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THEORETICAL DEFICIENCIES OF THE CONCEPT OF DOMINANT BATTLEFIELD IN THE CONTEXT OF FRAGMENTED WAR ZONES

Abstract: *The article critically analyzes the conceptual paradox of the dominant battlefield in contemporary conflicts, demonstrating the unsustainability of traditional doctrine of monocentric battlefields in conditions of fragmented war zones. Multidimensional fragmentation of conflict - geographical, technological, and socio-political - creates an operational environment in which hierarchical prioritization of battlefields becomes not only tactically inefficient but also strategically counterproductive. As an innovative theoretical contribution, the work proposes a model of "fluid hotspots" that conceptualizes conflict space as a complex adaptive system with polycentric, temporal hotspots of strategic importance, introducing original concepts such as Distributed adaptive synchronization, Modular operational packages, and Dynamic multi-domain operations. Methodologically, the research is based on comparative analysis of contemporary conflicts, critical re-examination of established military doctrines, and systematic consideration of transformative factors in contemporary warfare, with integration of relevant theoretical and empirical insights from strategic studies. The aim of the article is to formulate a comprehensive theoretical framework that will enable more efficient understanding and operational action in fragmented conflicts of the 21st century, bridging the gap between traditional military theory and the complex reality of contemporary warfare.*

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1. CONCEPTUAL PARADOX OF DOMINANT BATTLEFIELD: CRITIQUE OF MONOLITHIC APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

The doctrine of dominant battlefield, as a fundamental element of military theory, traditionally assumes the existence of a central zone of conflict where decisive operations are concentrated and the main bulk of combat power is applied. Such a conception, rooted in the Clausewitzian principle of center of gravity (*Schwerpunkt*), has historically shaped military campaigns through identification of key locations, directions of attack, and decisive points that lead to strategic victory. However, contemporary armed conflicts, especially those after the Cold War, fundamentally challenge the validity of this monolithic approach, creating a deep conceptual paradox between theory and practice. Fragmentation of battlefields, asymmetric warfare, and hybrid threats have transformed the nature of conflict to the point where conventional doctrine of dominant battlefield becomes operationally inadequate, and often strategically counterproductive. General Martin Dempsey (*Martin Dempsey*), 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces (2011-2015), recognized this paradox through his analysis of contemporary security challenges. During his speeches at Harvard in 2012, Dempsey pointed out that contemporary conflicts do not possess clear fronts nor have clearly defined centers of gravity that could be targets of concentrated application of combat power, marking this as the security paradox of our time (Dempsey, 2012). This observation fundamentally questions the long-standing assumption of military theory that wars can be won through identification and attack of the dominant battlefield or strategic center of gravity of the opposing side. Instead, contemporary conflicts are characterized by dispersion, fragmentation, and simultaneous operations in multiple domains - land, air, sea, cyberspace, and information environment - creating a complex operational environment that does not conform to traditional concepts of dominant battlefield.

The doctrine of dominant battlefield has its historical roots in Prussian, and later German warfare, especially through the concept of *Schwerpunkt* (center of gravity), which implied concentration of forces at decisive points of the battlefield. Karl von Clausewitz defined the center of gravity as „the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends... the point against which all energies should be directed" (Clausewitz, 1976:595-596). The

same idea later evolved through the operational doctrine of *Blitzkrieg* in World War II, the American concept of AirLand Battle (*AirLand Battle*) during the Cold War, and the theory of "shock and awe" (*Shock and Awe*) from the early 21st century. However, all these concepts share a common assumption about the existence of an identifiable, coherent, and dominant battlefield that can be decisive for the outcome of war.

