined the fate of Active Defense, AirLand Battle, and the future of the Army as a whole.
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Prologue: A Contentious Meeting and An Eagerness for Change

On a stifling summer afternoon in July 1970, two young Lieutenant Colonels, Walter Ulmer and Danbridge “Mike” Malone, hastily conducted last minute preparations for an information briefing they were about to present in the Army Chief of Staff’s conference room in the Pentagon. On any given day, the number of briefings and the routine, bureaucratic activities of the U.S. Army were countless. Things would be different, however, during this briefing. For Ulmer and Malone, the information that they were about to present would change several important aspects of the Army that they knew.¹

General William C. Westmoreland, the Army Chief of Staff, sat at the head of the large table. Surrounding him were the assembled members of the Army’s high command. These were veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam; warrior generals who wore enough stars to rival any constellation. Ulmer and Malone, two brainy career infantry officers, were among the Army’s brightest, yet they carried with them no secrets of military strategy and no bromides of future success. They represented the U.S. Army War College, an institution charged by Westmoreland four months earlier to investigate the “ethics, morality, and professional competence” of the U.S. Army as a whole.²

As the two officers began their briefing, both Ulmer and Malone knew that the afternoon would be trying, for they clearly bore bad news. Over the previous three months,


the War College had interviewed over 450 army officers concerning the state of professionalism in America’s Army. The results indicated a widespread perception of “a significant difference between the ideal values and the actual values of the Officer Corps.”

Ulmer began the presentation solemnly. Reading from the opening lines of the report’s abstract, Ulmer simply stated, “Gentlemen, a scenario that was repeatedly described in seminar sessions and narrative responses included an ambitious, transitory commander—marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties—engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and frustration of his subordinates.” Not surprisingly, he did not get very far before he was interrupted.

“That’s not the goddamn Army that I know!” exclaimed one of the generals. An extended moment of awkward silence followed the outburst. Another general broke the silence, “Yeah, well, apparently that’s the goddamned trouble. Now, why don’t you sit down, shut up, and let them finish.”

Finish they did, and the results of the briefing astonished all involved. According to the study, the difference in the Army’s “ideal” and “operative” values resulted from “prevailing institutional pressures” of “self-oriented, success motivated actions, and a lack of professional skills on the part of middle and senior grade officers.” Numbers had become an end in themselves. Statistics had replaced values. Furthermore, this “less than optimal climate” of institutional distrust was not the consequence of “external” factors, such as the

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3 Ibid., iii-v.
4 Ibid., iv.
5 Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers, 110.
public’s or the media’s response to Vietnam, but arose from within the leadership of the Army itself. The overall professionalism of the Army, not to mention its morale, was at a nadir.⁶

At the conclusion of the presentation, Westmoreland responded sadly, “I just can’t believe that.” Although he chose to discuss the findings of the report that day with the group of assembled leaders, he later decided to designate the report as “Close Hold: For Official Use Only.” Officers would be able to discuss the findings at military schools, but Westmoreland did not approve the release of the report to either the public or the Army as a whole.⁷ Despite its initial designation, however, the contents of the report soon spread via informal communications channels throughout the Army.

Ulmer and Malone’s report also provided a glimpse of the emerging social climate within the officer corps. At the heart of the matter laid an important truth: the U.S. Army had lost the war in Vietnam. Furthermore, in the process of that defeat, the Army had lost something of its very essence. Psychologically and ethically, the Army was a broken institution. In addition to Ulmer and Malone’s study, a string of critical publications—some even written by serving officers, like William Hauser, Zeb Bradford, Jr., and Frederic Brown—further attested to these prevailing sentiments.⁸

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More importantly, the reports indicated that despite the troubling trends “little evidence” of widespread “cynicism or negativism” existed within the Army’s junior officers.9 A glimmer of hope did emerge from the pessimistic verdicts of the studies. As Ulmer and Malone commented, “we were impressed by the enthusiasm these young officers had for a military career and they were optimistic about the future.”10 Bradford and Brown even articulated the presence of “quiet, steady progress in a number of key areas” that underscored that the Army, despite past problems and future challenges, was “unquestionably on the right course.”11 It was clear that the Army’s junior and mid-ranking officers neither fully trusted nor would blindly swallow “the party line,” but the surveys and their supporting analyses indicated that the officers who would ultimately lead the Army into the 1980s and 1990s wanted change. More than anything, the anecdotal accounts in the Study on Professionalism indicated that these officers simply wanted to be heard.12 As the Study on Professionalism emphasized, “at the end of almost every seminar the officers would come up to us and say, ‘thank you for letting us talk to a senior officer on such a subject . . . This is the first time it has ever happened . . . And thanks for listening.’”13

The social context of the U.S. Army officer corps was ripe to receive input and debate ideas that could ultimately lead to substantial change. As a result, further studies, commissions, and ultimately reforms of the Army’s operational doctrine, officer education,

9 U.S. Army War College, Study on Military Professionalism, iii.

10 Ibid., B-1-15.


12 See U.S. Army War College, Study on Military Professionalism, Annex B, Appendix 1 for “Anecdotal Input” that numerous officers provided to the study group.

13 Ibid., B-1-14.
and training would soon emerge as the U.S. Army took stock of what the *Study on Military Professionalism* bluntly stated.\(^\text{14}\)

**Introduction: Winning the First Battle**

The *Study on Military Professionalism* ended with a list of forty-three specific recommendations to correct the disturbing trends it identified. Significantly, one of Ulmer and Malone’s recommendations for immediate action included the simple statement that “corrective action must be based on comprehensive programs.”\(^\text{15}\) Although few realized it, that simple clause was the start of a twelve-year-long process that would ultimately constitute one of the most comprehensive reform programs the Army experienced in a half-century.

If the 1970s began with an official acknowledgement of the disturbing trends chronicled in Ulmer and Malone’s 1970 study, by 1973, several other important developments were emerging.\(^\text{16}\) In January, after antecedent negotiations conducted by Henry Kissinger and Henry Cabot Lodge, Secretary of State William P. Rogers signed the Paris Peace Accords, formally ending the American combat role in the Vietnam War. By March 29, 1973, all American combat forces withdrew from Vietnam.\(^\text{17}\)

The year was also significant for reasons that extended beyond the cessation of American combat operations in Southeast Asia. On July 1, selective service officially ended.\(^\text{18}\) Without the draft, which had existed in some form since 1940, except for one brief

\(^\text{14}\) U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism*, i.

\(^\text{15}\) U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism*, i.


eighteen-month, the U.S. Army faced a significant cultural change. No longer could the Army rely on a certain number of conscripted recruits to fill its ranks. The way it recruited and trained volunteers required a completely new set of practices and attitudes. In essence, on the heels of a major military defeat, the Army had to re-build a new organization, the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA), from the “tattered remains” of a scarred institution.19

On that same day, General William E. DePuy took command of the newly created Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), a sprawling institution charged with the education, training, and doctrinal development for the entire Army.20 As he assumed his new position, DePuy, a decorated veteran of World War II and a former division commander in Vietnam, made it perfectly clear what his task consisted of: “our mission is to prepare the Army for the next war.”21

Another important event of 1973 occurred several months later and half-a-world away. Along the small, contentious strip of land separating the state of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, two outnumbered armored brigades of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) successfully defeated five Syrian armored and mechanized infantry divisions.22 Although

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21 General William E. DePuy to Major General Donn A. Starry, 02 July 1973, Box 3, The Donn A. Starry Papers, Special Collections, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

this conflict did not involve the American military directly, it captured the attention of American soldiers and defense intellectuals. The fighting underscored the nature of modern warfare and reinforced many of the tactical ideas developed by leading American generals and military thinkers.\textsuperscript{23} While the indecisive fighting in the Sinai Peninsula, marked by unsuccessful Israeli armored counterattacks, emphasized the impact of technology like anti-tank guided missiles and surface to air missiles, the IDF’s remarkable small-unit leadership in the Golan Heights underscored the importance of initiative as a prerequisite for tactically defeating a numerically superior foe. As a result, the war significantly influenced American military thinking throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, by 1973, a series of diverse institutional and intellectual changes had clearly emerged within the U.S. Army. Particularly evident throughout the Army’s extensive school system, these developments quietly initiated a growing culture of reflective introspection. As General DePuy would describe the period, it was an “inward looking time.”\textsuperscript{24} Furthermore, as these institutions promoted new ideas, a small group of leaders began to promote initiatives for substantial reform. In short, a collection of critical institutions, innovative concepts, and visionary leaders fell into place and prepared the Army for significant change.

At the time, few military officers or defense intellectuals fully realized that the events of the early 1970s, taken together, would affect the American Army so profoundly in its view of itself and its understanding of warfare. Yet, the confluence of the events of the early

\textsuperscript{23} For some, like DePuy, such ideas had roots stretching back to World War II.

\textsuperscript{24} General William E. DePuy to General Fred C. Weyand, 18 February 1976, Box 11 and 17 (duplicate), The William E. DePuy Papers, Special Collections, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA. Slightly different aspects of this introspection constitute the primary theme of Richard Lock-Pullan’s article, “An Inward Looking Time.”
1970s marked a renaissance in military thinking in the U.S. Army. This discursive process ultimately developed into a spirited debate over tactical and operational doctrine. In essence, a healthy discourse concerning how the Army should train and fight in the post-Vietnam, “all-volunteer” era emerged. Few eras have changed so much within a military organization, and the intellectual rebirth that emerged in 1970 and lasted until the mid-1980s produced the Army that fought two wars in the Middle East and intervened in numerous countries to conduct peacekeeping operations, to train foreign forces, and to combat terrorism.

Much has been said about this renaissance in American military thought, and several important works of scholarship have addressed this era of reform. Yet, one of the

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25 Contrary to many historical accounts, I argue that the post-Vietnam renaissance in American military thought began by 1970. Other accounts, which will be briefly examined later, posit that the doctrinal debates of the late-1970s (beginning after 1976) marked the beginning of his renaissance. The archival record and available evidence, however, indicates that this renaissance was already in motion by the time the primary antecedents of the doctrinal debate—the publication of the 1976 version of FM 100-5, Operations and several articles critical of it—appeared in 1976 and 1977. In short, the doctrinal debates of 1976-1982 were not the cause, or the pathogen, of the renaissance; they were an effect or a symptom of it.

26 I will interchangeably refer to this group as either “civilian defense specialists” or “civilian defense intellectuals.” I define defense intellectuals as the civilian scholars of military history, national security issues, and aspects of political science, defense industry specialists, lobbyists, legislative aides, and strategy experts. I would like to emphasize that the use of the term “defense intellectuals,” at least in my usage and intentions, neither denotes nor connotes any negative implications.

27 Within this diverse realm of concepts, personalities, relationships, psychology, and experience, these debates also marked a unique convergence of the collective experiences of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, to include several important actors and leaders that participated in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

28 Most of the work on this subject has been primarily biographical or autobiographical in nature. In addition to the memoirs of Colin Powell, H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Wesley Clark, Frederick M. Franks, and Donn A. Starry, the initial journalistic inquiries of James Kitfield, Prodigal Soldiers, Al Santoli Leading the Way (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), and Michael R. Gordon and Bernard Trainor, The Generals’ War (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995) represent collective biographies that followed “a small group of courageous and determined people” through a dramatic time of significant change. Several insightful historians have also employed an institutional approach to their analysis of these events. These include Robert Doughty in The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-1976 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1979), John Romjue, From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982(Fort Monroe, VA: United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1984), and Paul Herbert’s Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combat Studies Institute, 1988). See also John P. Lovell, “Vietnam and the U.S. Army:
difficulties of this topic is that a study of any discursive process or series of debates is necessarily complex, if not chaotic. Put plainly, there is no simple way to characterize this debate or map its structure. Although a considerable amount of work on this subject has offered keen insights, as a whole, the topic’s scholarship has not provided a holistic analysis of the dynamic story of the Army’s doctrinal reform. Despite this, the account of how the


29 Five main works contribute important—albeit incomplete—accounts of the Army’s post-Vietnam doctrinal reform. John Romjue’s From Active Defense to AirLand Battle (1984) provides the basic story—and the “official” history—of the initial years of post-Vietnam doctrinal development, even if his account discounts outside influences and thus fails to address some of the underlying sources of the doctrinal change in the early 1970s. For an insightful critique of Romjue’s approach and conclusions, see Shimon Naveh’s In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997), 262-276. In addition to providing a correction to Romjue’s account, Naveh’s analysis places the U.S. Army’s doctrinal development in an international context, comparing it to the development of “operational theory” developed by the Red Army throughout the twentieth century. Although Naveh offers a penetrating analysis of the conceptual development of the Army’s doctrine, his ponderous theoretical work conflated American developments with concurrent and previous Soviet developments in operational theory, altering the intellectual and historical context that define so many aspects of the movement. He also places an overly strong emphasis on the civilian reformers who participated in these “revolutionary” debates and reforms while discounting important personal and conceptual continuities that linked the efforts—and the products—of the uniformed participants. More recently, Richard Lock-Pullan, in “An Inward Looking Time,” The Journal of Military History 67 (April 2003): 483-512, in “Civilian Ideas and Military Innovation: Manoeuvre Warfare and Organisational Change in the U.S. Army,” War and Society 20 (January 2002), 125-147, and in “How to Rethink War: Conceptual Innovation and AirLand Battle Doctrine,” The Journal of Strategic Studies 28 (August 2005): 679-702, emphasized that “the ending of the draft,” combined with civilian ideas and some internal innovation, “rather than the lessons of the Vietnam War, shaped and drove the key changes during this period.” Basing much of his analysis on Naveh’s work, Lock-Pullan provides a keen analysis of the conceptual discourse—again, particularly of the civilian participants—but, like Naveh, he does so at the expense of other continuities and factors. Additionally, in 2004 Robert Citino updated his analysis and arguments initially made in 1994 with From Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004). Citino argued that operational experience during the Vietnam War—including “impressive operations like the relief of Khe Sanh”—provided the inspiration and example of the “revolutionary” post-Vietnam doctrinal reform. Citino, who probably diminishes the role of civilian reformers, identified important trends that quickly emerged in the wake of the Vietnam War, such as the importance of the Army’s “Great Debate” over doctrine and the emergence of key leaders with a “keen interest in military history.” But like Naveh and Pullan, his anachronistic over-emphasis on the operational level of war as it applied to the development of the 1976 version of FM 100-5, Operations—not to mention his own previous research and expertise of German military history—skewed portions of his analysis. Frederick W. Kagan recently published Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy (New York: Encounter Books, 2006). Exploring a much broader perspective, Kagan argues that many of America’s current military problems (in Iraq and Afghanistan) resulted in part from misguided transformation efforts based on a misunderstanding of the nature of war and an obsessive over-reliance on technology. Within this argument, Kagan provides a broad overview of the Army’s reform process of the 1970s and 1980s at moderate length
Army began its intellectual and institutional reconstruction in the years after the Vietnam War is an important story that needs to be told in full and demands to be understood in depth.\footnote{Several important historical questions remain to be evaluated. The topic does not necessarily need new information, but an understanding of the period can benefit from an introduction of new ideas and fresh perspectives. As a result, I seek to shift the perspective of analysis to the years immediately preceding the emergence of the Army’s doctrinal debate. Contrary to other historical and theoretical accounts, this shift in perspective results in a description of a different sequence of events and a different interpretation of the periods ultimate outcomes: a renaissance that starts earlier and is more complex and diffuse than those provided by previous historians; and an outcome that is evolutionary in nature, not revolutionary.}

Moreover, a close examination of this process provides important institutional and intellectual perspectives on a significant change in American military thought.\footnote{Despite their important contributions, no single work within the current historiography addresses the in-depth intellectual milieu that influenced these changes within the Army. The topic’s important analyses collectively discount critical issues concerning the intellectual origins—and continuities—of important concepts and the decisive interaction of the story’s key institutions, individuals, and ideas. The result is an inadequate description of the specific mechanisms of change. Furthermore, much of the explanatory leverage of this story rests in the background: the intellectual and social milieu that created a particular historical and intellectual moment.}

The key questions are many.\footnote{Importantly, the questions of this study, which is part of a larger project designed to refine our understanding of the post-Vietnam renaissance in American military thought, education, and training—differ significantly from the primary research questions offered in previous analyses. Not surprisingly, these different questions lead to a slightly different focus (to include a deeper inspection of the historical context in which several key interactions occurred) and, ultimately, different conclusions.} How and why did the U.S. Army change its operational doctrine from 1970 until 1982? What were the key intellectual and doctrinal controversies behind this reform? When did it begin? What factors shaped the process? How did it proceed? How were these ideas expressed in action? How did key leaders use military history to develop doctrinal changes? What was the substantive nature of the resulting changes in doctrine during this period? Was reform more successful in some areas than in others? Was the development of AirLand Battle constituted a “Revolution in Military Affairs,” Kagan places these developments within an important context with subsequent reforms. Importantly, all of these accounts argue that the “renaissance” started with the doctrinal debates of the late-1970s (not prior to the emergence of FM 100-5, Operations (1976) ), as well as assert that the resulting changes were “revolutionary” in nature.

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Army a “learning institution?” What was the mentalité within the officer corps during this period? How did this set of collective attitudes affect the reception of new ideas and their subsequent evolution? What did The process provide the U.S. Army and the broader defense community? What were its shortcomings? Or, more generally, in the words of historian Peter Paret, “How does a military organization, without losing cohesion and effectiveness, change to meet the constantly recurring challenges of the new?”

Put simply, it was the intellectual renaissance in American military thought, combined with related developments in education and training, that served as a critical turning point for the post-Vietnam American Army. Moreover, the doctrinal reform that occurred within the Army from 1970 until 1982 grew out of a specific human context. The critical deliberations among military leaders and thinkers—filled with multiple points of tension and influenced by the personalities, intellectual predilections, and the insightful leadership of key

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34 To be sure, the antecedents of this process dated back to World War II and its effects stretched into the Reagan build-up of the 1980s. However, the specific combination of factors and events that were both necessary and sufficient for change that did not coalesce until the 1970s. Additionally, the synergy of this “package deal”—doctrinal reform, improved training techniques, and officer education—provides much explanatory leverage. Although this essay will deal primarily with doctrinal reform, it is important to note that the other major works within the historiography do not examine the symbiotic nature of training, education, and doctrine in detail. In addition to the identification of other historiographical lacuna identified within the notes of this section, a holistic analysis of the effects of this synergy is the goal of future research projects.

35 In fact, Azar Gat, a political scientist at Tel Aviv University, has argued that military thought—broadly defined to include theories describing the nature of war, the construction of operational doctrine, and precepts of professional education and training—“is not a general body of knowledge to be discovered and elaborated.” Instead, it is “comprised of changing conceptual frameworks which are developed in response to varying challenges, and which always involve interpretation, reflecting particular human perspectives, attitudes, and emphases.” On one level, the restructuring of these conceptual frameworks in American military thinking can be found in the various field manuals and articles within the military’s professional journals. Yet on another level, these frameworks—of doctrine, training, and professional pedagogy—are the result of a dialectic process that responded to what Gat described as the “challenges” of the international system and the “particular human” context of “perspectives, attitudes, and emphases” of a specific historic and intellectual moment. This duality underscores that what people thought cannot be divorced from how they thought, nor can one effectively separate either of these questions from the circumstantial and experiential contexts in which key leaders and military thinkers were operating. See Azar Gat, The Origins of Military Thought, From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 256.
participants—shaped the way in which the Army would fight and think about its future wars. Considered by some to be a revolution in military affairs, the process might better be characterized as an *evolutionary renaissance* in American military thought. What emerged came to be labeled *Active Defense*, and later, *AirLand Battle*, and the impact on the Army in particular and American defense in general was enormous.

