



OPERATIONS AND WAR

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- Not all military operations involve war, but war underpins the existence of all military Services, so doctrine should include an understanding of war and its consequences.
- The most fundamental and important purpose of military forces is their employment as **instruments of national power** to deter or win wars.
- War is a violent struggle between rival parties to attain competing objectives—also described as “socially sanctioned violence to achieve a political purpose” (Joint Publication 1, [Doctrines for the Armed Forces of the United States](#)).
- War has been deeply-rooted in human experience since the earliest times.
- War remains an instrument of policy used by nation states, sub-national entities, or supra-national groups to achieve disputed aims.
- *For the complete discussion of this topic, [click here](#).*

Traditional and Irregular Warfare

- Typically, US military doctrine frames warfare as “traditional” or “irregular.”
 - ✦ “Traditional warfare” is violent confrontation between nation states or coalitions and alliances of nation states (Joint Publication 1, [Doctrines for the Armed Forces of the United States](#)).
 - ✦ Traditional warfare typically involves force-on-force military operations in which adversaries employ a variety of conventional military capabilities against each other in the air, land, maritime, space, and cyberspace domains.
 - ✦ The objective in traditional warfare may be to coerce key military or political decision makers, defeat an adversary’s armed forces, destroy an adversary’s war-making capacity, or seize or retain territory in order to force a change in an adversary’s government or policies.
 - ✦ “[Irregular warfare](#)” (IW) is a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and **asymmetric** approaches, though it may employ the full range of

military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will (JP 1).

- ✦ The focus of IW is not on large-scale combat or the destructive capability of an adversary's military forces. Typically, a less powerful adversary seeks to disrupt or negate the military advantage of a more powerful foe, often an established regime, through small engagements intended to demoralize the foe's military, or attacks on nonmilitary targets in order to influence or control a local populace.
 - **IW is not a lesser-included form of traditional warfare.** IW encompasses a variety of operations where the nature and characteristics are significantly different from traditional war.
 - IW consists of five principle activities or operations undertaken in sequence, in parallel, or in blended form in coherent campaigns to address irregular threats: [counterterrorism](#), [unconventional warfare](#), [foreign internal defense](#), [counterinsurgency](#), and [stability operations](#).
 - **Traditional warfare and irregular warfare are not mutually exclusive;** both forms of warfare may be present in a given conflict. Airmen should understand that the character of war may often change in the course of a conflict. This is especially true in irregular warfare where the conflict is often protracted and varies in intensity.
 - Traditional warfare can rapidly evolve into an irregular war and vice versa, requiring the military force to adapt from one form to the other.
 - ✦ Military forces should be prepared to conduct operations across the [range of military operations](#) (ROMO), but they are ultimately tested by their ability to prevail in war.
 - ✦ The advent of air forces revolutionized many aspects of armed conflict, but did not fundamentally change the nature of war or the enduring insights that guide strategy.
 - ✦ Opening of space and cyberspace domains to military action has not fundamentally changed these insights either, even though it increased complexity.
 - *For the complete discussion of this topic, [click here](#).*
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