Experiences from contemporary conflicts testify to a deep discrepancy between this doctrinal assumption and operational reality. During Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, coalition forces achieved rapid and decisive victory on the conventional battlefield, capturing Baghdad within three weeks. However, this tactical victory on the alleged dominant battlefield did not lead to strategic victory - instead, the conflict transformed into a prolonged counterinsurgency war that lasted more than eight years. General H. R. McMaster (*H. R. McMaster*), through his analysis of contemporary conflicts, rightfully noted that focusing exclusively on conventional operations led to neglect of the complexity of conflicts that cannot be resolved solely through domination on the traditional battlefield (McMaster, 2008:23). Such discrepancy between tactical success and strategic failure illustrates the inadequacy of monolithic conception of battlefield in the context of contemporary conflicts. The counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan (2001-2021) provides an additional example of this paradox. Despite enormous firepower and technological superiority of NATO forces, operations on what was traditionally considered the dominant battlefield - physical terrain and enemy forces - failed to achieve decisive victory. General Stanley McChrystal (*Stanley McChrystal*), through his reflection on experiences from Afghanistan, summarized this dilemma: „We realized that there is no single battlefield, but a multitude of micro-battlefields, where success is not measured by seizing territory or inflicting casualties, but by gaining the trust of the local population and delegitimizing the enemy narrative" (McChrystal, 2013:103). Such observation points to a fundamental change in the nature of conflict, where traditional understanding of dominant battlefield as physical space gives way to more complex understanding of multidimensional struggle in which informational, psychological, and political factors play equally important, if not more important roles than kinetic operations.

Hybrid warfare, as demonstrated by Russia during the annexation of Crimea in 2014, further complicates the concept of dominant battlefield. Through a combination of special operations, information warfare, cyber attacks, economic pressures, and conventional military threats, Russia achieved its strategic goals without the need for traditional massive application of military force on a conventional battlefield. General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the

General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, articulated this approach through his famous doctrine: „The rules of war have fundamentally changed. The role of non-military means in achieving political and strategic goals has grown and in many cases exceeded the effectiveness of conventional weapons" (Gerasimov, 2013:2). Such observation points to a transformative change in understanding contemporary conflicts, where the center of gravity of operations shifts from traditional physical battlefield to "gray zones" where kinetic and non-kinetic operations intertwine.

The concept of Network-Centric Warfare (*Network-Centric Warfare*) further challenges traditional understanding of dominant battlefield. Admiral Arthur Cebrowski (*Arthur Cebrowski*), one of the main architects of U.S. Armed Forces transformation and pioneer of network-centric warfare theory, noted that „in the network-centric operational concept, advantage is not in massive concentration of forces at a decisive point, but in superior information position and ability to command and control dispersed forces with greater speed and precision" (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998:35). This shift of focus from mass concentration of forces to information superiority fundamentally changes the nature of combat space, making the traditional concept of dominant battlefield obsolete. Cebrowski further emphasized that network-centric warfare represents a fundamental shift from what we call platform-centric warfare to what we call network-centric warfare, which implicitly implies abandoning traditional conception of centralized battlefields in favor of distributed, interconnected operational nodes.

Dispersed operations, as a response to increased lethality of contemporary weapons systems, also contribute to battlefield fragmentation. Instead of concentrating forces on traditional dominant battlefield, contemporary armed forces incline toward dispersion to avoid detection and reduce effects of precision long-range weapons systems. General Mark Milley (*Mark Milley*), through his analysis of future character of warfare, predicted that „future conflicts will be characterized by extremely dispersed formations of operational units over vast spaces. There will no longer be a continuous front, nor clearly identified main battlefield" (Milley, 2016:56). Such prediction points to a fundamental break with Clausewitzian principles of concentration of forces at decisive points, further questioning the validity of the concept of dominant battlefield.

The proliferation of technologies that enable "A2/AD warfare" (*Anti-Access/Area Denial* - anti-access/area denial) creates an additional challenge to monolithic conception of battlefield. These technologies, which include long-range air defense systems, anti-ship missiles, electronic warfare, and cyber

capabilities, enable even relatively weaker actors to contest the superiority of stronger opponents, neutralizing the traditional advantage of concentration of combat power. The development of these capabilities fundamentally changes the character of potential conflicts, creating multiple layers of contestation that make the traditional concept of decisive battlefield practically inoperable. Information operations and cyber warfare represent perhaps the most radical challenge to the concept of dominant battlefield, as these forms of conflict take place in domains that do not conform to traditional spatial-temporal limitations of physical battlefield. General Keith Alexander (*Keith Alexander*), former director of the U.S. National Security Agency and commander of Cyber Command, emphasized that „the cyber domain represents a new battlefield that knows no geographical boundaries, where conflicts take place at the speed of light, and where victory is not measured by seizing territory" (Alexander, 2010:122). Such revolutionary change in the nature of conflict fundamentally undermines the assumption of the existence of one-dimensional, coherent, and dominant battlefield that can be decisive for the outcome of war.