**Doctrine or Dogma: What Is Doctrine and How Has It Been Used?**

What is doctrine? According to the Department of Defense’s *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, doctrine consists of “fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.” Put another way, doctrine represents officially approved precepts based on experience, reflection, and study. In its simplest form, doctrine is what is written or what is officially taught.

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36 This movement evolved in response to technological and geopolitical realities while simultaneously looking backwards to older models. Accordingly, I have been purposefully deliberate in my choice of the word *renaissance*. According to *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, renaissance means “a revival of or renewed interest in something,” or, as a proper noun, “the revival of art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th-16th centuries; the culture and style of art and architecture developed during this era.” I intentionally conflate this word with its relatively conservative connotations—conservative in the sense that a renaissance involves reaching back to thought or forms from the past as opposed to a revolution and the creation of something radically different or new. *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2d d. (2005) s.v. “Renaissance.” This determination humbly offers a correction of the previous scholarship within this topic’s historiography. For example, Naveh refers to the results of the doctrinal debate of the 1970s and 1980s as “a revolution in American military thought” and as a “quantum leap” from previous efforts, Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, xix-xx. Similarly, Pullan describes this results of this reform as “a new way of war,” Pullan, *U.S. Intervention Policy and Army Innovation*, 11. Kagan goes as far to describe the process as a “revolution in military affairs,” Kagan, *Finding the Target*, 66. Although Citino describes this process as a “rebirth” and a “renaissance,” he also describes the process as having “revolutionary” consequences. Further, his sequence of that renaissance (like Kagan’s, Romjue’s, Naveh’s, and Pullan’s) starts after the emergence of the “Great Debate” over doctrine, and not before, Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm*, 254 and 260.

37 Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005), 168. The formulation of “fundamental principles” has been part of the official definition for doctrine since 1979; the clause referring to judgment in application was added in 1984.

38 I.B. Holley, “Concepts, Doctrines, Principles: Are You Sure You Understand These Terms?” *Air University Review* 35 (July-August 1984): 90-93. Holley emphasized that the terms “concepts,” “doctrine,” and “principles” should not be used interchangeably. According to Holley, a concept is merely an idea formulated
Although the classic works of military history and theory, namely Clausewitz’s *On War* and Jomini’s *Summary of the Art of War*, posited theories of war and not tactical or operational doctrines, they remain critically important to the development and understanding of modern doctrine. Jomini and Clausewitz, using two very different intellectual methods, attempted to derive fundamental principles and abstractions concerning the nature of war. Significantly, both Jomini’s prescriptive principles of operational techniques and Clausewitz’s expansive philosophy of strategy and war have become deeply ingrained in American military thought. As a result, ever since their introduction to American military officers and thinkers, they have played an important role in the determination of the United States Army’s tactical and operational doctrine.

Despite the flurry of episodic intellectual activity inspired by Jominian maxims and Clausewitzean dialectics, the Army’s conceptions of doctrine (officially articulated guides and principles) did not emerge as a major component of American military thought until the in words; at its essence, it is “speculative, tentative, and usually malleable.” Conversely, doctrine is what is taught, or officially approved “rules or procedures drawn by competent authority.” Principles, however, “are truths that are evident and general;” in short, they are broader abstractions that explain the underlying ideas of doctrine. See also, Holley’s influential article, “The Doctrinal Process: Some Suggested Steps,” *Military Review* (April 1979): 2-13. See also Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*, 1-2 and I.B. Holley, *Ideas and Weapons: Exploitation of the Aerial Weapon by the United States During World War I: A Study in the Relationship of Technological Advance, Military Doctrine, and the Development of Weapons* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971).

39 Significantly, promulgating doctrine, as the military historian and doctrinal expert I. B. Holley has expressed, “involves far more than publishing a manual.” See I.B. Holley, “Fifty Questions for Doctrine Writers: Means are as Important as Ends,” *Airpower Journal* (Fall 1997): 27-31. Furthermore, applying the analysis of political scientist Barry Posen, doctrinal development involves a specific setting—in terms of technology, national politics and strategy, the institutional nature of the force that will employ the doctrine, and the geo-politics of the international system in which the doctrine is to operate—along with rigorous testing, consensus-building, and involved professional discussion. See Barry Posen, in *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 7.


professionalization efforts of Elihu Root at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then, American Army doctrine experienced an eclectic history of use and adaptation.

Following the Spanish-American War, Secretary of War Elihu Root incorporated Emory Upton’s post-Civil War efforts to apply historical analysis in an attempt to develop Army doctrine as part of his “managerial revolution” that professionalized the late-nineteenth century officer corps. These efforts continued into the twentieth century as the emerging institutionalization and professionalization of the American Army intertwined history, strategic context, and technology as important components in the creation of military doctrine. In 1905, the Army published the Field Service Regulations, a small, pocket-sized collection of current administrative procedures and tactical principles. This document underwent incremental and minor revisions until 1923, when a systematic effort incorporated

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44 Doughty, The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76, 1. See also Posen, The Sources of Military Doctrine, 34-80; and Reardon, Soldiers and Scholars, 183.

45 Coffman, The Regulars, 191 and 200. The FSR relied heavily on German regulations.
the “lessons” of World War I tactics and operations.46 A similar series of revisions occurred during the early years of World War II, incorporating technological advances in equipment. The 1939 revision included a change in nomenclature introducing the title: Field Manual 100-5.47

Since that time, this manual has been the foundation of Army doctrinal literature. Used primarily by officers in their education and training, it posited the “fundamental principles” of how the Army should fight. Between the end of World War II and the demoralizing defeat in Indochina, however, both the institutional interest in this manual and in military history in general waned.48 Although elements of the Army’s tactical doctrine changed with emerging technology and evolving national security policy, between 1944 and 1976, there were no major changes to the manual.49 Surprisingly, the Army of 1968 was using the same basic outlines of the manual that the Army used in World War II.50

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47 Ibid. The revisions occurred in 1941 and 1944.

48 Brigadier General Hal C. Pattison, a former Chief of Military History, stated in a letter immediately prior to his retirement in 1971, that the Army had developed a tendency to deemphasize the value and use of military history, in effect neglecting “the lessons of the past.” This is mentioned in Brooks E. Kleber, “History and Military Education: The U.S. Army” Military Affairs 42 (October 1978): 136.

49 Michael W. Cannon, “FM 100-5, Operations: Just Meeting a Requirement?” Military Review 72 (August 1992): 65. See also Doughty, The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76, 1. Doughty argues that as a whole, “the tactical doctrine of the U.S. Army changed considerably between 1946 and 1976.” He emphasized that the change was influenced by a variety of factors: improved conventional weapons; increased mobility; nuclear weapons; military and political leaders; and inter- and intra-service rivalry. Until 1976, the focus of tactical doctrine shifted from conventional operations to nuclear, to counterinsurgency, and back to conventional operations. The result was an increasingly complex tactical doctrine. Despite this increasing complexity, however, change within FM 100-5 proceeded incrementally. For example, the tables of contents were identical for the 1949 and 1954 manuals as well as for the 1962 and 1968 manuals. This was especially the case in terms of the development of conventional doctrine for mechanized forces. As Doughty concludes, by 1976, “the doctrine for employing mechanized forces had changed only slightly since 1945.” Ibid., 46. Importantly, the overriding concept of relying on America’s industrial capacity to mobilize sufficient
Doctrine has also played a critical role in the militaries of other countries throughout the twentieth century. The effects of its development have produced dramatic consequences.\textsuperscript{51} French dedication to an ill-conceived doctrine that relied on technology and firepower at the expense of initiative and innovation contributed to their decisive defeat in May 1940.\textsuperscript{52} During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany used doctrine as an innovative tool that produced both dramatic success, such as the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), Operation Michael (or Kaiserschlacht) in Spring 1918, and the Blitzkrieg of 1939-41, as well as total failure such as battles at Stalingrad, Kursk, the Ruhr, and Berlin.\textsuperscript{53} Likewise, the Soviet Union, despite its paranoid purges, and ironically in conjunction with the Reichswehr, developed a blitzkrieg-like operational concept during the interwar years that initiated a lengthy commitment to innovative doctrinal thinking.\textsuperscript{54} Not to be outdone, and, in fact, contributing to much of the interwar innovation, British military

resources and personnel to win the “last battle,” as opposed to “the first,” remained constant throughout this period until the 1976 edition of \textit{FM 100-5, Operations}.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. The changes that did occur reflected the incorporation of new technology and equipment, namely the use of the helicopter, and changing national security policies.

\textsuperscript{51} Recently, scholars have addressed doctrine as part of the on-going debate concerning the \textit{revolution in military affairs}. Several pertinent points merit acknowledgement. Primarily, as Stephen Biddle points out in \textit{Military Power: Explaining Victory and defeat in Modern Battle} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), factors such as politics, society, and technology were clearly important in determining defeat and victory on the modern battlefield, it was “force employment,” or the doctrine, training, leadership, and tactics that determined the winners and losers of conflict.


thinkers such as J.F.C. Fuller and later B.H. Liddell-Hart also contributed to this rich context of military thought.\textsuperscript{55}

Institutionally, military doctrine has also played an important role in creating an Army’s cultural behavior: its norms, values, and practices. This has been observed in the symbiotic relationship between doctrine and a professional military’s education system. For example, contemporary counterinsurgency scholars have argued that doctrine is “an efficient way to track the development of learning in military organizations.” They argue that “changes in doctrine are prima facie evidence of military learning.”\textsuperscript{56} In fact, these ideas, expressed as “models” of “institutional learning” are quite useful for an evaluation of any type of doctrinal development and institutional learning, and represent an important component of an army’s “institutional learning cycle” (See Figure 1).\textsuperscript{57}


Such analysis provides various interpretations and demonstrations of how a military institution might go about doctrinal reform as it observes needs for change, orients itself to produce alternatives to achieve change, decides the specific course of action to produce change, and takes appropriate action to execute these changes.

General DePuy, the first commander of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), defined doctrine as the “unifying concept” that coordinated all institutional aspects of an army: combat operations, training, education, force structure, and leadership. Conceived in this expansive manner, simultaneously looking backward to history and forward to “future battle,” doctrine provided a military institution with an intellectual foundation for accomplishing its mission: a common set of principles and reference points that connected military activities with the goals of victory in battle. At the same time, and

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perhaps even more important, such a conception of military doctrine provided the U.S. Army
with an impetus—and a system—for far-reaching change.59

Collecting Kindling: The Beginning of the Renaissance

As the Vietnam War came to its disastrous close, the U.S. Army faced a long list of
daunting challenges. The American public had come to view the military with great
antagonism and diminishing respect.60 As Henry Avery, a civilian aide to the Secretary of
the Army, stated, the public did not “want to talk about Vietnam—they are tired of the body
counts—the on and off peace negotiations—the bombings—Vietnam was to them a no-win
nightmare to be forgotten.”61

America’s reaction to the tragedy of Vietnam had far-reaching effects. As early as
1969, the Nixon Doctrine reoriented the nation’s strategic focus away from Vietnam. This
policy, a response to both domestic political pressure as well as emerging strategic realities
elsewhere in the world, introduced the practice of “Vietnamization” and singled out Western
Europe “as the theater in which the [Soviet] threat was most likely.” According to Kissinger,
the Nixon Doctrine was an “effort to harmonize doctrine and capability.”62

59 For a particularly germane discussion of this implication of doctrine, see Donn A. Starry, “To Change
an Army” Military Review 63 (March 1983): 20-27. See also Lupfer, The Dynamics of Doctrine, vii-ix and 55-
58.

60 From 1971 until 1976, the Harris Public Opinion Poll confirmed that public confidence in the military
had indeed sunk to an all-time low. The Harris Poll. Confidence in Leaders of Institutions (Rochester: Harris
March 2006. In 1966, sixty-one percent of Americans expressed “a great deal of confidence” in the military.
Yet by 1971, that percentage dropped to twenty-seven percent. In 1972, it was 35%. In 1973, it was 40%. In
1974, it was 33%. In 1975, it was 24%. By 1976, the percentage fell even further to twenty-three percent.


62 Clearly, Dr. Kissinger was referring to national security policy and strategy and not the Army’s
operational or tactical doctrine. While stating that the United States would comply with its treaty obligations, to
include providing a “shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation,” it clearly stated that in
circumstances involving lesser threats, the U.S. would “look to the nation directly threatened to assume the

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focused on a “1 ½ war” strategy that anticipated maintaining conventional forces for “simultaneously meeting a major Communist attack in either Europe or Asia, assisting allies against non-Chinese threats in Asia, and contending with a contingency elsewhere.” 63

Accordingly, the Army focused on re-building its forces in Europe and, to a lesser extent, thinking about the implications of conventional warfare in the Middle East.

The tactical situation in Europe, however, was precarious. Because of President Lyndon Johnson’s refusal to mobilize the Reserves during the Vietnam War, American forces in Europe had been stripped for Southeast Asia, leaving those units under-manned, under-trained, and under-equipped. 64 The Army faced a Soviet and Warsaw Pact opponent in Eastern Europe that possessed a significant numerical superiority. 65 In 1976, NATO maintained twenty-seven divisions in Europe, consisting of 6,655 tanks and 800,000 soldiers, compared to sixty-eight divisions of 15,450 tanks and 925,000 soldiers fielded by the Warsaw Pact (see Table 1). 66 What exacerbated this numerical dilemma was the fact that while the American Army was “away in Vietnam,” the Soviets had also “been busy . . . very, 

63 Kissinger, White House Years, 215-225. See also Spiro Agnew, “Address to The United States Army Armor Association,” 14 May 1971, Box 2, The Donn A Starry Papers.


very busy” in modernizing their forward-deployed troops in Europe with new equipment and increasingly sophisticated operational concepts.⁶⁷

Table 1: The quantitative disparities between the Warsaw Pact and NATO forces in Europe were quite daunting. When evaluated in conjunction with qualitatively superior tactics, doctrine, and technology—not to mention the Americans’ recent defeat in Vietnam—the Warsaw Pact’s tactical and operational superiority gave American military leaders much concern.

In sum, General Donn A. Starry, who commanded the Army’s V Corps in Europe from 1976 to 1977, concluded that the “battle damage” of Vietnam, especially in the American forces in Europe, was “extensive.” To make matters worse, the Army suffered from an acute lack of discipline underscored by rampant racial tension, drug abuse, and crime in the ranks. At the same time, the Army was also absorbing a dramatic decrease in defense funding. According to Starry, the “U.S. Army was somewhere close to its nadir.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Donn A. Starry, interview by author, 05 December 2006, Williamsburg, Virginia, Digital recording. Hereafter referred to as Starry interview, 05 December 2006. In fact, the Red Army had “revised operational concepts at the tactical and operational levels, increased their fielded force structure, and introduced new equipment featuring one or more generations of new technology.” Starry, “Reflections,” 546-547. See also Naveh, In Pursuit of Excellence, 209-249.

As a result of these challenges, many soldiers and officers simply did not believe that they could stop the communist forces from overrunning Western Europe. Soldiers assigned to the U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR) saw themselves “as minor speed bumps” for Soviet forces en route to the Rhine River and Western Europe; “they did not believe they could defend successfully, let alone win.” Even General DePuy expressed such sentiments. In 1973, he bluntly stated, “if you ask me what I think about the present status of the United States Army when I measure it against the requirement of being twice or three times as good as a battalion that you might find on the other side,” a necessary requirement given the disparities in the number of units available to either the U.S. Army or the Soviets, “I have to tell you we haven’t got it. We’re not there. We are not anywhere near there.”

In order to overcome this atmosphere of pessimism and fear, the leaders of the nascent Training and Doctrine Command decided that they needed nothing less than “a revolution in military thought.” DePuy and Starry, among other key leaders, both recognized the need for this “revolution,” and actively sought the spark from which to initiate it. As early as March 1972 when a Brigadier Starry, then a senior member on the Army Staff and about to become one of DePuy’s chief subordinates and collaborators, lamented his frustrations


concerning the “horrible inertia” surrounding any effort to reform the doctrinal or organizational aspects of the U.S. Army. Referring to the need for this “revolution in military thought,” he stated that “the last such revolution,” which changed the Army’s national military policy from preparing a small force of “volunteers” for combat to supporting a national effort to “mobilize” masses of conscripts, “was over forty years in the making—from Emory Upton to Elihu Root and the early years of the General Staff. We haven't forty years to spare now.” Starry continued, “How do we get even a partial consensus at a level where we can move ahead?” Despite Starry’s frustration, however, he was not the only senior leader within the post-Vietnam Army who sought consensus and reform.

Importantly, other leaders and previous initiatives had already begun to establish the foundations of the very consensus DePuy and Starry sought. Starting in the late-1960s and early 1970s, guided by both William C. Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams in their successive tours of Army Chief of Staff, the Army’s senior leadership inaugurated a number of introspective studies and programs that ultimately contributed to significant doctrinal reforms. These efforts, of which the 1970 Study on Military Professionalism was a part, established the supporting pillars of consensus needed for a renaissance, if not Starry’s call for a revolution, in military thought.

During the early 1970s, in addition to coming to terms with the formidable tactical challenges posed by the hordes of the Soviet Group Forces-Europe, the Army was

72 Ibid.

73 This same renaissance, argued by many to have been a result of later doctrinal debates, actually preceded the conceptual debates of the late 1970s. In fact, this renaissance would actually propel the subsequent debates and ultimately provide an important—perhaps even decisive—influence on the determination of future U.S. Army doctrine.
“unavoidably and understandably” preoccupied with “problems of morale, motivation, and the directly related problem of attracting and retaining volunteers.” Significantly, the primary thrust of these early efforts was educational and intellectual in nature as the initial stirrings of this “inward looking time” emerged from the three primary intellectual hubs of the Army: the United States Military Academy at West Point; the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks.

At West Point, two important factors emerged in the early 1970s. First, West Point hosted the 1971 Department of the Army Ad Hoc Committee on the Army Need for the Study of Military History. Despite its inelegant title, the committee, formed by Westmoreland and led by the head of West Point’s history department, Colonel Thomas E. Griess, explored a series of important professional questions for the entire officer corps. According to Dr. Brooks Kleber, at the time the historian for the U.S. Continental Army Command and a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, the committee underscored that “in a time of turmoil and transition, a major source of professionalism, stability, and integrity could be found in the study of military history.” The committee’s final report did more than reaffirm the importance of military history within the professional cannon of the U.S. Army, however. The Ad Hoc Committee’s recommendations prompted significant changes in the curricula throughout the Army’s extensive school system. As a result, officers of all ranks began to receive additional education in military history.

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74 General William E. DePuy to General Fred C. Weyand, 18 February 1976, Box 11 and 17 (duplicate), The William E. DePuy Papers.

Committee introduced a new phrase and an important professional concept into the Army’s lexicon: *historical mindedness*.\(^{77}\) The committee identified this notion as the primary professional value related to the study of military history and as the essential goal of its ambitious, Army-wide program reinvigorating the study and appreciation of military history.

A second factor that emerged at the Military Academy involved a slightly different, yet no less important, facet of the academy’s faculty. Starting in the mid-1960s, an increasing number of serving officers began to attend graduate school, particularly in the disciplines of the social sciences and the humanities.\(^{78}\) In addition to improving the scholarly credentials of the Academy and providing better instruction to cadets, these educational opportunities produced Army officers that were experienced (due to their combat service in Vietnam), trained at some of the top graduate schools of their respective disciplines, and professionally prepared to continue both learning and teaching throughout the Army’s school systems and in its operational units.\(^{79}\) Again, Colonel Griess, the head of the history department, as well

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\(^{76}\) Leonard D. Holder, interview by author, 10 November 2006, Georgetown, Texas, Digital recording. Hereafter referred to as Holder, interview, 10 November 2006. Although LTG (ret) Holder commented that the actual commission was not well-known throughout the Army, but “it was very influential I think, concerning what was actually taught.” Holder continued, “Brigadier General (ret) Griess was a great instructor. He was just a steady competent guy who knew the value of history and insisted that it be taught. . . I mean if you look at that, that’s another thing that kind of worked on that 100-5 period too. There was that network of historians, from Bob Doughty to Hal Nelson to Bill Stoff . . . They were readers of the drafts, writers of articles at the time, and the Army, at that time, was pretty interested in history.”

\(^{77}\) According to the committee, an officer imbued with such a cast of mind, “will develop the habit of searching for broad themes over lengthy periods; he will avoid convenient generalizations and single causation; he will learn to weigh evidence and infer logical conclusions. . . As he becomes more historical minded, man learns to come to terms with his fellow man and to think about the aspects of human nature which so often govern individual actions.” Department of the Army, *Department of the Army Ad Hoc Committee Report on the Army Need for the Study of Military History* (West Point, NY, May 1971, 4 vols), vol. II, D-2. See also Brooks Kleber, “History and Military Education: The U.S. Army” *Military Affairs* 42 (October 1978): 136-141.


\(^{79}\) Doughty and Crackel, “The History of History at West Point,” 416.
as his colleague, Colonel George A. Lincoln, head of the social sciences department, led the way in recruiting outstanding soldier-scholars to their faculty. Names that would continue to resonate throughout the Army during the 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s taught in these two departments in particular.\(^80\) Together these officers took great advantage of the opportunity to reflect on their collective experiences in Vietnam, their profession, and the nature of war.\(^81\)

The early 1970s also marked a time of significant change at the Army’s Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Responding to the findings of Griess’s Ad Hoc Committee as well as the 1966 Department of the Army Board to Review Army Officer Schools (the Haines Board), the Army’s oldest and perhaps most important school expanded the scope of its curriculum.\(^82\) This resulted in an increased focus on the nature of teaching, which began to occur in small discussion groups highlighting case studies and facilitating classroom debates. The Haines Board also affected the nature of the curriculum, which expanded to include an increasing number of elective courses.\(^83\)


\(^81\) As L. Don Holder recalled, to those officers who experienced it, graduate school was very important; “it kept me in the Army and really widened my perspective.” Holder interview, 10 November 2006.


The arrival of Major General John H. Cushman and Brigadier General Benjamin Harrison in June 1973 accelerated these changes. A diversity of new departments, teaching committees, and courses, such as the Applied Military History Committee and the accreditation of a master’s degree program (the Master of Military Art and Science (MMAS) Program) emerged and improved the quality and depth of instruction. Significantly, these “turbulent” (Cushman’s phrase) changes produced an intellectual climate that would ultimately affect the Army’s future tactical and operational doctrine.

The findings of the Haines Board also promoted significant change in the early 1970s at the Army’s most senior educational facility, the Army War College. Like Leavenworth, the War College’s pedagogy and curriculum underwent significant change as it offered an increasing number of electives. The changes at the War College, however, also included important institutional activities that resided outside of its classroom curriculum. In fact, some of the more important changes within the War College involved the development of a series of introspective research initiatives, such as the Army Research Associates Program and the reconfiguration of its in-house think tank, the Strategic Studies Institute. The War

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87 The Army Research Associates Program, which began in 1971, offered a small number of officers to attend leading civilian universities while pursuing independent studies at the post-graduate or fellowship level. This opportunity—through which the constructive criticism offered by Bradford and Brown as well as Hauser came to fruition—allowed selected officers the chance to “read, think, and write in the field of national security affairs” from the unique perspective and the “stimulating surroundings of the civilian academy” in order to provide the Army with nothing less than “fresh insight.” Hauser, *America’s Army in Crisis*, xi-xiii. Moreover, the early 1970s witnessed the War College’s reconfiguration of the Strategic Studies Institute—an internal War College organization that provided the college and the Army with original research concerning strategy and the national management of war and warfare. Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 446-447.
College also began the publication of a professional journal, called *Parameters*, started an oral history program that interviewed retiring senior officers, and initiated several studies and panels to examine the Army’s participation and ultimate failure in the war in Southeast Asia.88

In addition to these intellectual and institutional initiatives developing at the Army’s primary educational institutions, important changes also occurred within the Army’s senior leadership. In October 1972, Creighton Abrams succeeded William C. Westmoreland as Chief of Staff of the Army. Abrams, who had previously followed Westmoreland as the Commander of American forces during the final years in Vietnam, quickly began assessing the state of the Army and its need for professionalism and inspiration in the wake of that conflict. True to form (the name of his tank dating back to World War II was “Thunderbolt”), Abrams quickly made a significant impact on the emerging renaissance in American military thought through a combination of important initiatives, statements, and especially questions.

One of Abrams’ primary concerns focused on the Army’s intertwined problems of personnel and morale. Confronted with a significant drawdown in forces, the transition to the all-volunteer force, and the ethical and psychological scars of Vietnam, Abrams faced a formidable challenge. Abrams’s analysis of the problem, however, went far deeper than just numbers of personnel or divisions available, although these were clearly pertinent issues. He worried that the Army’s malaise as seen in the forces deployed throughout Europe resulted from a total loss of confidence in themselves, their Army, and their mission.89


This distressing lack of confidence had an immediate effect on Abrams. As a result, he emphasized that all reforms had to keep leadership, morale, and the well-being of soldiers in mind. The Chief of Staff would constantly harangue anyone within earshot that “The Army is not made of people; the Army is people.” Most importantly, Abrams maintained a realistic perspective on taking the deliberate steps required to rebuild the Army in the post-Vietnam era.90

Abrams’s most profound professional contributions as Chief of Staff emerged in a series of clear statements about leadership that were accompanied by a litany of questions, all designed for the Army to ponder. Handwritten notes within the margins of staff actions and proposals were typical: “How does [this] action make the Army better?” He commissioned research on basic questions that went to the heart of confidence and morale: “Why do we need an Army? . . . What kind of an Army should we have?” Moreover, Abrams insisted that leaders at all levels focus on the basics by emphasizing training, readiness, and a genuine concern for soldiers. In other words, Abrams perceived his mission as one focused on efforts to restore the Army’s confidence and even the Army’s own belief in its reason for existence. He constantly reminded officers that the Army must maintain “a sense of purpose and a dedication to that purpose. There must be a willingness to march a little farther, to carry a heavier load, to step out into the dark and the unknown for the safety and well-being of others.”91

90 Abrams once described the challenges of the 1970s as, “We have some raveled ends to pull together and a lot of temporary patches to replace. This is hard, slow work…it’s a challenge.” Creighton Abrams, quoted in Lewis Sorley, Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 346 and 370.

Abrams’s leadership during this critical period cannot be overstated. Interestingly, at its most profound, his leadership emerged in the form of questions. General Starry, who had served with Abrams throughout his career, described the Chief of Staff as an “interrogative commander.” He “taught people by asking questions. . . . He did nothing but ask questions, but in researching to answer his questions, you learned.” Consequently, Abrams not only provided leadership, but to the officers that served with him, like Starry, “he taught us, from beginning to end, as I long as I knew him.”

Never loquacious, Abrams’ direct manner infused a degree of confidence within the Army, especially among a small coterie of protégés that Abrams continually talked with and relied upon. During an early 1973 meeting, prior to Starry’s assumption of command of the U.S. Army’s Armor Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Abrams stated, “We’ve got to reorganize,” and, in his characteristic form of question-based pedagogy, he asked Starry, “What would you do?” As their discussion progressed, they talked about the need to stabilize personnel and manning systems throughout the force, but more importantly, they talked about the need to reform the manner in which the Army trained its soldiers, educated its officers, and created its war-fighting doctrine. At the end of the meeting, Abrams gave Starry the marching orders the younger general followed for the remainder of his career: “What I want you to do now,” Abrams said “is get the Army off its ass.”

Abrams’s guidance and his personal example instilled a new spirit throughout the ranks of the Army’s senior leadership. Even during his abbreviated tour as the Chief of Staff,

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92 Starry Interview, 05 December 2006.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
Abrams clearly showed the way forward as he garnered necessary political support, provided an example of personal leadership and energy, and fostered the intellectual stimulus for future change.\(^95\) Thus, through effective leadership and a series of critical decisions that placed talented officers, such as DePuy and Starry, in influential positions throughout the early 1970s, Abrams’s impact on future reforms were influential long after his death.

By 1973, all these factors—critical institutions, required concepts, and necessary leaders—were in place. At the same time, the institutional structures, particularly at the Command and General Staff College, which were necessary to facilitate an in-depth professional debate concerning the Army’s future doctrine, also fell into place. Because of these developments and inspired leadership from Abrams and his handpicked cadre of leaders and protégés, the overarching climate existed for the Army to change.

**The Spark: Failure, Frustration, and The Arab-Israeli War of 1973**

These intellectual and institutional developments did not occur in a vacuum, however. In fact, the impetus of reform intersected with a pervasive acknowledgement of failure in Vietnam. Defeat in Vietnam manifested itself throughout the Army’s officer corps in several ways. On the one hand, the shadow of defeat exacerbated the atmosphere of pessimism and fear seen in Europe while accentuating the officer corps’ sentiments of frustration expressed in the *Study on Professionalism*. Yet on the other hand, this admission encouraged the War College’s self-critical programs of introspection, although it did so within a certain set of parameters.

\(^95\) Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 361 and 372.
For the Army, like the public at large, Vietnam was more of a nightmare to be forgotten than a repository of experience from which to learn.\textsuperscript{96} In the early 1970s, American military leaders firmly believed that they could not afford another debacle like Vietnam; to them, neither the nation, nor their specific military institutions could weather another quagmire as divisive as Vietnam. In other words, the Army was “unwilling to tear open wounds so recently and tentatively healed.”\textsuperscript{97} The phrase “No more Vietnams” became a mantra within the Army of the 1970s, 1980s, and even the 1990s. As one serving officer described it, “After getting out of Vietnam, the Army looked around and realized it should not try to fight that kind of war again.”\textsuperscript{98}

And so defeat in Vietnam played an important, yet dual, role in sparking the American renaissance in military thought. Such sentiments served not only as a catalyst for change, but they also shaped the direction of that change as well. Because of this important duality (which was encouraged by the social, political, and strategic context of the times), as the renaissance developed further, it progressed in the opposite direction from directly assessing the lessons of Vietnam. The Army looked to other forms of warfare that diminished, if not the impact of reform, at least its scope to an almost obsessive focus on the tactics and operations of conventional war.


\textsuperscript{97} Captain Andrew J. Bacevich, Jr. “A Dissenting View of the Next War,” Armor 85 (September-October 1976): 42. Bacevich presaged a point made repeatedly in Nagl’s Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: that the Army ignored counterinsurgency doctrine and the tactical lessons of Vietnam at its peril. As Bacevich described the problem in 1976, “we have transformed conventional war into something more than mere feasibility. Rather it is rapidly becoming an obsession.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{98} Major Donald B. Vought, “Preparing for the Wrong War?” Military Review (May 1977): 32.
A combination of bureaucratic frustration, an aversion to anything that smelled of Vietnam, and the abject fear and genuine professional concern about the Soviet threat is viscerally palpable when reviewing the archival evidence, oral histories, and memoirs of the Army’s high command throughout the early 1970s. As Starry recalled, in addition to masses of Soviet conventional forces, “to the east was the threat of nuclear Armageddon—an end to civilization as we knew it, by means of thermonuclear warheads aboard intercontinental ballistic missiles.” Instead of surrender and defeat, the real possibility of total annihilation existed. Further to the east, “there appeared the equally ominous, but less well understood threat of the destruction of states and their peoples by the work of radical revolutionaries of various persuasions from political to religious.” More importantly, “in the wake of Vietnam,” the American Army was “largely incapable of coping with either threat.”

These concerns resulted in a discussion among the leaders of TRADOC and General Abrams. As the Army’s senior leaders expressed their apprehensions through both official correspondence and unofficial conversations, a clear doctrinal dilemma quickly emerged. Quite simply, they faced a stark choice: should the Army focus on confronting the Soviet conventional forces in Europe, or should the Army develop its forces to meet the challenges of revolutionary war? According to Starry, Abrams “decided that the primary threat remained against NATO Europe; and to that we turned our undivided attention.”

As with any choice, Abrams’s decision involved a degree of negation; the Army’s awareness of what

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100 Ibid., 7-8
really happened in Vietnam and the process of institutional learning about its recent experience of irregular, guerilla warfare would have to wait.  

Despite all of these important first steps, the Army’s pioneering leaders were still in need of a catalyst for change. The Army required a paradigm or an event that could overcome the institutional pessimism and frustration that emanated from the U.S. Army’s defeat in Vietnam. Throughout the Army, leaders lacked a necessary focal point on which to build consensus and provide a positive example of the need for, and the potential of, significant reform and change.

Fortuitously, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War provided the catalyst for that consensus. The war “vividly illustrated the lethality of modern weapons and the high value of crew proficiency and the skill of tactical commanders.” The nature of the fighting provided an

101 Importantly, this “choice” was to have serious and long-standing consequences. As Nagl correctly points out, “the U.S. Army has failed to form a consensus on the lessons of Vietnam and has not accepted the idea that revolutionary war requires a qualitatively different response from the conventional warfare it knows so well how to fight.” Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife, 205. He goes on to emphasize that in the post-Vietnam era, the Army was aware of its doctrinal deficiencies in its counterinsurgency doctrine, but took no substantial action to correct those shortcomings. My own research has confirmed this. Within the official archives of the TRADOC Commander’s counterinsurgency doctrine was not discussed at all until the mid-1980s. Even then, that topic—unlike AirLand Battle and Active Defense—was quickly delegated to either the Infantry or the Special Forces community to develop or revise any doctrine. See General William R. Richardson to Lieutenant General Carl Vuono, 21 January 1985, Box 5, The William R. Richardson Papers, Special Collections, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA for one of the first instances of serious high-level discussions concerning low-intensity conflict and counterinsurgency operations.

102 See Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 25-36. Herbert dedicated an entire chapter describing the influence of the 1973 Yom Kippur War on DePuy and TRADOC as a whole. It is important to note, however, that the war served as a reaffirmation of DePuy’s ideas that had been germinating for almost thirty years.

opportunity, or “a marvelous excuse,” for the U.S. Army’s own doctrinal reform.\textsuperscript{104} Most significantly, the Arab-Israeli conflict represented the antithesis to the experience of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{105} It was technologically advanced, conventional in scope, orthodox in character, and, at least for the Israelis, ultimately successful.

As General Starry evaluated the situation, “the armored battlefields of the Yom Kippur War yielded striking lessons about what to expect in the first and succeeding battles of the next war.” In full agreement with General DePuy, Starry emphasized the powerful impact of technologically advanced weapons systems on the battlefield. He concluded that “the U.S. military should expect modern battlefields to be dense with large numbers of weapons systems whose lethality at extended ranges would surpass previous experience by nearly an order of magnitude.”\textsuperscript{106} Starry’s more substantive conclusions, however, focused on more than just the technological aspects of warfare. Starry came to believe that “the outcome of the battle at the tactical and operational levels will be decided by factors other than numbers, and other than who attacks and who defends. . . In the end, the side that somehow, at some time, somewhere during the battle seizes the initiative and holds it to the end is the side that wins.” As a whole, the war and its lessons provided a realistic example that paralleled NATO’s challenge in Western Europe: modern technological warfare where a heavily outnumbered force achieved victory by relying on leadership, creative use of terrain, and initiative.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{104} DePuy, \textit{Changing an Army}, 189.

\textsuperscript{105} See also, Lock-Pullan, “An Inward Looking Time,” 483-512 and “How to Rethink War: Conceptual Innovation and AirLand Battle Doctrine,” 679-702,


“A Radical Departure”: The Development of Active Defense

The leaders of the United States Army wasted no time in their attempts to take advantage of the experience of the IDF. Within a few weeks of the cessation of hostilities, Abrams dispatched Starry, then the commander of the Army’s Armor Center, to Israel to investigate the battlefields and “lessons” of that conflict. Starry’s report, distributed throughout the Army’s command structure, provided “the required framework to guide future Army actions and improvements.”

The short, violent, and technologically advanced nature of the war greatly affected leading military thinkers, both in and out of uniform. As Starry stated:

Historically, the United States and other western nations have assumed they could afford to lose the first few battles of the next war because mobilization of men and materiel in factories and military training centers, and mobilization of mutual support among allies would soon permit the building of an allied force which would overwhelm our enemies, win the last few battles, and so the war. Today, we believe it is no longer realistic to depend so on a mobilization system. For a number of reasons, it appears that we should expect wars of the future to be shorter and more violent than in the past. And so, the important—essential task of NATO military forces is to win the first battles of the next war.

This paradigm shift from winning the last battle to winning the first became central to TRADOC’s doctrinal reform.

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108 Starry, “Reflections,” 548. Major General Starry and Brigadier General Robert Baer, who was the head of the Army’s efforts to develop a new main battle tank, were in England for consultations with the British and German armies on future tank designs when the Army received approval to send an advance team to Israel. General Abrams decided to send both Starry, who at the time was the commander of the U.S. Army Armor Center, and Baer to examine these “armored” battlefields as well as to determine the initial wider lessons of that conflict. This was the first of four trips Starry would make to Israel throughout the course of the 1970s. See also Starry, SOOHP Interview, 132-133, and 462.


110 Donn A. Starry, “How the Battle Against Warsaw Pact Armor and Air Can Be Won,” Manuscript for Flug Revue International, 26 February 1976, Box 6, The Donn A. Starry Papers. This article summarized the results of Starry’s first fact-finding trip to Israel. A large portion of the article—and its drafts—correspond directly with Starry’s initial “Lessons Learned” report.
In July 1974, General DePuy attempted to make this reform a collaborative endeavor among the leading generals within his command. In a letter to his subordinate commanders and their staffs, DePuy used a descriptive analogy to communicate his desire for a collaborative intellectual effort to develop the concepts and principles from which the 1976 version of *FM 100-5, Operations* would eventually evolve: “In France, in the house of a peasant there is always a pot of soup boiling in the fireplace. From time to time, someone throws in a potato, leek, some chicken stock or beef gravy, an occasional carrot or whatever. Over time, the soup gets better and better. Everyone can add to it and anyone may partake.” As he introduced his evolving ideas concerning tactics and doctrine to his subordinates, DePuy continued, “I view the attached paper somewhat the same way.”\(^{111}\)

This process, with its attempts to evoke DePuy’s “pot of soup” and its efforts to encourage doctrinal discussion, centered on what became known as the “How to Fight” series of manuals.\(^{112}\) These field manuals consisted of forty-two different publications ranging from general tactical operations, such as armor and infantry operations, to anti-armor tactics, and aviation techniques and procedures. DePuy identified the centerpiece of his reform efforts as the revision of *Field Manual 100-5, Operations*, “the capstone manual on the operations of the Army in the field.”\(^{113}\)


\(^{112}\) General DePuy focused his personal attention and that of his commanding generals on three manuals: the capstone manual (*FM 100-5, Operations*); an anti-armor manual; and an aviation manual. Ibid.

Despite DePuy’s attempts of collaboration, however, the reform process remained relatively isolated from both the Army and the broader defense establishment.\footnote{114} Although awareness of the on-going doctrinal revision was common, few officers outside of those in the highest levels of command knew of the actual substance of the proposed changes.\footnote{115} Several important factors contributed to this isolation. First, both Abrams and his successor, General Frederick C. Weyand, provided extensive support to DePuy’s reform efforts.\footnote{116} This support came in the form of Abram’s initial guidance—such as his gruff marching orders to “get the Army off its ass”—as well as limited correspondence concerning the project’s progress from Weyand. More importantly, however, General Abrams’s illness and death in office created an “institutional vacuum” within the Army’s senior leadership that DePuy fully exploited.\footnote{117} This left DePuy relatively unhindered to continue the process as he saw fit.