The paradox of dominant battlefield has significant implications for military theory and practice. First, it questions the traditional approach to operation planning that focuses on identification of main effort (*Hauptschwerpunkt*) and supporting efforts. In a fragmented operational environment, strict hierarchical subordination of efforts can be counterproductive, as secondary efforts can often have strategic significance that exceeds their nominal classification. Second, it requires reconceptualization of doctrine of force employment, moving away from rigid linear formations toward adaptive network structures that can operate effectively in dispersed, fragmented environment. Third, it imposes the need for new approaches to measuring success in operations, where traditional metric indicators such as seized territory or casualties inflicted give way to more complex assessments of systemic effects. In the absence of clearly defined dominant battlefield, strategy, operations, and tactics must evolve toward holistic, systemic approach to conflict that transcends monolithic conception of centralized clash of military forces. Instead of focusing on individual dominant battlefield, military planners must develop capacities for simultaneous action in multiple domains and through multiple lines of operations, recognizing the interdependence of different elements of warfare - from kinetic actions, through information operations, to diplomatic and economic measures. Flexibility, adaptability, and capacity for decentralized decision-making become key requirements for military forces operating in fragmented operational environment. This does not mean complete abandonment of principles of concentration of forces, but their sophisticated rein-

terpretation in the context of network-centric operations where concentration can be achieved through coordinated action of dispersed elements, and not only through physical grouping of forces in one place.

The conceptual paradox of dominant battlefield is not only an academic issue, but has deep practical implications for conducting contemporary conflicts. Insisting on obsolete monolithic conception of battlefield can lead to strategic myopia, tactical rigidity, and operational inefficiency. Recognizing the complex, fragmented nature of contemporary conflicts represents the first step toward developing more efficient approaches to warfare that transcend limitations of traditional military theory. This does not mean complete rejection of classical principles of warfare, but their reinterpretation and adaptation in the context of radically transformed nature of conflict. Only through such evolutionary approach to military theory can we overcome the conceptual paradox of dominant battlefield and develop doctrinal frameworks that adequately reflect the complexity of contemporary warfare.

2. FRAGMENTATION OF WAR ZONES AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PHENOMENON

Contemporary armed conflicts fundamentally differ from classical wars in degrees of complexity, unpredictability, and fragmentation of operational environment. Traditional conception of war, founded on Clausewitzian principles, assumed relatively homogeneous battlefield with clear front lines, identified centers of gravity, and distinctive separation between combat zone and rear area. However, wars of the 21st century - from Iraq and Syria, through Ukraine, to low-intensity conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa - demonstrate pronounced fragmentation that manifests through geographical dispersion of combat actions, technological heterogeneity of employed means, and socio-political complexity of actors. Fragmentation is not only a tactical or operational phenomenon, but fundamentally strategic challenge that requires thorough re-examination of conventional military thinking and doctrinal adaptation.

Geographical fragmentation of war zones implies transformation of traditional, linear battlefield into a mosaic of unconnected or loosely connected zones of conflict that spread through different types of terrain and operational environments. General Robert Scales (*Robert Scales*), through his analysis of transformation of contemporary warfare, recognized the significance of this transformation when he noted that „contemporary operations no longer follow conventional front lines, but take place in branched, unconnected zones of conflict that can be separated by hundreds of kilometers, but still represent

parts of the same strategic conflict" (Scales, 2016:45). This observation points to a fundamental change in spatial conception of combat actions, where traditional doctrine of linear front becomes inadequate for understanding and conducting contemporary operations. Instead of continuous front, contemporary conflicts are characterized by polycentric hotspots of violence, with simultaneous operations in urban centers, rural areas, mountainous regions, and desert terrains. Heterogeneity of terrain requires adaptable formations, specific tactics adapted to different operational environments, and sophisticated planning that transcends traditional sectoral division of responsibilities. Such fragmentation creates significant challenges for command and control, as traditional hierarchical models often cannot efficiently coordinate operations through geographically dispersed and operationally different zones of conflict.