Second, the limited defense spending of the mid-1970s prompted congressional oversight of TRADOC to focus almost exclusively on weapons systems acquisitions and operational costs.\footnote{118} In fact, the documentary record indicates very few instances where

\footnote{114} For an account of DePuy’s doctrinal formulation and the creation of Active Defense, see Herbert, \textit{Deciding What Has to Be Done}, 45-61.\footnote{115} Herbert, \textit{Deciding What Has to Be Done}, 104.\footnote{116} General Creighton W. Abrams to General William E. DePuy, 15 August 1974, Box 27, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also General William E. DePuy to General Frederick C. Weyand, 29 April 1975, 24 June 1975, 7 October 1975, 17 December 1975, and 18 February 1976, Box 16, The William E. DePuy Papers. Furthermore, as General Starry points out, much of the broader post-Vietnam reforms were initiated and supported by Abrams. “There was a widespread consensus that the Army needed substantial rebuilding. That rebuilding began with General Abrams’s appointment as Chief of Staff in the fall of 1972. By the summer of 1973, reorganization of the Army’s command structure was underway. That reorganization included, among other changes, dividing CONARC into FORSCOM and TRADOC.” Starry, “Reflections,” 548.\footnote{117} Swain, “AirLand Battle,” 364-365.\footnote{118} General William E. DePuy to General Frederick C. Weyand, 29 April 1975, Box 16, The William E. DePuy Papers.
Congress directly asked General DePuy a question concerning doctrine.\textsuperscript{119} What evidence that does exist suggests that DePuy’s interactions with Congress typically involved weapons systems acquisitions, the budget, and concerns that TRADOC’s programs be conducted in close coordination with the Bundeswehr and other NATO allies; all efforts that were already well underway.\textsuperscript{120}

Finally, a significant disagreement between DePuy and Major General John Cushman, head of the Combined Arms Center and the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth also contributed to the nature of the doctrinal reform.\textsuperscript{121} This disagreement, which was compounded by the fact that Leavenworth was the traditional site for doctrinal development, represented the first of a critical series of debates concerning the Army’s operational doctrine.

The doctrinal disagreement between DePuy and Cushman originated as a matter of personality, experience, and perspective. Significantly, the two officers would never compromise. On the one hand, DePuy clearly saw doctrine as a tool to integrate the myriad activities of a complex institution and to describe how the Army should fight. Cushman, on the other hand, saw the war-fighting substance of doctrine as its singular function and placed little significance on the doctrine’s ability to integrate various institutional activities.\textsuperscript{122} For example, DePuy defined doctrine as the “unifying concept” that coordinated all aspects of an


\textsuperscript{121} Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 51-59.

\textsuperscript{122} General William E. DePuy to Major General Michael E. Ryan, USAF, 15 July 1976, Box 12, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also, Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 54-56.
army: operations, training, education, force structure, and leadership. Conversely, Cushman approached doctrine as an intellectual expression of “principles and policies . . . developed through experience or by theory, that represent the best available thought that can be defended by reason.” Moreover, in lieu of DePuy’s desire for a clear statement of warfighting techniques that outlined “How to Fight,” Cushman took a more philosophical approach to the creation of doctrine. For Cushman, “the search for valid doctrine [was], at its root, a search for truth.” DePuy knew exactly what he wanted and demanded an almost linear order to the process. Cushman, however, was prepared to embrace the chaos of creative development as a down payment for innovation. As a result, Cushman viewed the doctrinal reform process as a collaborative, non-linear intellectual effort that avoided specific prescriptions of how to fight. When it came to doctrine, DePuy and Cushman were speaking different languages.

125 Ibid. See also Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 51-60.
126 Ibid.
127 The A.P. Hill Draft of FM 100-5, the initial revision of the 1968 FM 100-5 was prepared at Fort Leavenworth under the supervision of Cushman in accordance with the “guidance” described above. The draft was prepared for a TRADOC Commanders’ Conference held at Fort A.P. Hill in December 1974. Basing much of his philosophy on a dialectic process of the discovery of “truth,” (Cushman’s CGSC Approach to Writing Doctrinal Literature’s format is that of a dialectic progression to determine the definition of doctrine), the A.P. Hill draft started with the premise that “Tactics is a thinking man's art. It has certain principles which can be learned, but it has no traffic with rules.” Department of the Army, “Field Manual 100-5 (Test), Operations, A.P. Hill Draft,” 02 December 1974, Special Collections, U.S. Army Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS. This phrase, which Cushman lifted from George C. Marshall’s 1934 work, Infantry in Battle, was in total contradiction from the didactic tone focusing on tactical fundamentals and prescriptions of “How to Fight” that DePuy was applying to all the Army’s war-fighting manuals. Interestingly, this was not DePuy’s nor Cushman’s first time to collaborate on the creation of Army doctrine. In 1958, both officers corresponded with one another in their efforts to produce the 1962 version of FM 100-5. Ironically, DePuy, then a colonel, informed Major Cushman, that “with respect to the future of the coordination group and what we will be doing, there is naturally much speculation owing to a change in personalities. It is impossible to forecast what will happen because this kind of office takes its character and sets its pace from the personality of its
DePuy’s dissatisfaction with Cushman’s initial doctrinal products, known as the “A.P. Hill Draft” of FM 100-5, prompted the TRADOC Commander to oversee the creation of the new FM 100-5 personally from his headquarters at Fort Monroe. In fact, DePuy and Starry, along with one of DePuy’s chief assistants, Brigadier General Paul Gorman, did much of the conceptualization and actual writing of the manual themselves. Accordingly, the resulting doctrine accentuated the personal predilections of these men and greatly magnified their influence.

DePuy’s formative experience of combat in World War II appeared in the new doctrine’s focus on small-unit tactics. DePuy served in the 90th Infantry Division during World War II and witnessed extensive fighting in the “hedgerow” country during the initial Allied attempts to break out of the Normandy beachhead in July and August 1944. Inadequate leadership and insufficient training marred the division until late 1944. As DePuy later remarked, “In Normandy, the 90th Division was a killing machine—of our own troops.” These shortcomings, contrasted to the tactical skill that DePuy witnessed “on the receiving

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128 DePuy Interview, Changing an Army, 187-188. This started with DePuy’s rejection of Cushman’s draft presented at the first meeting of all of the TRADOC commanders at Fort A.P. Hill in December 1974. See Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 51-59.

129 General DePuy described the new manuals as having “a strong Gorman/DePuy touch.” General William E. DePuy to Lieutenant General McAlister, Memorandum, “TRADOC Publications,” 3 November 1975, Box 22, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also DePuy, “Draft Concept Paper for Combat Operations,” Manuscript, 1975, Box 17, The William E. DePuy Papers. What is remarkable about this document is the numerous sheets of legal pad sheets, on which DePuy personally wrote large portions of the actual content of the manual. Such activities were unusual for a four-star general. Normally, the process of writing the manual fell to subordinates. DePuy maintained a team of doctrine writers, known as the “Boathouse Gang,” but stayed extremely involved in the process. Additionally, General Starry specifically stated that he was the author on the chapters on the offense and defense. See General Donn A. Starry to Major General George S. Patton, III, 11 November 1976, Box 7, The Donn A. Starry Papers. See also Starry Interview, 05 December 2006; Starry, interview by Romjue, 19 March 1993; and Donn A. Starry, interview by LTC Matthias A. Spruill and LTC Edwin T. Vernon, June 1986, transcript, Senior Officer Oral History Program, Special Collections, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA. Hereafter referred to as Starry, SOOHP Interview, June 1986.

130 See Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 21-22.
end” of the Wehrmacht, would continue to dominate his thinking for the remainder of his career.\(^{131}\)

Because of his experience in both World War II and Vietnam, DePuy continually emphasized the importance of tactical fundamentals, competent leadership, and a pervasive need to “focus on the basics.”\(^{132}\) His memories from fighting the Wehrmacht in Europe in 1944 and 1945 and Vietnamese communist forces in 1966 and 1967 led DePuy to conclude that the Army had too little focus on the fundamental skills of soldiering in battle.\(^{133}\) As he emphasized in July 1973, “nobody . . . seems to be concerned . . . about the adequacy or the quality for the techniques and tactics of our . . . platoons, squads, crews, troops and companies. Yet, this is where we are really weak, and this is where we are very, very, very vague.”\(^{134}\) The 1973 Arab-Israeli War merely reinforced DePuy’s career-long focus on the fundamental building blocks of tactical acumen and skill.\(^{135}\)

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\(^{131}\) DePuy, Changing an Army, 202 and 1-67.


\(^{133}\) As a result, much of his correspondence is marked with the ironic, yet repeated occurrence of a four-star general, a leader at the highest level of command constantly talking about the specific techniques and procedures of squads, crews, and teams at the lowest levels of the organizational structure. See General William E. DePuy to Major General Donn A. Starry, 26 February 1975, Box 10, The William E. DePuy Papers.

\(^{134}\) General William E. DePuy to Lieutenant General Richard G. Stillwell, 23 July 1973, Box 13, The William E. DePuy Papers. Given this emphasis on avoiding vagueness throughout the Army’s library of manuals, he probably did not get past the second paragraph of Cushman’s draft before deciding to write the manual with a small team of writers directly under his supervision.

\(^{135}\) DePuy, Perlman Interview, 23 September 1986. DePuy specifically referred to the effective use of the “pile-on” tactics of the Vietnam War, in which most battles started with a small, outnumbered American or South Vietnamese unit under attack by a large VC or NVA force also found its way into the manual. As DePuy described it, “the game was to reinforce quickly and massively by fire and maneuver.” Starry, in numerous
Intellectually, DePuy was a product of the operations research and statistical analysis-intensive Pentagon of the 1960s. Sometimes referred to as “the Army’s most brilliant general,” DePuy was a relentless perfectionist who reveled in statistics and particularly responded to analytical staff work that approached problems from a “systems engineering” perspective. These predilections would have a significant impact on the nature of the statistic-heavy information that populated the pages of the revised manual DePuy was writing.

For his part, Starry was also affected by his own experience. Probably Abrams’s most intimate protégé, Starry wrote the two main chapters of the 1976 manual (on offense and defense) based not on combat experience in World War II or Korea, but on his extensive duty in Cold War Europe, conducting counterinsurgency operations in South Korea from 1954 to 1956, and in several significant positions in Vietnam, to include commanding the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment during the invasion of Cambodia. Starry, a true polymath, was also a self-taught intellectual and a bibliophile, who focused the majority of his reading on military history (as indicated by his personal library of over 4,000 books).

Most importantly, Starry’s interactions with the IDF throughout the early 1970s and his strong affinity for military history caused him to apply relevant historical analysis and recent military experience in the creation of the new manual. Upon returning from his initial tour interviews, emphasized that it was this reaffirmation of the conclusions that he and DePuy were forming in 1972-1973 that made the October War so important to the U.S. Army. See Starry, SOOHP Interview, June 1986, 460-461.

136 See Herbert, Deciding What Has to Be Done, 11-22 and 85-88. Herbert even describes the “boathouse gang” of doctrine writers as experts in operations research who were specifically selected “because they were capable of the sort of analytical staff work that would influence General DePuy.”

137 See Donn A. Starry, “Library Inventory,” June 1983, Box 1, The Donn A. Starry Papers; Starry, “Officer Record Brief,” Box 1, The Donn A. Starry Papers.
of the Yom Kippur battlefields, Starry, working in close collaboration with DePuy, continued to refine his conclusions concerning the fighting there and the nature of modern warfare. By mid-1974, these ruminations evolved into a “concept paper” and a later briefing and series of journal articles entitled, “Modern Armor Battle.”

Based almost exclusively on his findings and reflections on the Yom Kippur War, “Modern Armor Battle” sought to portend “what we could expect to encounter in modern armor battle.” Importantly, Starry viewed its creation as the first step in an important dialogue “where we started trying to get people to respond to it; [to] get some kind of a conversation going.” The concept paper emphasized that “long range, high velocity tank cannon, and long range anti-armor missile systems” would “dominate the modern battlefield.” Introducing a popular phrase of the time, the concept paper clearly stated, “Anything they can see can be taken under fire and hit. Anything they hit can be killed.” The “think-piece,” which also appeared in an expanded form as bi-monthly serial articles in

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138 Starry was quite taken with the IDF. As he stated in a letter to Major General George S. Patton III, “if only we could capture the secret of motivation, devotion, determination, and all else that is so evident everywhere in the IDF—but I keep reminding myself it’s in the leadership, old comrade—it’s in the leadership.” General Donn A. Starry to Major General George S. Patton, III, 24 July 1978, Box 13, The Donn A. Starry Papers.

139 Starry Interview, 05 December 2006. Not surprisingly, as Starry described its development, “Modern Armor Battle” was a response to a question posited by General Abrams. While visiting Fort Knox in early 1974, the Chief of Staff queried Starry, “So what are you doing about doctrine?” Starry responded by handing him “a paper—a concept paper—a ‘think’ paper. It quickly became a thing called ‘Modern Armor Battle.’” The first archival appearance of this concept paper is in July 1974. See Major General Donn A. Starry to General William E. DePuy, “Rationale for Changes in Tactics, Gunnery, ATT, ATP,” 08 July 1974, Box 3, The Donn A. Starry Papers. See Also Lieutenant General Donn A. Starry, Memorandum For V Corps, Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, Intelligence; “Subject: Enemy Force Densities,” 27 July 1976, Box 6, The Donn A. Starry Papers.

140 Major General Donn A. Starry, “Modern Armor Battle,” January 1975, Box 36, The Donn A. Starry Papers. “Modern Armor Battle” is an important conceptual development that has been overlooked within the topic’s historiography. Its timing and its content demonstrate Starry’s important role in the creation of key ideas that ultimately became Active Defense. This underscores a critical point: Starry’s efforts and contributions to the doctrinal reform process from 1973 until 1982. Most accounts, following the dichotomous nature of the debate over Active Defense associate that doctrine with DePuy and its successor, AirLand Battle, with Starry. Available archival evidence, however emphasize otherwise, demonstrating a distinct continuity of Starry’s participation, and relative responsibility for both doctrines.
Armor magazine from July 1974 to July 1975, highlighted many of the concepts that would become critical parts of the 1976 version of FM 100-5, Operations. Most importantly, “Modern Armor Battle” succinctly summarized how Starry, along with DePuy, envisioned how modern combat would occur:

> The defender should attempt to destroy as many of the enemy as possible in the initial onslaught . . . Timing is critical. Cavalry and other surveillance means should be employed to detect the approach of succeeding echelons, allowing the defender time to reposition himself in order to meet the next attack. When fighting outnumbered this routine of defend, attack, then defend again, will be normal, should be expected, and success will accrue only to the commander who plans in detail as far in advance as possible.

When compared to the vague abstractions contained within Cushman’s initial draft that was completed at about the same time, it is easy to discern which version of potential doctrine DePuy was inclined to advance.¹⁴¹

> The personal nature of the doctrine’s formulation also gave significant influence to other key defense intellectuals and retired senior military officers. Three in particular stood out: Robert Komer, Trevor N. Dupuy, and Bruce C. Clarke. Komer, known by many as “Blowtorch Bob,” was a Harvard-educated World War II veteran who later served with the CIA and the National Security Council.¹⁴² After Vietnam, where he headed the civilian pacification program, Komer worked for the Research and Analysis (RAND) Corporation, where he gave DePuy an in-depth statistical and conceptual analysis for the emerging doctrine.¹⁴³ Similarly, Trevor N. Dupuy, a retired lieutenant colonel and a Harvard-educated military historian, also corresponded frequently with both DePuy and Starry during the critical period of doctrinal revision. Of particular importance, his company, the Historical

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¹⁴¹ Starry Interview, 05 December 2006; Starry, “Modern Armor Battle.”


¹⁴³ See the extensive correspondence between Komer and DePuy in “Letters To and From Mr. Komer, 1975-1976,” Box 28, The William E. DePuy Papers.
Evaluation and Research Organization (HERO), incorporated a stew of statistical and historical analysis.\footnote{For the DePuy-Dupuy Correspondence, see “HERO Correspondence, 1974-1977,” Box 11, 13, 16, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also The Donn A. Starry Papers.}

Finally, DePuy and Starry received massive input from retired General Bruce C. Clarke. As a young Regimental Combat Team Commander in World War II, Clarke commanded an outnumbered and outgunned unit that stopped the German armored breakthrough at St. Vith, Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge.\footnote{Charles Whiting, \textit{Decision at St. Vith} (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2001). See also, Bruce C. Clarke, “Clarke at St. Vith,” Unpublished Manuscript, [Ca. 1974], Box , 11, The William E. DePuy Papers.} Clarke repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining a historical perspective in the evaluation of tactics; he also continually provided his memories of what many considered a classic moment of victory against the odds.\footnote{For the DePuy-Clarke correspondence, see “Bruce C. Clarke Correspondence, 1973-1977,” Box 11, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also Box 3, 4, and 24, The Donn A. Starry Papers.} Clarke’s repeated emphasis and numerous letters were not lost on DePuy and Starry.\footnote{The highlighted portions of an undated letter received by Starry underscored this point. “I felt that I must fight a flexible delaying action and not let my command be destroyed by what I sensed was a force vastly superior to my command and associated units;” and “I established a mobile counterattack force, of a part of a battalion of tanks, concealed near and behind St. Vith. It was used to counterattack whenever the Germans established a dangerous situation but then only to sweep the enemy and return to its rendezvous for further orders.” Bruce C. Clarke to Donn A. Starry, [Ca. late-1974], Box 3, The Donn A. Starry Papers.} According to DePuy, the new doctrine “descended from the U.S. response in the Battle of the Bulge—the only time in the history of the Army when we received a massive armored breakthrough attempt.”\footnote{DePuy, Perlman Interview, 23 September 1986. This represented a clear impact of the influence that Bruce C. Clarke as well as Creighton Abrams, another renowned hero of that battle, had on this critical stage of the doctrinal reform process.} Like DePuy and Starry, each of these influential figures emphasized fundamental skills and the nature of modern warfare. Together, these five people, along with DePuy’s “Boathouse Gang” of doctrine
Out of this process came the framework of the 1976 version of *FM 100-5, Operations*, also known as *Active Defense*. Much like Starry’s concept paper, “Modern Armor Battle,” *Active Defense* conceived a modern battlefield of unprecedented technological and lethal scope. Supporting this assertion with numerous charts, graphs, and statistical analyses, the manual’s authors emphasized the increased accuracy and firepower of modern weapons systems. Because of the “increased lethality” of the modern battlefield, the manual’s tactics emerged as being considerably different from previous versions.

Based on the conviction that “What can be seen, can be hit; what can be hit, can be killed,” the specific mechanics of *Active Defense* resulted from the manual’s emphasis on concentration and the tactical strength of defensive prepared positions.\(^{149}\) At its very essence, *Active Defense* described a conventional linear battlefield in Central Europe where American forces would be significantly outnumbered. The doctrine called for the U.S. Army to conduct a series of defensive engagements from prepared positions. The crux of such a defensive operation was to pinpoint the enemy’s main point of advance and to use the lateral movement of unengaged forces “from less threatened flanks” to mass forces in front of the enemy’s main effort (See Figure 2). As General DePuy described his doctrine, “what I am trying to inject into the doctrine of the U.S. Army . . . involves the concentration of overwhelming forces at the point of decision.”\(^{150}\)


Figure 2: “The Active Defense.” Active Defense advocated a linear defense, indicated by the line of units in the diagram to the left. Once the enemy’s main attack was identified, units out of contact would maneuver laterally (diagram on the right) to concentrate forces in order to destroy the enemy’s attack. Referred to as the “thickening of the defense,” a defender would “strip out” adjacent sectors and “move quickly . . . to gain dominant ground.” This defensive maneuver would continue until the enemy was halted.¹⁵¹

In addition to these directives for tactical success, Active Defense also posited that offensive actions and unprotected movement would be extremely hazardous, and thus, would probably fail.¹⁵² As a result, “sweeping counterattacks” that might expose friendly forces to enemy fire and thus “surrender the advantages of the defender” were eschewed, although limited, local counterattacks that might produce “decisively greater enemy losses” were

¹⁵¹ Holder, interview, 10 November 2006. Although FM 100-5, Operations (1976) described the techniques of defense and maneuver, it did not provide a schematic description of the Active Defense. The author developed this sketch from a composite of descriptions to include a conversation with LTG (ret.) Holder, and from William S. Lind, “Some Doctrinal Questions for the U.S. Army,” Military Review 57 (March 1977): 54-65. Similar diagrams can also be found in U.S. Army Armor Center, TC 71-4-2: The Tank/Mechanized Infantry Team (Fort Knox, KY: October 1974); and U.S. Army Armor School, TC 17-15-3: Tank Platoon (Fort Knox, KY: 15 April 1975).

encouraged. The use of tactical reserves was also discouraged as that decision might limit the number of forces available to mass against the enemy’s main effort.

As General DePuy explained of the doctrine’s contributing factors, *Active Defense* had many fathers. In addition to the personal influences of its primary authors, the lethality of modern weapons and the nature of the Soviet threat in Europe influenced the doctrine greatly. The nature of modern warfare also prompted close coordination with the U.S. Air Force. Working closely with General Robert J. Dixon, the commander the Air Force’s Tactical Air Command (TAC), DePuy incorporated the highest level of cooperation between the two services since 1947 into a chapter entitled “Air-Land Battle.” Additionally, the political and strategic necessity—voiced vociferously by the West German Bundeswehr—to defend Western Europe along the inter-German border also had a significant impact on *Active Defense*. Accordingly, the manual reflected “extensive collaboration with the High Command of the German Army” that emphasized consistency and compatibility with the

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153 Ibid., 4-3.
154 Ibid., 5-6 to 5-7.
155 DePuy, interview by Perlman, 23 September 1986.
156 Ibid.
157 General Robert J. Dixon to General William E. DePuy, 29 July 1976, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also, Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, 68-73. Their collaborative efforts created the Air Land Forces Application Agency (ALFA), located at Langley Air Force base, that synchronized doctrinal efforts between TRADOC and TAC. As General Dixon described the results, “This is the best thing that’s happened to Army-Air Force relations in my 35-years.” See also General Robert J. Dixon, “TAC-TRADOC Dialogue,” *Strategic Review* 6 (Winter 1978): 45-54. This level of cooperation quickly diminished throughout the 1980s. The Air Force eventually grew quite suspicious of the Army’s doctrinal development, fearing that its emphasis on tactical and close air support encroached upon traditional Air Force turf. Holder Interview, 10 November 2006.
158 DePuy, interview by Perlman, 23 September 1986. Specifically, the West Germans were concerned with any tactical or operational concepts that might sacrifice large portions of their territory without a fight. See also DePuy, *Changing an Army*, 187-189.
equivalent field manual of the German Army—100/100.” DePuy even had General George Blanchard, the Commander of the U.S. Army in Europe (USAREUR), write an entire chapter of the new manual dedicated to “Operations within NATO.”

The combination of tactical fundamentals, the impact of technology on the nature of the modern battlefield, significant historic antecedents, and inter-service and inter-alliance collaboration shaped and supported the emerging doctrine. It fit with DePuy’s cast of mind: mix the statistical with the historical to construct doctrinal principles and persuade skeptics. The resulting manual, described as a “radical departure” by one of DePuy’s deputies, outlined how the Army was to approach future warfare.

The First Battle Develops: The Reaction to Active Defense

TRADOC leaders successfully managed the transition from theory, describing war in broad and vague terms, to a practical application: describing forces that would operate in a specific setting with specific weapons systems and capabilities. Because of this, the manual differed starkly from its predecessors. In fact, the differences with previous iterations of U.S. Army doctrine started with the design of its cover, which appeared for the first time with a camouflage pattern, (See Figure 3). For many, the camouflage pattern was a significant, if subtle, attempt to signify an emphasis on the “How to Fight” mentality. Perhaps more significant was the fact that the manual was not printed as a bound document. Instead,


emphasizing his intention that the manual maintain a degree of realistic utility, DePuy insisted that the new *FM 100-5, Operations* (1976) exist as a loose-leaf binder.

Figure 3: “How to Fight.” The physical appearance of the 1976 version of *FM 100-5* (far right) was the first indicator of the change wrought by the DePuy reform initiatives of 1973-1976. The 1962 edition is to the left; the 1968 version is in the center.

The manual also clearly highlighted its purpose, scope, and tone. For example, the doctrine unequivocally stated that:

> The United States could find itself in a short, intense war—the outcome of which may be dictated by the results of initial combat. This circumstance is unprecedented: we are an Army historically unprepared for its first battle. We are accustomed to victory wrought with the weight of materiel and population brought to bear after the onset of hostilities. Today the U.S. Army must, above all else, *prepare to win the first battle of the next war*.

With entire chapters dedicated to “U.S. Army Objectives,” “Modern Weapons on the Modern Battlefield,” “How to Fight,” “Air-Land Battle,” and “Operations Within NATO” the manual was specific and often didactic. For example, the manual listed precise prerequisites for success in a battle: adequate concentration of forces and weapons; sufficient control and direction of the battle to maximize the effects of “fire and maneuver;” the use of cover, concealment, suppression, and combined arms teamwork; and maintaining a high-level of peacetime training to produce highly-skilled teams and crews. The presence of numerous statistical charts highlighting force ratios, ranges, probabilities of success based on whether the defender or the attacker fired first, and the repeated need for defenders to destroy many
targets in a short period underscored the manual’s specificity (See Figure 4). These themes and motifs echoed the conclusions of DePuy and Starry concerning the lethality of the modern battlefield and the paramount need to win the first battle.\footnote{Department of the Army, \textit{FM 100-5, Operations} (1976), 1-1, i., 2-1 to 2-32, 3-3, 3-17, and 5-13. Importantly, these prerequisites were verbatim duplications of the lessons learned enumerated in the TRADOC study of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. See William E. DePuy to Fred Weyand, 18 February 1976, Box 11, The William E. DePuy Papers. See also Herbert, \textit{Deciding What Has to Be Done}, 98-107.}

Many officers were receptive to the new concepts.\footnote{The chart on the left compared the ranges of anti-tank weapons and tank cannon over a thirty-year span. The $P_h$ means “probability of a hit.” The chart on the right stated the depth a Soviet Army would conquer in a day.} This was particularly the case among the officers and staffs who contributed to the process of developing \textit{Active Defense}.\footnote{For examples, see Box 28 of The William E. DePuy Papers for the full correspondence and reports.} As more officers began to embrace the principles outlined in \textit{FM 100-5, Operations} (1976), by this time commonly referred to as \textit{Active Defense}, it appeared that the new doctrine had struck a positive chord with many.

Institutionally, TRADOC integrated the new doctrine into the training reforms that were going on simultaneously under the direction of Brigadier General Paul Gorman.\footnote{Both DePuy’s and Starry’s archives filled up with numerous commentaries that ranged from complementary to gushing. For examples, see Box 28 of The William E. DePuy Papers for the full correspondence and reports. See also Boxes 7-11 of The Donn A. Starry Papers.}

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\textbf{Figure 4: War Made into Math:} Charts such as these led to the criticisms that \textit{Active Defense} maintained an “attrition-based” tone and that the doctrine discounted the human element of battle.\footnote{The chart on the left compared the ranges of anti-tank weapons and tank cannon over a thirty-year span. The $P_h$ means “probability of a hit.” The chart on the right stated the depth a Soviet Army would conquer in a day.}
General DePuy also incorporated the precepts of *Active Defense* into the Division Restructuring Study, which sought to redesign the organization of the Army’s fighting units along the same principles that propelled doctrinal reform. These collective efforts eased the acceptance and institutionalization of the new doctrine. They also contributed to the development of a broader set of manuals for the individual branches and different combat and support functions of the entire operational Army. Significantly, these manuals covered all aspects of the Army’s operations: fighting, training, officer education, organization, leadership pedagogy, and weapons acquisition. This broader conceptualization of doctrine enabled TRADOC to develop a series of integrated ideas and a method of thinking that defined not just how the Army was to fight, but also how it was to train and educate its soldiers and officers.

The acceptance of *Active Defense*, however, was far from universal. In fact, many reacted to the new line of thinking with hostility. The resistance to the new ideas rose from a combination of factors: differing ideas, intellectual approaches, and assumptions concerning the nature of future warfare; simple misunderstandings and miscommunications; and institutional resistance to change. Opposition also reflected a generational tension


168 General Donn A. Starry to Major General C.P. Benedict, 13 March 1978, The Donn A. Starry Papers. See also letter from General Starry to Colonel Thomas A. Ware, 28 April 1978, The Donn A. Starry Papers. According to Holder, perhaps up to a third of the officer corps—or at least a third of the officers who took the time to seriously reflect upon the doctrine—reacted hostilely to it. Holder interview, 10 November 2006.
between senior officers whose formative experiences in World War II and Korea differed from those of a younger generation whose memories were of the agony of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{170}

It is not surprising that Fort Leavenworth and the Command and General Staff College quickly emerged as one of the primary battlefields of the developing conflict over \textit{Active Defense}. To be sure, some of the objections raised by the faculty and students at Leavenworth resulted from differing intellectual philosophies and substantive differences of opinion concerning doctrine. But another clear cause of their reaction to \textit{Active Defense} was a sense of wounded pride.\textsuperscript{171} In some cases, the same instructors who raised doubts about the new doctrine had previously served as the leading authors of the “A.P. Hill Draft” that ingloriously succumbed to the DePuy-Starry-Gorman formulation of \textit{Active Defense}. In other cases, a growing number of instructors had been “divorced” from the doctrinal development process and simply did not understand the nuances or the constraints that affected the development of \textit{Active Defense}.\textsuperscript{172} Thus, the faculty—many of whom had been educated in graduate school prior to teaching at West Point and later at Leavenworth—lacked an author’s familiarity with the doctrine, yet they were still armed with the academic skills of intellectual dissection, academic debate, and, most importantly, historical mindedness.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{169} Paramount within this resistance to change were elements of intra-service tension within the various branches of the Army. See DePuy, \textit{Changing an Army}, 180-187.

\textsuperscript{170} DePuy, interview by Pearlman, 23 September 1986.

\textsuperscript{171} See “Comments on FM 100-5, Operations, July-August 1976, Special Collections, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS; Starry, SOOHP Interview, 515-518.

\textsuperscript{172} Due to this degree of unfamiliarity, at times instruction of the new tactics resembled a “stiff little pattern that we all learned and parroted.” Holder interview, 10 November 2006. See also Birrer, Service at CGSC; Starry, SOOHP Interview; Aaron Blumenfeld, “AirLand Battle Doctrine: Evolution or Revolution: A Look Inside the U.S. Army,” (unpublished thesis, Princeton University, 1989), 47; and Swain, “AirLand Battle,” 377.
At the same time, Cushman’s push in 1973 to expand the curriculum of electives and to provide more “small-group instruction,” with its emphasis on discussion and debate, naturally fostered an atmosphere of intellectual skepticism and inquiry. The intellectual climate at CGSC greatly facilitated the doctrinal debate concerning the efficacy of the 1976 manual. Although Cushman’s approach to creating a useable doctrine was singularly ineffective, his broader pedagogical approach, which emphasized Socratic discussion and dialectic discourse, was highly effective in producing a full-fledged professional debate within the Army’s officer corps.

L. Don Holder, who would later be one of the primary authors of the 1982 version of FM 100-5, Operations, was a major attending the Command and General Staff College as a student when he first encountered the new doctrine. Like many, his reactions were mixed. Impressed with the manual’s tactical focus, he participated in numerous discussions concerning the doctrine’s ability to win, its lack of historical examples in its explanations and construction, and an overwhelming sentiment that based on his own historical study and combat experience in Vietnam that the tactics and techniques espoused in the new doctrine simply would not work. Accordingly, the doctrine prompted “very spirited arguments” in both the “student housing area” as well as within the College’s classrooms.

Much like these initial reactions, the general critique of Active Defense focused on four major areas. First, the manual placed too much emphasis on the defense. As one CGSC instructor forcefully lamented,

\[173\] Many instructors at Fort Leavenworth were alumni of the History Department at West Point. In fact, comparing the two faculty rosters—that of the History Department at West Point in the early 1970s and the faculty lists at CGSC in the late-1970s—yields an uncanny congruence. Esteemed officer-scholars, such as Harold Nelson, Robert Doughty, Theodore Crackel, just to name a few of the more notable faculty members, thus offered an important contribution to the emergence of both historical mindedness and the subsequent doctrinal improvement and reform.

\[174\] Holder, interview, 10 November 2006.
The theory of the conduct of the defense in the conventional environment is so fraught with peril that its success requires an extraordinarily imaginative mental exercise perceiving our commanders, their staffs, and subordinate units to operate with an exquisitiveness of tactical judgment and a preciseness of execution never before achieved by large conventional forces at any point in history. Further, the collapsing of available forces directly in front of the enemy raises the specter of unacceptable and easily exploitable risks to the flanks as well as inviting the enemy to take disproportionately costly losses—which he can well afford—early on, to insure that this first battle is our last battle.  

Second, its systems-analysis approach, replete with statistics and charts, neglected the psychological and human aspects of warfare. As another CGSC instructor commented, “I get the disturbing feeling . . . that the soldier has been preempted by machines. . . . We will lose for sure if we take that approach.” Additionally, this same methodology neglected important aspects of leadership and techniques of command and control. Finally, the doctrine focused too narrowly on conventional operations in Europe.

These sentiments, when coupled with the manual’s prescriptive tone, prompted an increasing number of objections. The general pessimistic atmosphere in the Army and an inherent institutional resistance to change caused further misunderstandings concerning the doctrine and the intent of its authors. As Starry remarked, “there’s a loud clamor from that . . .
corner of the world [mid- and junior level officers] violently opposed to what we’re proposing to be done with tactics . . . time and a lot of persuasive argumentation will be necessary to bring them along.”

Nonetheless, the emerging discourse, and the general willingness of the Army’s leadership to engender such a debate, initiated an important process of clarification, adaptation, and, ultimately, synthesis.

**Fuel Added to the Fire: The Battle Continues**

Regardless of the degree of acceptance or disagreement, *Active Defense*—when combined with the beginnings of the renaissance in American military thought—stimulated an important intellectual discourse within both the Army and the broader defense community. Interestingly, however, the more public aspects of the debate over doctrine were almost preempted before they even began.

On February 11, 1976, DePuy met with William S. Lind, a defense analyst and national security assistant for Senator Robert Taft and later Senator Gary Hart. DePuy arranged for members of the “Boathouse Gang,” his personal staff of doctrine writers, to give Lind a presentation explaining “the rationale behind the principles” of *Active Defense*. As the briefing progressed, however, it became clear that Lind was less than impressed with the new doctrine. According to DePuy, Lind briefly listened to the presentation concerning the draft manual and then initiated “a very long lecture” on Belasarius and the history of

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180 Major General Donn A. Starry to General William E. DePuy, 1 May 1974, Box 3, The Donn A. Starry Papers.

181 1976 Desk Calendar, Box 16, The William E. DePuy Papers. Ironically, after spending the morning with Mr. Lind, General DePuy spent the remainder of his afternoon discussing doctrinal changes with Bob Komer, mentioned above.

maneuver warfare. The two men parted ways with DePuy aggravated and Lind inspired to prepare an article criticizing *Active Defense*.

In early May, Lind sought to re-open the battle. He submitted an article, “Some Doctrinal Questions for the United States Army,” to the Army Office of Legislative Liaison with a request for comment and for publication. In the article, Lind reported that he found the new doctrine “seriously deficient.” Lind focused on several key assumptions of *Active Defense*, to include the need to win the first battle, the doctrine’s ability to describe the manner in which the U.S. Army would successfully fight outnumbered and win, and the validity of the tactics described throughout the manual. Characterizing the doctrine as “attrition warfare,” he repeatedly emphasized that “there are serious questions” concerning the new doctrine and directly challenged whether it represented actual progress.

When DePuy received the request, he promptly refused to either comment on or approve the article for publication in any of the professional journals that fell under TRADOC’s jurisdiction. As he informed the Chief of the Legislative Liaison office, “I have no intention of getting involved in a series of non-productive, point-by-point, exchanges with Mr. Lind.”

Undeterred, Lind proceeded to share his article with other personnel within the Senate staff community as well as active duty officers. When the staff of *Military Review* saw a copy of the article, they offered to publish it without clearing the decision with General DePuy. Upon learning this, DePuy reportedly erupted, threatening to “demolish the ____________

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building” housing the offices of Military Review “brick by brick” if they proceeded to publish Lind’s critique.\textsuperscript{186} As a result, just as quickly as they had agreed to publish Mr. Lind’s article, the staff at Military Review rescinded their offer, even offering Lind fifty dollars for the publishing rights in order to maintain control of the manuscript.\textsuperscript{187}

The situation culminated in October 1976. Armed Forces Journal International published a series of four articles concerning Active Defense in that month’s edition. Two of the articles provided positive feedback concerning the new doctrine. One, conducted in the format of a scholarly book review, described FM 100-5, Operations as an example of “forward looking military thought” that existed as “a readable and useful manual.”\textsuperscript{188} General DePuy must have been pleased with such an initial response. Yet, as he turned the page, he must have been reminded of the contentious meeting with Lind as he saw the results of their arguments and divergent perspectives aired in the most public of forums.

The next page’s title summarized the situation: “Banned at Fort Monroe, or the Article the Army Doesn’t Want You to Read.”\textsuperscript{189} Lind, ever the proponent of maneuver warfare theory, used an indirect approach himself by taking his story of being denied publication in Military Review to the press. The article summarized Lind’s plight and in the process leveled a number of allegations about both TRADOC and General DePuy. In an attempt to maintain parity between the opposing points of view, the publishers of Armed Forces Journal

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{186} Holder Interview, 10 November 2006.
\item \textsuperscript{187} John Patrick, “Banned at Fort Monroe, or the Article the Army Doesn’t Want You to Read,” Armed Forces Journal International 114 (October 1976): 24.
\item \textsuperscript{188} F. Clifton Berry, Jr. review of Field Manual 100-5, Operations, in Armed Forces Journal International 114 (October 1976): 23-24.
\item \textsuperscript{189} Patrick, “Banned at Fort Monroe,” 24.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
International allowed TRADOC to reply to these allegations and some of Lind’s “Doctrinal Questions.”

In the series of terse responses that followed, TRADOC completed a critical first step in the future development of the U.S. Army’s tactical and operational doctrine. By responding to Lind’s critique and his allegations, DePuy and TRADOC began what later became known as “The Great Debate.”\textsuperscript{190} To be sure, Lind deserves credit for preparing a cogent and “crystallizing” critique of the substantive points within the 1976 manual.\textsuperscript{191} Additionally, Lind’s dogged pursuit of the issue over publication pushed TRADOC to this critical decision. Likewise, however grudgingly he made the decision, and despite the obvious public and political pressure stemming from the allegations of suppression, DePuy still chose to engage in a public debate. That decision in turn sparked further introspective thought, creativity, and innovation that continued the doctrinal discourse, sustained the renaissance in American military thought, and ultimately produced further doctrinal reform.

\textbf{The Battle Broadens: “The Great Debate”}

A large portion of “The Great Debate” appeared in the pages of \textit{Military Review}, the professional journal of the U.S. Army published by the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Significantly, from 1945 to 1976 only three articles referred to the topic of doctrine or \textit{FM 100-5, Operations}. After the publication of \textit{Active Defense}, in July 1976, however, the number of articles and discussions increased dramatically (see Table 2).\textsuperscript{192}

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{190} General Donn A. Starry to Colonel Thomas A. Ware, 28 April 1978, Box 12, The Donn A. Starry Papers.
\textsuperscript{191} Holder Interview, 10 November 2006.
\textsuperscript{192} These numbers were compiled from the article titles and abstracts of \textit{Military Review} found at the Center for Army Lessons Learned, https://calldbp.leavenworth.army.mil/. The average total number of articles
\end{verbatim}
Table 2: The number of articles in *Military Review* concerning doctrine and *FM 100-5* reflected the Army’s interest in the “Great Debate.”