The conflict in Ukraine, begun in 2014, is an illustrative example of this geographical fragmentation. Hostilities did not follow conventional logic of continuous front, but manifested through distinctive, geographically separated hotspots - from urban conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk, through rural operations in the Donbas region, to hybrid actions in Crimea. Spatial ramification of conflict creates significant challenges for command and control, logistical support, and coordination of operations. As noted by General Philip Breedlove (*Philip Breedlove*), former Supreme Allied Commander Europe NATO, „fragmented battlefield requires decentralized command structure capable of autonomous decision-making at tactical level, while simultaneously maintaining strategic coherence" (Breedlove, 2018:112). The tension between tactical autonomy and strategic coherence represents one of key challenges for military formations operating in geographically fragmented war zones. Urbanization of conflict further contributes to geographical fragmentation, creating complex micro-environments in which operations of different character and intensity simultaneously take place. Operation *Iraqi Freedom* in Fallujah in 2004 and the battle for Mosul 2016-2017 demonstrated how urban warfare creates fragmented battlefield where conventional combat operations, counterterrorism actions, and stabilization activities can take place in parallel within the same urban environment, often at distances of only a few hundred meters. General Petraeus, through his analysis of urban operations in Iraq, emphasized that „urban environment represents the ultimate fragmented battlefield, where key decision can take place in one building or city block, while a few streets away completely different dynamics of conflict unfold" (Petraeus, 2010:74). Such micro-fragmentation of battlefield requires extremely high degree of situational awareness, precise intelligence support, and ability for rapid transitions between different modalities of combat actions. Geographical frag-

mentation often leads to situations where different types of operations - from high-intensity kinetic actions to humanitarian activities - take place simultaneously in spatially close but operationally separate zones. Spatial proximity of different conflict modalities requires sophisticated coordination and de-escalation mechanisms to avoid unwanted incidents that can escalate the situation or compromise the mission in one zone due to activities in another.

Technological fragmentation represents another key dimension of contemporary warfare, manifesting through heterogeneous nature of combat systems and means applied in the same conflict. Today's wars witness simultaneous use of most sophisticated weapons systems and primitive improvised means, creating asymmetric operational environments in which conventional military formations face unconventional opponents. Admiral William McRaven (*William McRaven*), former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, noted that „technological asymmetry in contemporary conflicts creates situations where most advanced combat platforms can face rudimentary, but tactically efficient improvised explosive devices or commercial drones modified for combat use" (McRaven, 2013:92). Technological heterogeneity requires adaptable tactics and doctrine that can respond to a wide spectrum of threats of different technological levels. Proliferation of precision weapons and electronic warfare systems further complicates technological fragmentation of battlefield. Contemporary conflicts are characterized by use of high-precision weapons systems with long range that can project lethal power over great distances, creating situations where physical proximity to enemy forces is no longer necessary for combat efficiency. Simultaneously, electronic warfare systems enable degradation of enemy command-information networks without kinetic action, creating new domain of conflict that overlaps with traditional physical battlefield. Technological fragmentation creates complex operational dilemmas for military planners. On one hand, it is necessary to maintain technological advantage through investments in most advanced weapons systems and equipment. On the other hand, capability must be developed for efficient action against relatively primitive, but innovative and adaptable opponents who use commercially available technologies in unexpected ways.

Cyber operations represent perhaps the most radical aspect of technological fragmentation of war zones, creating virtual dimension of conflict that takes place parallel to physical conflicts, but follows different logic, tempo, and rules of engagement. The cyber weapon *Stuxnet* attack on Iranian nuclear facilities (discovered in 2010) demonstrated how operations in cyber domain can take place parallel to diplomatic, economic, and intelligence activities, creating multidimensional conflict without formal declaration of war or kinetic

actions. General Keith Alexander (*Keith Alexander*), former director of U.S. National Security Agency, noted that „cyber domain creates new war space that does not submit to traditional geographical, temporal, or physical limitations, enabling simultaneous operations that fragment traditional conception of unified battlefield" (Alexander, 2014:128). Such observation points to fundamental transformation of war space that requires reconfiguration of traditional concepts of command and control, intelligence support, and operational planning. Cyber domain not only adds new dimension to conflict, but also transforms the way all other domains are used, creating complex interdependencies that make traditional linear conception of battlefield inadequate.

Socio-political fragmentation of conflict manifests through proliferation of actors involved in contemporary hostilities. Unlike traditional interstate conflicts with clearly defined sides, contemporary conflicts are characterized by multiple actors of different degrees of organization, legitimacy, and capacity - from regular military formations, through paramilitary groups, private military companies, terrorist organizations, criminal networks, to local militias and individual fighters. Heterogeneity of actors creates complex operational environment in which it is difficult to identify clear friend-enemy lines and apply conventional approaches to targeting and neutralization of enemy forces. The Syrian civil war (2011-) represents paradigmatic example of this socio-political fragmentation, with more than a thousand different armed groups that participated in the conflict, creating complex network of alliances, rivalries, and temporary coalitions that constantly changed during the course of conflict. General Joseph Votel (*Joseph Votel*), former commander of U.S. Central Command, described this situation as „kaleidoscopic battlefield where identities, affiliations, and goals of actors constantly change, creating operational environment of exceptional complexity that requires sophisticated understanding of local socio-political dynamics" (Votel, 2016:67). The observation emphasizes the need for integration of sociopolitical analysis into military planning and operations, which represents significant departure from traditional focus on physical aspects of conflict.

Socio-political fragmentation often results in situations where different actors have fundamentally different goals, motivations, and methods of action, making traditional approaches to negotiation and diplomatic resolution of conflicts extremely complex. Some actors may be motivated by ideological beliefs, others by economic interests, third by local politics or personal ambitions, creating complex calculation for all who attempt to understand or influence conflict dynamics. Information operations and perception management represent additional aspect of socio-political fragmentation of contemporary

conflicts. Through strategic communication, propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation of social media, different actors create competing narratives about conflict, creating information environment that further fragments understanding of conflict among local population, international public, and participants themselves. As emphasized by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, „information space opens wide asymmetric possibilities for reducing combat potential of the enemy, creating front that permeates entire territory of enemy state and fragments traditional understanding of battlefield" (Gerasimov, 2013:3). Such observation points to growing significance of information dimension of conflict and its potential to fundamentally transform traditional conceptions of warfare.

Multidimensional fragmentation of contemporary war zones has deep implications for military theory and practice. First, it requires reconceptualization of doctrine that will transcend traditional linear conception of battlefield and develop holistic approach to multi-domain operations. Transformation must take into account the fact that contemporary conflicts take place simultaneously through multiple domains and that effects in one domain can have unpredictable consequences in other domains. Second, it imposes the need for transformation of command-control structures from hierarchical to network models that can more efficiently function in fragmented operational environment. Traditional hierarchical models, designed for linear warfare, are often too slow and inflexible for needs of coordinating operations through fragmented zones of conflict. Third, it implies necessity of developing forces capable of adaptable operations in different operational contexts - from high-intensity conventional conflicts, through counterinsurgency operations, to cyber actions and information warfare. Flexibility requires not only technical capacities but also cultural adaptation that traditional organization often finds difficult to accept. Training and education of military professionals must adapt to respond to challenges of fragmented operational environment. Instead of focusing exclusively on conventional tactics and procedures, contemporary officers must develop competencies for understanding complex socio-political dynamics, adaptation to technological innovations, and efficient action in unpredictable, chaotic situations. General Mattis, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, emphasized that „contemporary warfare requires soldier-scholars capable of understanding complexity of fragmented conflict zones and adapting their operational approaches to specific context" (Mattis, 2018:49). Such observation emphasizes the significance of cognitive flexibility and contextual intelligence as key competencies for military leaders of the 21st century.