More important than numbers were the substance and tone of the debate. In addition to the Army’s internal criticisms that focused on the doctrine’s defensive orientation and its diminution of the psychological and cultural elements of war, the analysis in the professional journals also criticized the “first battle” orientation, the lack of a tactical reserve, and the overemphasis on technologically advanced firepower. One of the very first articles to appear, Lind’s “Doctrinal Questions for the United States Army,” published in the March 1977 edition of *Military Review*, was perhaps the most critical.

Not all the commentary in *Military Review*, or other defense publications, was negative, however. In an early review of the new doctrine in late 1976, Philip A. Karber, a noted defense analyst, described *FM 100-5* and its emphasis on the defense as the beginning of a “doctrinal renaissance” grounded in a realistic appraisal of techniques and capabilities.

Published during this period was eighty-five total articles per year. The slight increase in 1981-82 reflected TRADOC’s efforts to preview their ideas prior to the publication of “AirLand Battle” in August 1982.

Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle*, 13-21. I am indebted to Romjue for not only making this point, but for also identifying the important discourse that occurred within the pages and volumes of *Military Review*. However, Romjue’s account only mentions a handful of articles. Although he deals with the more important pieces of the dialectic, his abbreviated analysis does not do the articles—nor their authors—justice. The actual process was more involved, and the ideas more complicated, than Romjue’s account depicts.
Additionally, Archer Jones, a renowned military historian, praised the manual for its clarity, its emphasis on concentration, its attention to the new technology, and its focus on defensive operations in a balanced analysis of the doctrine’s strengths and weaknesses.\footnote{Archer Jones, “The New \textit{FM 100-5}: A View From the Ivory Tower,” \textit{Military Review} 58 (February 1978): 27-36.}

Nor did the commentary come just from civilians and members of the defense intellectual community outside of the military. Canadian General Dan G. Loomis, after observing the irony of such extensive discussion about a field manual, described the doctrine as a “major milestone” of “tremendous strategic importance.”\footnote{Brigadier General Dan G. Loomis, Canadian Army, “FM 100-5, \textit{Operations}: A Review,” \textit{Military Review} 57 (March 1977): 66-69.} In July 1977, Colonels Zeb Bradford and Frederic Brown published “Implications of the Modern Battlefield” emphasizing the importance of the ongoing “revolution” about “how the Army perceives its combat missions.”\footnote{Zeb B. Bradford and Frederic J. Brown, “Implications of the Modern Battlefield,” \textit{Military Review} 57 (July 1977): 3-11.} In January 1978, Majors Robert A. Doughty and L. Don Holder used their collective knowledge of military history to justify, explain, and formulate “Images of the Future Battlefield,” while also providing readers with a prescient warning: “the adoption of new weaponry and doctrine which remolds or revolutionizes the nature of battle has never been an easy process.”\footnote{Major Robert A. Doughty and Major L. D. Holder, “Images of the Future Battlefield,” \textit{Military Review} 58 (January 1978): 56-69. Both of these officers served as instructors in the History Department at the U.S. Military Academy. Doughty eventually received a Ph.D. from the University of Kansas, while Holder received a M.A. from Harvard. MAJ Doughty would eventually serve as the Head of the History Department at West Point. MAJ Holder would rise to the rank of Lieutenant General and eventually serve as Commander of the Combined Arms Center.}
Additionally, Colonel John C. Galzay offered an insightful essay describing the “correlation” between writing doctrine and fighting wars. In his May 1978 article, “On Writing and Fighting,” he cogently argued that “facing an enemy who is numerically superior and who possess a technology equal to ours means that we must properly combine men, materiel and intelligent tactics if we are to win.” Importantly, he emphasized that “doctrine must express: what usually works; what is believed by more than half of the Army at large; what is practiced by the Army in the field; [and] what is taught in schools;” he also commented that TRADOC’s process of producing and writing doctrine, along with the doctrine itself, must improve. Several months later, in November 1978, Military Review published two articles critical of Active Defense. Both Major Michael D. Krause’s “Doctrine and Lessons from the Past” and Major Floyd Churchill’s “To Win the First Battle” questioned the basic underlying assumptions as well as the feasibility of Active Defense while positing alternative modifications to the body of tactical precepts contained within DePuy’s capstone manual.

The debate lasted for years, allowing authors to express a variety of concerns and critiques. These commentaries ranged from “Doctrine and Strategy: The Misunderstood Basics” (1979) to “The Doctrinal Process: Some Suggested Steps” (1979) to “FM 100-5: Revisited: A Need for Better Foundation Concepts” (1980) to “Fight Outnumbered and

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199 John C. Gazlay, “On Writing and Fighting: A Comparative Analysis of the Process,” Military Review 58 (May 1978): 42-52. What is interesting about Gazlay’s primary argument is its congruence with the teachings of none other than John Cushman. As an example of the pervasive influence that the CGSC climate had on the officer corps and the emerging doctrinal debate, it is instructive to compare Gazlay’s article with Cushman’s presentations on doctrine disseminated throughout the College. See Cushman, Leavenworth: A Memoir, 26-35 and Annex C.

200 Ibid., 51-52.

Win…Against What Odds?” (1980). Even as late as 1980, the debate continued. That year in particular saw a critical article authored by an irascible cavalryman that refused to pull any punches. Colonel Robert Wagner, commander of the Army’s Second Armored Cavalry Regiment, wrote “Active Defense and All That.” Colonel Wagner’s primary thesis was that *Active Defense* ran the risk of turning into a “forward deployed, laterally dispersed, static operation without the linchpin of offensive maneuver to make it work.”

Largely an open and healthy professional debate, this exchange of ideas improved later doctrine as it played a critical role in determining the nature and substance of the 1982 version of *FM 100-5, Operations* that ultimately replaced *Active Defense*. Importantly, the debate within the pages of *Military Review* and other professional journals prompted TRADOC to respond with its own articles and clarifications. This process allowed officers and civilians alike to introduce innovative concepts, while simultaneously prompting TRADOC to improve its dissemination of doctrinal concepts and information. Thus, TRADOC’s leaders, albeit hesitantly at first, provoked and participated in an insightful dialectic process that furthered the critical intellectual renaissance within the officer corps.

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204 For examples of these clarifications see Donn A. Starry, “A Tactical Evolution—*FM 100-5*,” 2-11 and William E. DePuy, “*FM 100-5 Revisited*” *Army* (November 1980): 12-17.
The Indirect Approach: The Military Reform Movement

The initial critique provided by William Lind connected the development of post-Vietnam Army doctrine with the “military reform movement.” Senator Gary Hart and Lind defined this “movement” as “an attempt to discover the root causes of our military failures, develop the ideas necessary for restoring military effectiveness, and turn those ideas into policy.” According to Hart and Lind, the “movement” consisted of civilian strategists such as John Boyd, Edward Luttwak, Steven Canby, Norman Polmar, Pierre Sprey, Franklin C. “Chuck” Spinney, and Jeffrey Record, as well as journalists such as James Fallows and members of the Congressional Military Reform Caucus. This movement advocated a methodology of battle and philosophy of war known as “maneuver warfare.” Contrasted with the notion of “attritional warfare,” where the object of conflict was the physical destruction of the enemy, “maneuver warfare” enthusiasts emphasized speed and movement.

205 Samuel P. Huntington described this disparate group of intellectuals in the foreword to The Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis. He identified their general critique of American defense policy in the 1970s and 1980s as “the desirability of shifting the emphasis in military doctrine from attrition to maneuver and of shifting the emphasis in military procurement from a smaller number of highly sophisticated (and expensive) weapons to a larger number of proven, less sophisticated (and cheaper) weapons.” See Asa A. Clark, Peter Chiarelli, Jeffery S. McKitrick, and James W. Reed, The Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), x-xi.


207 Ibid.

as well as the “moral, mental, and physical” aspects of war. To these theorists, warfare was an intellectual and psychological effort to “dislocate” and “collapse an adversary’s system into confusion and disorder by causing him to over and under react to activity that appears simultaneously menacing as well as ambiguous, chaotic, and misleading.”

As Lind elaborated, maneuver warfare “defeat[s] the enemy by disrupting his ability to react, rather than by physical destruction of forces.” As such, the intellectual roots of “maneuver warfare,” meticulously cultivated and developed by Boyd, a retired Air Force Colonel, owed much to the writings and thought of the British strategist B.H. Liddell Hart and his “indirect approach.”

Given such a philosophy, Active Defense, with its emphasis on firepower and the destruction of enemy forces, appeared to maneuver warfare theorists as “a continued adherence to the firepower/attrition doctrine.” However, the aggressive tone of Lind’s article, and, more importantly, DePuy’s initial reaction to it, diminished much of this group’s initial influence, particularly with DePuy and Starry. Two important participants in the debate—the leaders of TRADOC and the maneuver warfare theorists—were talking past one another. As DePuy dismissively remarked, “I was not taken with the man [Lind].” Along those same lines, Starry added, “No one seems to know what he is trying to prove. He is one

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209 Ibid.

210 Ibid. This line of thought is based on Boyd’s idea of the Orient-Observe-Decide-Act cycle of decision-making. Boyd argued that the belligerent who completes this OODA-loop faster would have a decided tactical, operational, or strategic advantage over their adversary.


of those instant field marshals so often found in the ranks of the Enthoven’s, Valtz’s, Odeen’s, and the ilk.” Starry concluded, “I guess the best thing to do is ignore Mr. Lind.”

Although the substance of Lind’s critique was partially sound, his personal interaction with the leaders of TRADOC contributed to an increased level of misunderstanding. Ironically, this conflict of personalities forced maneuver warfare enthusiasts to use their own indirect approach as they chose to maintain contact with insightful mid-ranking officers, such as Lieutenant Colonel Huba Wass de Czege, as well as maintaining intellectual pressure on TRADOC as they continued to write articles critical of *Active Defense*. Both techniques significantly influenced future doctrinal revisions.

*Seizing the Initiative: The Development of AirLand Battle*

As the concepts and critiques of *Active Defense* spread throughout the Army, newly promoted Lieutenant General Donn Starry attempted to apply the principles of the new doctrine in Europe. In 1976, he assumed command of the Army’s V Corps in Germany. Armed with numerous draft copies of the manual, Starry, who claimed he “was not

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215 Lieutenant General Starry to Major General George S. Patton, III, “Lind Article,” 11 November 1976, Box 7, The Donn A. Starry Papers. On another occasion, Starry went even further, stating, “He is the kind of fellow who has read just enough about the subject (without understanding it) to be very, very dangerous. No one ever said the defense was once again supreme. We were just a bunch of practicing tacticians trying to work our way out of a very difficult situation. As I work out the details on the ground I’m more than ever convinced that we are right. Were I not responsible for doing what I wrote, perhaps I too could be a tactical gadfly, along with Mister Lind. Maybe I’ll do that when I retire!!” See Lieutenant General Starry to Colonel Davis, 19 July 1976, The Donn A. Starry Papers. Starry referred to Alain Enthoven, Robert Valtz, and Phillip Odeen, a string of influential civilian systems analysts that served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough: Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), vii-xxi.

216 Coram, *Boyd*, 370-371. This technique actually worked quite well. According to L. Don Holder, one of the primary writers of the 1982 manual, the influence of the writings of the military reform movement was critical to the revisions that ultimately replaced Active Defense. Holder specifically said that Lind’s writings assisted many officers that he interacted with in “crystallizing” their thoughts. Although the writings might have been received more as “confirmation” rather than “inspiration,” the writings of Lind, Luttwak, and Record in particular were all formative in the minds of the Army’s next generation of doctrine writers. See also Holder Interview, 10 November 2006; and Starry, SOOHP Interview, 515-523.
completely happy with what had been written,” set out to “test the ideas on the ground.” He immediately initiated a series of “staff rides” or “terrain walks in which division, brigade, and battalion commanders met with me on-site [at planned defensive positions] to determine if the doctrine based on the Yom Kippur’s War’s lessons was about right or all wrong.” In very short order, Starry injected a sense of military history, personal leadership, and tactical acumen into his unit and applied it to the operational challenge he and his commanders faced on a daily basis.

These attempts to “fit Active Defense (1976) into a real-world defensive array,” exposed significant shortcomings in the doctrine. The primary problem was threefold. First, the terrain walks demonstrated the degree to which many officers either did not understand or did not agree with the prescriptions in FM 100-5, Operations. Second, there was confusion over the corps commander’s specific role. Third, there was uncertainty over what was to happen after the first echelon of Soviet forces was defeated. To Starry, the question

217 Starry, “Reflections”, 551. Starry commented that “In the 1976 edition of FM 100-5, we really did a pretty fair job of solving what had to be done to be able to fight that battle [against the initial Soviet attack in Europe] successfully. What we were not able to cope with, and we knew it at the time, was what to do about the follow-on echelons . . . I knew that there was something missing. And the something missing was what to do about the follow-on echelons.” Starry, SOOHP Interview, 463.

218 Starry, “Reflections”, 551. As Starry described the process, the concept of terrain walks came from General Abrams personal example. “I just continued to do what he taught me to do ever since I was a second lieutenant.” Starry Interview, 05 December 2006.

219 General Donn A. Starry to Major General C.P. Benedict, 13 March 1978, Box 11, The Donn A. Starry Papers. See also letter from General Starry to Colonel Thomas A. Ware, 28 April 1978, Box 12, The Donn A. Starry Papers. When Starry arrived in V Corps, the officer corps in Europe “had no confidence in their tactics; they had no confidence in their operational schemes; they had no confidence in their logistic system; and they had no confidence in themselves.” See Starry Interview, 05 December 2006; and Starry, SOOHP Interview, 507.

was quite simple: after using the tactics of *Active Defense* to win the first battle against the Soviet first echelon, “what are we going to do next?”  

*Active Defense* did not adequately address how to deal with follow-on echelons of Soviet forces. The doctrine talked at length about the first battle, but the manual offered very little about “how to fight” subsequent battles. Because of this, even as the collective confidence of his subordinate commanders increased, eventually culminating in a belief that they could use the tactics of *Active Defense* to fight and win, Starry still faced a dilemma: “What am I, the corps commander, going to do—especially about the follow-on echelons?”

It quickly became obvious to Starry and others, that Corps and Division commanders had much more to do than just “concentrate the forces;” in fact, with the nature of developing Soviet operational doctrine, these generals had important battles of their own to fight.

The conclusions that Starry drew from these exercises, as he and his subordinate commanders began to shift the linear conceptions and lateral movements of *Active Defense* to thinking about the Soviet threat in terms of echelons and depth, significantly advanced American war-fighting doctrine, for Starry would soon command TRADOC and incorporate these experiences into future incarnations of *FM 100-5.*

The terrain walks and their associated conversations prompted Starry to focus on the *operational level of war:* the techniques of “large unit operations” and the art of coordinating successive battles into an  

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221 Starry, SOOHP Interview, 558.

222 Starry, interview by Romjue, 19 March 1993.

223 See Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence,* 251-252. Naveh describes Starry’s efforts to reform “Active Defense” as a “quantum leap.” To be sure, this was an important development, however, Naveh’s description is an exaggeration. See also Kagan, Finding the Target, 60-66. Kagan stated that this development “opened up new ways of thinking about warfare.”
overarching campaign to achieve the military goals associated with the political ends of a nation’s strategy.\textsuperscript{224}

Figure 5: “What are we going to do next?” Despite its focus on meeting a technologically advanced Soviet adversary on the potential battlefields of Europe, \textit{Active Defense} did not address the “Second Echelon Threat.” As Starry attempted to apply the doctrine on the actual ground he was responsible for defending, he quickly focused on the question as to how best to deal with this formidable threat.\textsuperscript{225}

These issues were at the forefront of General Starry’s mind in 1977 when he assumed command of TRADOC.\textsuperscript{226} At the same time, other leaders, such as Lieutenant General Richard Cavazos, grew increasingly concerned that \textit{Active Defense} discounted the “moral, or human, dimension” of warfare.\textsuperscript{227} Most importantly, Lieutenant General Edward C. Meyer,

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\textsuperscript{226} Starry was handpicked by DePuy for the position. DePuy stated that “Donn is out in front [of any other contenders for the position] by a wide margin.” He continued, “Donn is, of course, very strong on doctrine and tactics and on combat developments and as the Commandant at Knox has a good grounding in training and training developments.” See General William E. DePuy to General Bernard Rogers, 26 October 1976, Box 6, The William E. DePuy Papers.
\end{flushleft}
the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, already named as the next Chief of Staff of the Army, harbored similar concerns about the substance of *Active Defense* as well as the internal and external criticism of the doctrine.\footnote{228 Huba Wass De Czege, “Lessons from the Past: Making the Army’s Doctrine ‘Right Enough’ Today,” *The Landpower Essay* 06-2 (September 2006): 6. See also Holder Interview, 10 November 2006.}

In June 1979, Meyer encouraged Starry to develop a corollary to *Active Defense* that addressed these issues. As with so many doctrinal initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s, however, Starry had already completed a concept paper addressing the problems identified in the terrain walks.\footnote{229 General Donn A. Starry, Memorandum, “Commander’s Notes,” 2 May 1978, Box 31, The Donn A Starry Papers. See also Lieutenant General Edward C. Meyer to General Donn A. Starry, 13 June 1979, Box 18, The Donn A Starry Papers. See also Romjue, *Active Defense to AirLand Battle*, 30-32 and Swain, “*AirLand Battle*,” 30-32.}

Using the conclusions he developed in Europe, Starry and his staff created a new concept: *The Central Battle*.\footnote{230 Donn A. Starry, “A Tactical Evolution—*FM 100-5,*” *Military Review* 58 (August 1978): 2-11.}

*The Central Battle* posited that the Corps Commander should synchronize and coordinate all elements of firepower and maneuver to produce a decisive outcome.\footnote{231 Ibid.}

Starry articulated this idea as a combination of equipment and procedures that facilitated “seeing deep into the battlefield, moving fast to concentrate forces, suppressing enemy fires—especially artillery—with counter-fire systems, striking quickly to kill many systems, then finishing the fight rapidly before the second echelon can close.”\footnote{232 Donn A. Starry, “Keynote Address to The United States Army Armor Association,” May 1978, Box 36, The Donn A Starry Papers.}

Although similar to the concepts of *Active Defense* in several important ways, Starry’s additions of “seeing deep” and the inclusion of a more offensive mindset represented an important series of adjustments.
that would continue the evolution of America’s war-fighting doctrine. Just as vital as the formulation of these new ideas, however, was Starry’s participation in the written dialogue and discourse that was continuing in the professional journals.233

Starry’s previous experience in the development of the 1976 manual as well as his time as V Corps Commander emphasized the importance of developing a systematic approach to the development and dissemination of new doctrine.234 Upon assuming command of TRADOC, he took several steps to formalize the process.235 First, he appointed Brigadier General Donald R. Morelli as Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine.236 Second, he assembled a highly educated and talented team of mid-level officers (majors and lieutenant colonels) to form the core of a doctrine revision and writing team.237 This handpicked group included two Harvard-educated officers, Lieutenant Colonel Huba Wass de Czege, an advocate of maneuver warfare theory, and Major L. Don Holder, as well as an experienced doctrine writer, Lieutenant Colonel Richmond B. Henriques.238

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233 See Starry, “Extending the Battlefield,” 31-50 and Clyde J. Tate and L. D. Holder, “New Doctrine for the Defense,” Military Review 61 (March 1981): 2-9. See also Table 1 for the increase in articles concerning doctrine that arrived after Starry took command of TRADOC.