For efficient action in fragmented operational environment, military organizations must develop new approaches to intelligence preparation of battlefield that transcend traditional focus on military aspects of situation and incorporate comprehensive analysis of geographical, technological, social, political, economic, and informational factors. This requires interdisciplinary approach that integrates military knowledge with expertise from other domains - from social sciences, through computer science, to communication studies. Only through such holistic approach is it possible to create adequate understanding of complex, fragmented nature of contemporary conflicts and develop efficient strategies for their resolution. Planning operations in fragmented war zones requires fundamentally different approach from traditional linear planning. Instead of rigid, sequential plans, contemporary operations require adaptable frameworks that enable flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances. The concept of "mission command" (*Mission Command*), based on decentralized decision-making and clear understanding of commander's intent, becomes especially relevant in fragmented operational environment where centralized control can be inefficient or impossible. Through clear communication of strategic goals and operational parameters, while simultaneously delegating tactical decisions to subordinate commanders, it is possible to maintain coherence of operations despite battlefield fragmentation. Fragmentation of war zones requires integrated inter-agency and international approach to conflict management. No military organization, however capable, can independently address the complexity of contemporary fragmented conflicts. Instead, it is necessary to develop efficient coordination mechanisms between military, diplomatic, developmental, economic, and other elements of national power, as well as with allied and partner nations, international organizations, and local actors. Only through such comprehensive approach is it possible to effectively navigate through complexity of multidimensional fragmentation of contemporary conflicts and develop sustainable solutions for their stabilization and resolution.

3. IMPOSSIBILITY OF HIERARCHICAL PRIORITIZATION OF BATTLEFIELDS IN NETWORK-CENTRIC CONFLICTS

Traditional military doctrine, founded on linear concepts and hierarchical prioritization of battlefields, shows increasing deficiencies in contemporary operational environment. Throughout the history of warfare, military strategists have sought to identify key points, sectors, and directions that would be decisive for campaign outcome, directing majority of resources, forces, and

attention to those "dominant battlefields". However, the emergence of Network-Centric Warfare (*Network-Centric Warfare*) radically transforms the nature of conflict, creating complex operational environment in which traditional concept of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields is not only inefficient but also potentially counterproductive. Network-centric conflict, unlike industrial era warfare, is characterized by dispersed operations, simultaneous engagement in multiple domains, decentralized decision-making, and complex interdependencies that make every point of system potentially critical for overall outcome.

Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, one of the main architects of U.S. Armed Forces transformation and director of *Force Transformation* at the Pentagon (2001-2005), precisely identified this transition when he stated that „in network-centric warfare, advantage is not in concentration of mass at traditional decisive points, but in system's ability to generate and maintain higher operational speed, greater precision, and self-synchronization through distributed network of sensors, decision-makers, and effectors" (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998:34). Such fundamental shift of focus from geographical concentration to systemic synergy represents radical break with Clausewitzian principles of center of gravity and decisive point that have shaped military thinking for centuries. Instead of clearly defined, hierarchical "main effort" and "supporting efforts", network-centric conflict is characterized by fluid, adaptive operations where secondary efforts can suddenly become crucial due to complex interdependencies within the system. Cebrowski further elaborated that network-centric warfare results from fundamental changes in American society and business, especially through co-evolution of economy, information technologies, and business processes and organizations; these changes are connected with three key themes: shift of focus from platform to network, shift from viewing actors as independent to viewing them as parts of continuously adapting ecosystem, and significance of speed of command as the most important factor in successful operations (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998:28-35). Dynamic nature of network-centric conflicts undermines traditional logic of prioritization. In conventional conflicts, commanders could with relative certainty identify key points and directions on battlefield, enabling hierarchical allocation of resources. However, speed of changes in network-centric conflicts, combined with nonlinear nature of information systems, makes such prioritization extremely difficult, if not impossible. As noted by General McChrystal, through his reflection on transformation of Joint Special Operations Command in Iraq: „In network-centric environment, battlefield is everything that affects the network - and that is practically everything. There is no clear hierarchy of importance

between physical, informational, and cognitive domains, but only complex interplay that requires simultaneous engagement through all domains" (McChrystal, 2015:153). This observation points to fundamental impossibility of isolating individual aspects of network-centric conflict and their hierarchical ranking by importance, which represents significant challenge for traditional approaches to operational planning.