236 Ibid.

237 Previous historical scholarship has discounted the full contributions that these authors provided to the reform process. Although Romjue mentions these authors (see the citation immediately below), he devotes little analysis to their academic background and conceptual contributions. The same critique applies to Lock-Pullan and Kagan as well. Lock-Pullan refers to Holder and Wass De Czege once; Kagan refers to Holder a single time and does not mention Wass De Czege at all in his 400-page book. This is unfortunate as they were relatively left to their own in the actual writing and later development of the concepts that ultimately became AirLand Battle.
Under the guidance and direct supervision of General Starry, these men reviewed and revised *FM 100-5* starting in late 1979. As General Morelli pointed out after reviewing the 1976 manual, “all are convinced that the manual needs a major revision.” Morelli, who Starry designated as the primary point of contact between TRADOC and the growing numbers of critics of *Active Defense*, came to the conclusion that, “we must answer some of our more knowledgeable critics—not to necessarily agree but rather set the doctrine straight.” Accordingly, this team captured the conceptual exchange of the “Great Debate” that ensued after the publication of *Active Defense*, as well as the development of ideas expressed in action by leaders such as Starry in the field.

The concepts that Starry developed on the hoods of countless jeeps in planned battle positions within the General Defense Plan (GDP) for Western Europe interacted with the debates emerging from classrooms at Fort Leavenworth as well as the ideas posited by military and civilian critics on the pages of *Military Review, Parameters, Armed Forces Journal*, and the *Air University Review*. As a result, an interactive doctrine incrementally evolved. Moreover, the process also engaged developments in Soviet operational thought and their actual deployments throughout Eastern Europe. This important aspect also

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238 Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle*, 42-43. Significantly, Wass De Czege and Holder had recently completed tours as instructors at West Point, further underscoring the contributions that that pillar of the renaissance in American military thought brought to bear within the doctrinal reform of the late-1970s.


240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.

242 Holder Interview, 10 November 2006.

243 Starry interview 05 December 2006; Starry, SOOHP interview. It is instructive to note that the doctrinal changes pushed by Starry were reactions to both Soviet operational thought and theory and the actual disposition of Soviet forces on the ground in Europe. Much of Starry’s initial conceptualization resulted from
reinforced the dialectic nature of the development of America’s war-fighting doctrine. These developments also reflected the growing tendency within TRADOC to treat the enemy as a holistic system that could be defeated through a series of shocking blows to its will and coherency.²⁴⁴ Most importantly, these evolving concepts, appearing as articles and briefings, were not only interactive in nature, but simultaneously achieved substantive doctrinal revision while also assuming a key consensus-building, collaborative tone.

Maintaining this creative momentum, Starry integrated his concept of the “Central Battle” with emerging conceptual developments at Fort Sill, the home of the Army’s field artillery center. A small group of forward-thinking artillery officers was developing a sophisticated line of thought—known as Deep Attack—that targeted high-value Soviet assets throughout the depth of their attacking formations in order to create “windows for action” (See Figure 6).²⁴⁵ Thus, Central Battle, which was sometimes referred to as Deep Battle or the Corps Battle, became the Extended Battlefield, which incorporated these ideas emerging from Fort Sill and further highlighted the importance of thinking about an enemy attack of multiple echelons arrayed in depth. The Extended Battlefield, in turn, slowly evolved into an interaction with various intelligence agencies—ranging from his own intelligence assets in V Corps to information provided by the CIA and the NSA. See Starry interview 05 December 2006. See also Lieutenant General Donn A. Starry, Memorandum For V Corps, Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, Intelligence; “Subject: Enemy Force Densities,” 27 July 1976, Box 6, The Donn A. Starry Papers.

²⁴⁴ Starry Interview, 05 December 2006; Holder Interview, 10 November 2006. See also Naveh, In Pursuit of Military Excellence, 287-299; and Kagan, Finding the Target, 57-66. Among these artillery officers were Anthony Pokorny, John S. Doerfel, and another alumnus of the West Point faculty, Richard Hart Sinnreich. Romjue, From Active Defense to AirLand Battle, 34-35; Richard Hart Sinnreich, interview by LTC Stephen G. Fox, April 2001, transcript, Senior Officer Oral History Program, Special Collections, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

Figure 6: Creating “Windows for Action.” Starry continued to mix the statistics of operations research with the examples of military history. Diagrams such as this example appeared in numerous articles and briefings that sought to convince the U.S. Army of the need to “see deep” and “attack deep” in order to create windows for action, in which they might wrest control of the initiative in future battle.246

the Integrated Battlefield, as Starry’s concepts evolved further and began to incorporate the conceptual use of tactical nuclear weapons and, more importantly, the systems that would direct the targeting of both those nuclear weapons and the Army’s long-range conventional assets (See Figure 7).247

Figure 7: Conceptual Progress. The concepts of Active Defense grew into the Central Battle or the Corps Battle, followed by the Extended Battle, and finally by the Integrated Battle. These ideas, originating both within the Army as well as from the influence of important civilian defense experts, would form the conceptual backbone of AirLand Battle in 1982.248

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246 Image from Starry, “Extending the Battlefield,”44.

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid., 39-43.
Importantly, during the entire doctrinal development process, Starry’s team of military thinkers maintained effective communication throughout the officer corps. In addition to journal articles and briefings, Starry also directed the Department of Tactics at Fort Leavenworth to change the curricula throughout the Army’s school system to better reflect and teach the emerging concepts of the *Central Battle*, the *Extended Battle*, and the *Integrated Battle.* As a result, by clearly communicating their developing ideas prior to the official publication of the doctrine, Starry and his team of doctrinal writers were able to ensure that the shock of something so new, felt by such a large portion of the officer corps in 1976, would not be repeated.

Starry also realized that the manual would have to be written at Fort Leavenworth in full cooperation with the Command and General Staff College. The primary job of writing

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249 See Table 1, especially the increasing number of articles as 1982 approached. As early as 1980, at Starry’s instigation, the “Extended Battlefield” concept emerged as part of the CGSC curriculum meriting its own academic committee at the college, the “Integrated Battlefield Committee.” LTC James Stallings, Department of Tactics, interview by W.G. Robertson, CAC Historical Office, 29 July 1983, Fort Leavenworth, transcript, Special Collections, Combined Arms Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and LTC Thomas Kelly, Department of Tactics, interview by W.G. Robertson, CAC Historical Office, 09 August 1983, Fort Leavenworth, transcript, Special Collections, Combined Arms Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. See also U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *Tactical Commanders Development Course: Battle Book; U.S. BDE/BN Task Force* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1984), i-ii. The U.S. Army War College also introduced an entire elective course on AirLand battle, complete with its own text entitled, *Art of War Colloquium: AirLand Battle Doctrine*, by June of 1983. U.S. Army War College, *Art of War Colloquium: AirLand Battle Doctrine* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1983), 1-37. See also the U.S. Army War College, *Special Text, Academic Year 1985: Department of Military Strategy, Planning and Operations, Volume III: Planning* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1984), 1-1 to 1-7. Thus, the War College assisted in the development, evolution, and most importantly, the understanding of the new doctrine in several ways. At the various branch schools throughout the Army, this cascading effect continued. For example, at Fort Knox, the home of the U.S. Army Armor Center, curricular materials included references to both AirLand Battle as well as the developing sentiments of historical mindedness, as they used works of military history to highlight the principles of AirLand Battle. See U.S. Army Armor Center, *Combined Arms Warfare Late/Modern: Selected Readings* (Fort Knox, KY: U.S. Army Armor Center, 1984, 1988), i-iii; U.S. Army Armor Center, *Combined Arms Warfare Ancient/Medieval/Early Modern: Selected Readings* (Fort Knox, KY: U.S. Army Armor Center, 1985, 1992), i-iii; and U.S. Army Armor Center, *Armor in Battle* (Fort Knox, KY: U.S. Army Armor Center, 1986), i-ii. As Starry later recalled, “we had to figure some way to avoid the pitfalls, the trap, that we had fallen into with the 1976 edition.” Starry, SOOHP Interview, 588.
the new doctrine there quickly fell to Wass De Czege and Holder. Handpicked by Starry’s chief deputy, Lieutenant General William Richardson, who was also the commander of Fort Leavenworth and the commandant of the Command and General Staff College, Wass De Czege and Holder each brought a unique set of credentials to this process. Remarkably, they were extremely intelligent, well educated, and they had combat experience. As a result, like General Starry they were both philosophical and practical. They had the intellectual skills to connect with the impressive brainpower of the likes of the “military reform movement,” but their combat experience and military “practicality” gave them an important advantage that was to prove critical. As Wass De Czege described himself and Holder, “[we] were self-confident professionals and open-minded critical thinkers with an imagination, a standard I strove for and Holder achieved easily.”

Together the two officers delved into the world of military thought and theory. Their sources were dense and eclectic. For Holder, a former member of the history department faculty at West Point, the 1976 Michael Howard and Peter Paret translation of Clausewitz’s On War was particularly important. So were the German equivalent to FM 100-5, Field Manual 100/100 Truppen Führung, and two Soviet texts on operational warfare, Reznichenko’s Taktika and Siderenko’s The Offensive. Wass De Czege, a former member of the social sciences department faculty at West Point, also referred to these texts as well as Russell Weigley’s Eisenhower’s Lieutenants. Writing around the clock, both officers

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250 Starry, SOOHP, Interview, 522.


252 Holder Interview, November 10, 2006.

253 Ibid.

relied on the full slate of editions of *FM 100-5* dating back to 1940, to include *Active Defense* as well as the numerous articles and issues expressed during the “Great Debate.” As each chapter was completed, the two officers would send drafts directly to General Starry for his comments.255

The results of this “messy process” produced the 1982 version of *FM 100-5, Operations*.256 This version, known as *AirLand Battle*, responded to the shortcomings of *Active Defense*.257 *AirLand Battle* emphasized the Central Battle/Extended Battle/Integrated Battle concepts: seeing and striking “deep” into the enemy’s follow-on echelons of forces through the Corps Commander’s efforts to synchronize offensive assets at the operational level of war. As a result, it represented a direct response to the critique that *Active Defense* lacked the offensive and psychological elements of maneuver warfare theory.258 Portions of *AirLand Battle* went as far to refer directly to *Active Defense*’s controversial elements and offered an insightful synthesis of the opposing elements of the debate. When describing “Defensive Operations,” perhaps the most contentious element of *Active Defense, AirLand Battle* stated,
The defense denies success to an attacking enemy. For this reason some theorists have labeled defense the less decisive form of war. To win, one must attack. However, the distinctions between defensive and offensive operations of large formations are made primarily on their intended purposes rather than on the types of combat actions they undertake. Offensive combat is as much a part of defensive operations as strongpoint defenses or delaying actions.\textsuperscript{259}

\textit{AirLand Battle} also moved away from \textit{Active Defense’s} prescriptions of “How to Fight.” In its place, the doctrine writers augmented the evolutions of Starry’s concept papers and briefings with a series of descriptions known as “Operational Concepts,” the “Dynamics of Battle,” and “Combat Imperatives.”\textsuperscript{260} Specifically, \textit{AirLand Battle} defined its “Operational Concepts” as: initiative; depth; agility; and synchronization.\textsuperscript{261} The “Dynamics of Battle” consisted of “Combat Power” and “Combat Imperatives.” In turn, “Combat Power” consisted of “maneuver,” “firepower,” “protection,” and “leadership.” The manual also emphasized “leadership” as “the crucial element of combat power.” Likewise, “Combat Imperatives” consisted of the following maxims: “insure unity of effort;” “direct friendly strengths against enemy weaknesses;” “designate and maintain the main effort;” “sustain the fight;” “move, fast, strike hard, and finish rapidly;” “use terrain and weather;” and “protect the force.”\textsuperscript{262} Moreover, the new doctrine treated the Soviet threat not as a group of numbers and statistics, but as a systemic whole that was to be attacked in the dimensions of both space and time (See Figure 8).\textsuperscript{263} This holistic approach, in turn, shifted the focus away from “servicing” a certain number of targets to “defeating”—both physically and psychologically—the enemy force “by throwing the enemy off balance with powerful initial

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., 10-1.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 2-1 to 2-4.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid. Later revisions in the 1990s would add versatility to this list.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid.
blows from unexpected directions and then following up rapidly to prevent his recovery.”

Despite its lists of fundamentals, principles, and imperatives, at its very essence, however, as Starry described the doctrine, “AirLand Battle is about taking the initiative.”

Taken as a whole, these new ideas further emphasized the human and psychological elements of offensive warfare as the manual and its key concepts highlighted the operational precepts of initiative, depth, agility, synchronization, and leadership.

In addition to these conceptual innovations, AirLand Battle also posited three integrated and hierarchical levels of warfare: strategic, operational, and tactical. According to FM 100-5, Operations (1982), the strategic level of war consisted of employing “the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by applying force or the threat of

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264 FM 100-5, Operations (1982), 2-1. Holder described the creation of this passage as an attempt to capture Clausewitz’s concept of the defense as “not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows.” See Holder, interview, 10 November 2006. See also Clausewitz, On War, 357-359.


266 Image from Starry, “Extending the Battlefield,” 36.
The operational level of war referred to the use of all “available military resources to attain strategic goals within a theater of war. Most simply it is the theory of larger unit operations. It also involves planning and conducting campaigns.”

Finally, the tactical level of war described “the specific techniques smaller units use to win battles and engagements which support operational objectives.”

The manual also illustrated “AirLand Battle Fundamentals.” A direct reference to the fundamental principles of maneuver warfare theorists, as well as Starry’s evolving understanding of the nature of modern warfare, these precepts concentrated on the use of both the “operational level of war” and “indirect approaches.” The fundamentals underscored that speed and violence, coupled with the “flexibility and reliance on the initiative of junior leaders, rapid decision-making, clearly defined objectives and operational concepts, a clearly designated main effort, and deep attack,” could produce battlefield success. The emphasis on the initiative and rapid decision-making abilities of junior leaders was related to the German concept of auftragstaktik. Also adopted by the maneuver warfare theorists, auftragstaktik referred to “a method of issuing orders so that subordinate

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268 Ibid. The “operational level of war” section and its supporting definition and description was a last second addition insisted upon by General Otis—Starry’s successor at TRADOC—and Major General Morelli. Because of this timing, according to Holder, the description was hastily created and ill defined. The need for a further revision of this section of the manual prompted TRADOC’s efforts to re-write FM 100-5, Operations four years later in 1986. At that time, Wass De Czege and Holder would again be the primary authors of the final revision of the Army’s AirLand Battle doctrine.

269 Ibid. This addition highlights the fact that the 1976 FM 100-5, Operations was misnamed. Quite simply, Active Defense did not address the operational level of war. If anything, the 1976 version of FM 100-5 should have been named “Tactics” not “Operations.”

270 Ibid., 7-1 to 7-3.

271 Ibid., 7-2.
commanders are allowed maximum freedom of action to accomplish assigned missions.”  

A similar emphasis also appeared with the importance of clearly designating a “main effort.” This, in turn, was related to another German concept that was also advocated by proponents of maneuver warfare: *

\textit{schwerpunkt} or “focus of effort.” These constructs underscored General Starry’s conclusion that, in modern warfare, battles at the tactical and operational levels “will be decided by factors other than numbers and other than who attacks and who defends. In the end, the side that somehow, at some time, somewhere during the battle seizes the initiative and holds it to the end is the side that wins.”

To be sure, the new manual and its authors did not abandon all elements of Active Defense. *AirLand Battle* retained many of DePuy’s key assumptions, such as the lethal nature of modern warfare and its effects on tactics as well as the notion that the Army must be prepared to win the first battles in any war. Starry also maintained, and in fact significantly expanded, close collaboration with the Air Force. In its final form, *AirLand Battle* represented a synthesis of concepts exchanged during the “Great Debate” as well as the pragmatic efforts of commanders on the ground applying, testing, and re-evaluating the precepts of America’s emergent war-fighting doctrine.

The key difference in the manuals resulted from the different techniques of doctrinal formulation. During the first iteration of reform, the collection of information and the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Boyd, “Patterns of Conflict.”
\item Starry, “Reflections,” 549-550.
\item Starry, SOOHP Interview, 463.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
formulation of the doctrine was relatively closed. As opposed to the isolated process of
1973-76, the Starry reforms incorporated the critiques stemming from the reaction to *Active
Defense* and used the professional journals, concept papers, curriculum changes, and
briefings to discuss prospective doctrinal ideas. As Starry recalled,

> [The] thing that tied it together was that we had a briefing. The briefing was Modern Armor Battle; the
b briefing was Central Duel; the briefing was eventually *AirLand Battle*. I gave that to any audience that
would listen and some who probably did not want to listen. . . . There may have been ten or fifteen
versions of that briefing. . . . We would have an extended question and answer [session] afterward, and two
things happened. First a whole lot of people heard that briefing many times; more times than they probably
would have liked to have heard it, *but it was different every time*. And it was different by an amount that
reflected something that somebody had asked about it . . . in many cases in a previous briefing. “Wow;
he’s listening to us. And he has changed it because of something that we asked about.” Now, all of a
sudden they are shareholders in this thing. This is theirs, it is not mine, because [I] had reacted to
something that they asked about or commented on.\(^{277}\)

After 1977, Starry and TRADOC effectively used the open exchange of ideas fostered by the
“Great Debate” to gain the necessary consensus to further doctrinal reform.

Furthermore, where *Active Defense* incorporated historical lessons arising from
statistical analysis, operations research, and the personal memories of its primary authors,
*AirLand Battle*—following the influence of the Griess Commission’s call for historical
mindedness—incorporated a more systematic use of the language and images of history (See
Figure 9).\(^{278}\) Each major section of the manual included historical vignettes related to the
writings of Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, the French theorist Ardant du Picq, B.H. Liddell Hart, and
even the influential British historian John Keegan.\(^{279}\) Thus, the doctrine contained in the
1982 version of *FM 100-5* offered an insightful synthesis of the technological demands of

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\(^{277}\) Starry, interview, 05 December 2006.

\(^{278}\) Holder, interview, 10 November 2006. *FM 100-5, Operations* (1982), 8-1 to 8-4 and 10-1 to 10-3. See Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, 100-107 for comments concerning DePuy’s “unsystematic” use of history. Additionally, the 1982 writers, included more officers who had received formal historical training and advanced degrees.

\(^{279}\) Ibid., 1-4, 2-1, 8-1 to 8-4, 9-1, 10-1 to 10-2, and 11-1. See also Romjue, 55. The two largest historical vignettes were of Grant’s action at Vicksburg (for an example of the fundamentals of offense) and the actions of German Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff at the Battle of Tannenberg in World War I (for an example of the fundamentals of the defense).
modern war with the human and psychological dimensions of battle. As a result, the principles of AirLand Battle have remained relatively unchanged for over a generation.

Figure 9: Two examples of the differing uses of history. The example on the left, from the 1976 edition of FM 100-5, Operations, otherwise known as Active Defense, incorporated a statistical analysis of historical information gleaned from the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The example on the right, which was accompanied by a written vignette, from the 1982 edition of FM 100-5, Operations, otherwise known as AirLand Battle, incorporated a more traditional use and language of military history.

**American Military Thought: Revolution or Renaissance?**

In 1972, General Starry called for a “revolution in military thought.” But what was the outcome of the spirited doctrinal debates and military reform of the 1970s and 1980s? Did the Army find the “professional attainment, based on prolonged study” that Winston Churchill once described as “the title reeds of the commanders of future armies, and the secret of future victories?” Was the doctrinal reform of the 1970s and 1980s truly a revolution?

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Given the dialectic progression of tactical concepts codified in *Active Defense* and subsequently in *AirLand Battle*, the development was not revolutionary, but evolutionary. Starry himself said as much in 1978 when he referred to *FM 100-5* as “a tactical evolution.”²⁸² In fact, the principles of *AirLand Battle* were quite traditional. As Holder remarked, *AirLand Battle* was “really conservative doctrine,” it “retained some of the features of its predecessor,” as it added “some new ideas to doctrine” while returning “many older [ideas] to use.”²⁸³ At its core, the doctrine reached back to the traditions of the U.S. Army during World War II. The reformers of the late-1970s and early-1980s sought to capture historical conclusions about the nature of conventional warfare as well as to resurrect the fundamental tactical and operational precepts that the U.S. Army developed during that conflict.²⁸⁴

Revolution or not, the post-Vietnam renaissance in American military thought was significant and consisted of far more than just an interaction of ideas. In simple terms, this intellectual process did not occur in a vacuum. Numerous factors, ranging from personality conflicts and budgetary limitations to technological, tactical, and strategic realities, influenced the Army’s fundamental principles of doctrine. To understand the context and

members of the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. Speaking about the importance of military professionalism and education, Churchill commented: “That you should have been able to preserve the art not only of creating mighty armies almost at the stroke of a wand—but of leading and guiding those armies upon a scale incomparably greater than anything that was prepared for or even dreamed of, constitutes a gift made by the officer corps of the United States to their nation in time of trouble. . . . I shall always urge that the tendency in the future should be to prolong courses of instruction at the colleges rather than to abridge them and to equip our young officers with that special technical professional knowledge which soldiers have a right to expect from those who give them orders, if necessary to go to their deaths. Professional attainment, based on prolonged study, and collective study at colleges, rank by rank, and age by age—those are the title reeds of the commanders of the future armies, and the secret of future victories.”


²⁸⁴ Holder, interview, 10 November 2006.
implications of this evolutionary progression of ideas, one must evaluate it in light of what it essentially was: the intellectual component of a consolidated effort to instill a new era of professionalism within the U.S. Army. The sum of these efforts, as General Starry expressed in a March 1983 *Military Review* article, sought nothing less than “To Change an Army.”

The early 1970s presented leaders of the American Army with an opportunity for remarkable reform. This was not the first time that such an opportunity arose. To be sure, the efforts of Upton and Root, in the important institutional professionalization at the beginning of the twentieth century, emphasized the importance of military history, institutional education, and formal doctrine. During the twentieth century, however, in the midst of the Cold War, and especially in the jungles of Vietnam, the Army and its professional officer corps lost its way. The Army lost its way in terms of its doctrine, its intellectual roots, and its professional values and identity. As General DePuy described the troubling institutional attitudes concerning training and doctrine in the 1960s: “We weren’t serious about it . . . we assumed that we could win any war if we just managed national defense right—it didn’t have anything to do with tactics, weapons, motivation, or training . . . It was all wrong of course.”

Defeat in Vietnam, especially when coupled with the renaissance in military thought, changed that. Moreover, the doctrinal debates of the late-1970s and the on-going reform efforts of DePuy and Starry, supported and led by a successive string of strong Chiefs of Staff extended those dynamics of change. Importantly, the efforts of these leaders interacted

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285 Starry, “To Change an Army,” 20-27. Many other historical accounts overlook this aspect of the doctrinal reforms and revisions.

with a particular culture and a specific environment that was eager to receive and debate change. No matter how reluctant the Army’s first steps towards this debate might have been, what emerged might not equate to the momentous revolution that Starry called for in 1972, but it clearly represented the continuation of an important renaissance in military thought that assisted in increasing the level of professional discourse throughout the Army. It was as if the kindling of the early 1970s—the critical institutions, developing concepts, and zealous leaders—interacted with the spark of defeat in Vietnam and the “fortuitous” example of the Yom Kippur War to create significant doctrinal reform.

At the same time that TRADOC successfully invigorated the officer corps in the “Great Debate,” several other important intellectual currents and initiatives were also emerging. In 1979, Starry founded the Combat Studies Institute to “conduct original, interpretive research on historical topics pertinent to the current doctrinal concerns of the U.S. Army,” and to provide “an integrated, progressive program of military history instruction in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command service school system.” Additionally, professional historians produced a number of important works of scholarship under the rubric of “new” military history. Influential historians, such as Russell Weigley (The American Way of War (1973) and Eisenhower’s Lieutenants (1981)), John Keegan (The Face of Battle (1976)), John Shy (A People Numerous and Armed (1976)), and Michael Howard and Peter Paret (with their translation of Clausewitz’s On War (1976)), played an important role in developing the dense intellectual context that fueled this re-birth of military

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287 General Donn A. Starry to Major General Walker, “Establishing of Combat Studies Institute C&GSC,” 1 May 1979, Box 16, The Donn A Starry Papers. See also General Starry to Dr. I.B. Holley, “Combat Studies Institute,” 23 May 1979, Box 17, The Donn A Starry Papers. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that CSI’s first publication was Robert Doughty’s The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76 (1979). The development of CSI and its subsequent publications and programs of instruction further facilitated the cascading effect of the doctrine and the impact of Active Defense, AirLand Battle, and the results of the renaissance as a whole.
thought. Moreover, the growing influence of historical mindedness allowed these scholars to continue to interact within the doctrinal development process as well as the broader process of educating and training the Army’s officer corps. This resulted in the production of “sound, effective, innovative techniques and programs to make history vital to the Army in peacetime and crucial to its winning should it be committed to battle again.”

These contributions complemented the educational spirit of the “Great Debate” and the intellectual flexibility, initiative, and confidence required to foster and sustain the discourse. This spirit had several important consequences. First, it assisted these reforms to be comprehensive. Second, it created a peculiar doctrine: AirLand Battle was a doctrine that was not doctrinaire. The development of AirLand Battle represented a manner of military thought that emphasized creativity, qualitative military superiority, historical mindedness, and mental agility. As such, the process through which TRADOC leaders developed AirLand Battle shaped a way of fighting and thinking about wars with a spirit and tone that might be best described as the Ideology of the Initiative.

This educational and doctrinal spirit provided the backbone to the extensive reformation of the United States Army’s tactical and operational mindset. Even though this process would wax and wane throughout the turbulent history of the Army and the nation in the closing decades of the twentieth century, the conclusion of the process remained unchanged. In many ways, Clausewitz was right. Despite the impressiveness of technology or the “shock and awe” of propaganda, the nature of war remained the same . . . complex and

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289 I have developed this concept with full deference to Jack Snyder’s “ideology of the offense.” See Jack L. Snyder, The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). However, the subsequent historical record bears out that AirLand Battle clearly did not succumb to the numerous shortcomings of the pre-World War I “ideology of the offensive.”
paradoxical . . . dynamic and “chameleon-like” . . . passionate and human. Because of this, Churchill’s “secret of future victories,” based on “prolonged study” also remained the same. This was where the contributions of the diffuse beginnings of the renaissance in American military thought began to pay significant dividends. In short, the doctrinal reforms that propelled the U.S. Army from the confidence-taxing defeat of Vietnam through Active Defense and ultimately to AirLand Battle required an intellectually enlightened and self-critical organization that was open to debate, flexible to change, and versatile in its practices of military employment and military thought, training, and education.

Viewed from this perspective, the influential “network” of uniformed historians and political scientists played a particularly important role in this process. In fact, the early actions of Thomas Griess and George A. Lincoln provided the critical intellectual capital necessary for substantial doctrinal change. Serving as the respective heads of the history and social science departments at West Point, Griess and Lincoln took advantage of the institutional changes occurring during the late-1960s and early-1970s to create a cadre of intellectual officers that not only educated cadets, but also ushered in a renaissance in American military thought. As such, these two soldier-scholars served as important intellectual patrons that indirectly influenced the scope and nature of the Army’s doctrinal renaissance. Moreover, the modern faculty system at the Military Academy, with its emphasis on professional development and its commitment to providing experienced and insightful officers with professional academic training, became the leading supplier of intellect throughout the officer corps. These officers in turn became the “readers of the drafts, writers of articles” and active participants who provided the necessary intellectual
stimulation to initiate the debate and maintain the scholarly zeal that produced doctrinal reform.²⁹⁰

For a brief time, these characteristics—the “secret of future victories”—defined the U.S. Army. Over time, however, the Army’s quest for an effective doctrine, which produced such positive results through the 1980s, would also lead to some troubling, or at least ambiguous, developments. The Army began to develop a strong bias to focus almost solely on the tactical level of war. Although the doctrinal renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s clearly articulated what the operational level of war should look like, later training and educational developments (not to mention the manner in which the Army’s personnel system selected officers for senior command), caused the Army to continue to hone its tactical prowess at the expense of a deeper understanding of the operational art and a competency in the strategic implications of war.²⁹¹ By the last decade of the twentieth century, the Army had lost much of the intellectual ardor and innovative creativity that animated a period of significant reform and lively debate.²⁹²

Despite these subsequent shortcomings, what did occur from 1970 until 1982 was remarkable. If anything about the process was revolutionary, it was how the Army’s senior leaders—particularly Starry—dealt with these intellectual currents in general and the emerging debate over Active Defense in particular. From 1977 until 1982, surrounded by critics and attacked by almost all sides, Starry and his team of doctrine writers and military

²⁹⁰ Holder, interview, 10 November 2006.

²⁹¹ Early indications of this tendency were mentioned in correspondence between Lieutenant General Carl Vuono and General William Richardson, one of Starry’s successors as TRADOC Commander. See Lieutenant General Carl Vuono to General William Richardson, “Third Commandant’s Review of AirLand Battle Study,” 29 November 1984, Box 2, The William R. Richardson Papers. See also Holder, interview, 10 November 2006.

²⁹² Questions related to this assertion are the subject of future research projects planned by the author.
thinkers did something remarkable; they listened. This deceptively simple act led to a more inclusive synthesis that combined “lessons” of military history with a critical analysis of *Active Defense* to produce an interactive doctrine centered on the principles of flexibility, leadership, and above all else, initiative. This took a special combination of intelligence, introspection, education, and combat experience. The civilian reformers who offered so much to this innovative process had all of these attributes save one: combat experience. Given the specific nature of the culture of the post-Vietnam officer corps, however, it took the likes of Abrams, Starry, Griess, Holder, Wass De Czege, Clarke, Cavazos, and even DePuy, and their collective combat experience to bring these elements together.

Taken together, these elements contributed to a broad conceptualization of the role and use of doctrine. This conceptualization applied doctrine, along with extensive thought and reflection, not only to war-fighting, but also to training, force structure, and weapons systems acquisition; all of which were important aspects to rebuilding a professional organization within a climate of limited budgets and pessimistic sentiments.  

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293 As the decade ended, the defense budgets again began to increase prior to the massive “Reagan build-up” of the mid- to late-1980s. Importantly, by the time the Army was able to enjoy the budgetary largesse of the mid-1980s, they had already established a solid, systematic intellectual foundation to support weapons systems procurement. This helps to explain part of the successful acquisition and fielding of the “Big 5” Weapons systems: the M1 Tank, the M2/M3 Fighting Vehicle, the Patriot Air Defense Missile System, the Apache Attack Helicopter (AH-64), and the Blackhawk Utility Helicopter (UH-60).
most important contributions.²⁹⁴ Yet, if DePuy’s outlook concerning doctrine was broad, Starry’s intentions “To Change an Army” were even more ambitious.²⁹⁵

The image on the cover of the March 1986 edition of *Military Review* succinctly summarized this important idea. The edition portrayed the integrated elements of technology, training and education, field exercises, and the ubiquitous image of the American soldier and equipment linked together in an unbroken chain of doctrine (See Figure 10). The image communicated the characteristics of an organization far different from the demoralized officers and soldiers left in the immediate wake of the Vietnam War. It was nothing less than an image of a changed Army.

²⁹⁴ Many previous historical accounts disregard DePuy’s contributions in *Active Defense* as a “fiasco,” “stillborn,” an “absurdity,” or as a “total rejection.” See Kagan, *Finding the Target*, 57 and 70; Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, 268. Although *Active Defense* was flawed, incomplete, and lacked a broad consensus throughout the officer corps, these conclusions are overly harsh. In addition to fostering the “Great Debate,” DePuy’s conceptions concerning doctrine remained at the forefront of Starry’s mind as he led the effort to create *AirLand Battle*. These simple explanations and arguments—themselves a result of the dichotomous nature of the debate when the epithets of “attrition” and “maneuver” bandied about—mask important continuities about the Army’s renaissance and about the creation of *AirLand Battle*, to include Starry’s intimate participation in both versions of the Army’s operational doctrine.

²⁹⁵ Starry’s efforts to use doctrine “to change an army” have also been characteristically under-emphasized in the topic’s historiography. This is due to the pervasive emphasis—present in Naveh, Citino, Pullan, and Kagan—of the use of the “operational art” as a prism for analysis. Although very important in identifying the key elements of *AirLand Battle* and how they developed, this prism distorts the fact that both DePuy’s and Starry’s efforts transcended descriptions and methods of how to fight. Although creating doctrine that reflected their estimation of the nature of modern warfare was a central element of the reform, both efforts (1976 and 1982) were more than just operational conceptions. This same oversight also diminishes the synergistic impact that doctrinal reform affected in a symbiotic combination with educational and training developments that occurred simultaneously. Starry’s efforts in particular should be evaluated from the perspective that analyzes the transformative effects of the process on the culture of the Army as an institution as well as the transformative effects on how that institution planned to fight in battle.
It was here where the “command influence” of Abrams, DePuy and Starry gained significance. Although their conclusions discounted the experience of Vietnam as an aberration (a decision that would ultimately lead to an acute tactical bias with potentially significant costs), their influence greatly assisted the tactical and training renaissance that was instrumental in creating a new professional organization: the post-Vietnam “Modern Volunteer Army.” The historic, professional, and human dimensions of AirLand Battle reflected Starry’s conclusion that “battles are won by the courage of the soldiers, the excellence of the leaders and the effectiveness of the training in their units before the battle begins.”

Very much in the spirit of Clausewitz, these sentiments did much to foster a doctrinal system intended “to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self-education, not to accompany him to the battlefield.”

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297 Clausewitz, *On War*, 141.
time, and very much in the spirit of Abrams, who Starry described as the “real genius behind AirLand Battle,” these sentiments helped to get the Army “off its ass.”

What this process suggests is that given the right conditions, a certain degree of learning and innovation was possible in the modern U.S. Army. In fact, with the right conditions, the effectiveness of internal reform could be remarkable, if not near-revolutionary. These conditions, however, constitute a critical point in and of themselves. The body of archival and historical evidence indicates that doctrinal reform, at least in the U.S. Army, should focus on a particular threat, be feasible in its synchronization with national strategic policy and technology, possess a high-ranking sponsor or proponent, and be regenerative and collaborative in nature. Most importantly, such reform absolutely requires introspective, experienced, intelligent officers that are well-educated and imbued with a deep sense of historical mindedness.

Not only did the concepts within FM 100-5, Operations indicate how the American Army was to fight, but more importantly, the field manuals and the debate that surrounded them indicated how the Army was to think. Above all else, the human dynamic of personality, experience, leadership, and historically inspired thought determined the fate of Active Defense and AirLand Battle. This process, which would continue throughout the 1980s, helped to create an atmosphere that would provide a significant impact on the culture, professionalism, and the future of the Army as a whole. In the end, for a brief, yet critical time, the U.S. Army—through a combination of historical mindedness and visionary leadership—attained, at least when it came to conventional war, the “secret of future

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Starry Interview, 05 December 2006.
victories.” The task remains for current and future Army leaders of all ranks to find and nurture this secret once more.
**Appendix 1: Active Defense versus AirLand Battle: A Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of War</th>
<th>&quot;Active Defense&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;AirLand Battle&quot;</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technologically advanced; rapid; lethal</td>
<td>Emphasized lethal &quot;non-linear&quot; battlefield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governing Doctrinal Principle</strong></td>
<td>Linear Defense; Maneuver Laterally to concentrate forces</td>
<td>Depth; Maneuver &quot;deep&quot; to disrupt and defeat the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;How to Fight&quot; of &quot;Battlefield Dynamics&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Combat Fundamentals&quot; or &quot;AirLand Battle Fundamentals&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Combat Fundamentals&quot; or &quot;AirLand Battle Fundamentals&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled and Directed Battle</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover, Concealment, Suppression, and Combined Arms</td>
<td>Depth</td>
<td>Speed and violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly trained crews and teams</td>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Agility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Synchronization</td>
<td>Synchronization</td>
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<td>Combat Service Support</td>
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<td>The Defense</td>
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<td>Operations within NATO</td>
<td>Defense and Breakout of Encircled Forces</td>
<td>Defense and Breakout of Encircled Forces</td>
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<td>Special Environments</td>
<td>Rear Area Protection</td>
<td>Rear Area Protection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joint—Contingency—Combined Operations</td>
<td>Joint—Contingency—Combined Operations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Offense**                      | Purpose: "Destroy enemy forces; Secure key terrain; Deceive and divert the enemy; Develop intelligence...By taking the offensive, we gain the initiative, carry the fight to the enemy, fight in his positions, and seek decision on our terms."
|                                  | Fundamentals of the Offense: "Planned around six basic concepts: See the battlefield; Concentrate overwhelming combat power; suppress enemy defensive fires; Shock, overwhelm and destroy the enemy; Attack deep into the enemy rear to destroy his system of defense; Provide continuous mobile support"|
|                                  | Purpose: No change from "Active Defense"
|                                  | Fundamentals of the Offense: Described as "Operational Concepts"
|                                  | Concentration
|                                  | Surprise
|                                  | Speed
|                                  | Flexibility
|                                  | Audacity
|                                  | Also described "Forms of Maneuver"
|                                  | Frontal Attack
|                                  | Penetration
|                                  | Envelopment
|                                  | Turning Movement
|                                  | Infiltration
|                                  | Also described "Types of Defensive Operations"
|                                  | Defense
|                                  | Delay
|                                  | Defense of Encircled Forces
|                                  | Rear Area Protection Operations
|                                  | Counterattacks and Spoiling Attacks
|                                  | Withdrawals

| **Defense**                      | Purpose: "Cause an enemy attack to fail; Preserve forces, facilities, installations, activities; Retain tactical, strategic, or political objectives; Gain time; Concentrate forces elsewhere; Wear down enemy forces as a prelude to offensive operations; Control essential terrain; Force the enemy to mass so that he is more vulnerable to our firepower."
|                                  | Fundamentals of the Defense: "Understand the enemy; See the battlefield; Concentrate at the critical times and places; Fight as a combined arms team; Exploit the advantages of the defender."
|                                  | Purpose: No change from "Active Defense"
|                                  | Fundamentals of the Defense: Described as "Operational Concepts"
|                                  | Deception
|                                  | Operations Security
|                                  | Maneuver
|                                  | Also described "Types of Defensive Operations"
|                                  | Defense
|                                  | Delay
|                                  | Defense of Encircled Forces
|                                  | Rear Area Protection Operations
|                                  | Counterattacks and Spoiling Attacks
|                                  | Withdrawals
|                                  | "Principles of War" not mentioned; Levels of war indirectly addressed

| **Principles of War**            | Defined the Principles of War. Also defined three levels of war: Strategic—Operational—Tactical |
|                                  | Numerous quotes of famous theoreticians
|                                  | Historical Perspectives describing each type of major operation
|                                  | Offense: Grant at Vicksburg
|                                  | Defense: Hindenburg and Ludendorff at Tannenberg
|                                  | Numerous pictures and maps graphically showing spatial relationships and other concepts

| **Nature of Examples**           | Limited to the future European battlefield; Statistical in nature (esp. in chapter on "Modern Weapons on the Modern Battlefield"
|                                  | Defined the Principles of War. Also defined three levels of war: Strategic—Operational—Tactical |
|                                  | Numerous quotes of famous theoreticians
|                                  | Historical Perspectives describing each type of major operation
|                                  | Offense: Grant at Vicksburg
|                                  | Defense: Hindenburg and Ludendorff at Tannenberg
|                                  | Numerous pictures and maps graphically showing spatial relationships and other concepts

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