Multi-domain character of contemporary operations further complicates prioritization of battlefields. Instead of focusing on one dominant physical domain (land, air, or sea), contemporary conflicts are characterized by simultaneous operations through physical and non-physical domains - land, air, sea, space, cyberspace, and information environment - creating multidimensional space of conflict that cannot be easily divided into discrete, hierarchically organized components. General Mark Milley, as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, stated: „We can no longer speak of dominant battlefield and supporting efforts in traditional sense. Contemporary multi-domain conflict requires simultaneous engagement through all domains, considering that influence in one domain can have nonlinear, disproportionate effects in other domains" (Milley, 2018:5). Inter-domain interdependence makes hierarchical prioritization potentially dangerous, as neglecting one domain can create systemic vulnerabilities that opponent can exploit, regardless of concentration of forces in other domains. Multi-domain nature of conflict requires development of new conceptual frameworks that can encompass complex interactions between different domains. Traditional approach that treated different domains as separate entities with clearly defined boundaries becomes inadequate when effects in one domain can have immediate and far-reaching consequences in other domains. For example, cyber attack on communication systems can simultaneously affect land operations, aviation missions, and logistical support, creating cascading effects that propagate through entire operational system.

Systemic nature of network-centric conflicts transforms traditional understanding of strategic center of gravity. Instead of focusing on identification and attack of individual critical points, network-centric warfare requires understanding opponent as complex adaptive system with distributed nodes and redundant capacities. As noted by Colonel John Warden (*John Warden*), creator of *five rings* theory: „Contemporary systems rarely have one critical point whose destruction would lead to systemic collapse. Instead, they are often designed with distributed architecture that can survive loss of individual components; this requires parallel, simultaneous attack on multiple systemic elements, not sequential prioritization of targets" (Warden, 1995:89). This observation points to need for fundamentally different approach to operation

planning, which recognizes that in network-centric conflict, strategic success often does not result from concentration on individual "dominant" battlefield, but from ability to simultaneously act through different points of enemy system, creating cumulative effects that exceed sum of individual actions.

Information superiority, as key element of network-centric warfare, further complicates traditional hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. In industrial era warfare, physical presence and material advantage were decisive factors for establishing domination on battlefield. However, in information age, ability to collect, process, and distribute information can be equally important, if not more important than physical concentration of forces. Admiral William Owens (*William Owens*), former Vice Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasizes: „In network-centric war, battlefield of knowledge often precedes and shapes physical battlefield. Information superiority can be decisive even without traditional material advantage, if it enables faster, more precise, and more effective application of force" (Owens, 2001:67). Such shift of emphasis from physical mass to information superiority represents fundamental challenge for traditional hierarchical prioritization, as information domain does not conform to same limitations as physical domains and cannot be easily divided into discrete, geographically defined sectors of greater or lesser priority. Information superiority enables what Cebrowski and Garstka call "self-synchronization" - ability of distributed forces to coordinate their actions without explicit commands from higher level of command. Self-synchronization is enabled by high level of knowledge about own forces, enemy forces, and all relevant elements of operational environment and it transcends loss of combat power inherent in traditional hierarchical synchronization characteristic of conventional doctrine and converts combat from stepwise functions into continuum of high speed.

Decentralization of command and control, as necessary response to complexity of network-centric conflicts, further complicates hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. In traditional, centralized model, higher commands could determine priorities and distribute resources according to hierarchy of importance of different sectors. However, speed and complexity of contemporary operations often require delegation of authority to lower levels, creating situation where tactical commanders have significant autonomy in decision-making. General Petraeus, analyzing experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan, noted: „In distributed operations, experience has taught us that it is impossible to centrally determine what is 'main' and what is 'supporting' battlefield. Instead, we must enable local commanders to recognize and exploit tactical opportunities that can have strategic significance, often without time

for consultations with higher levels of command" (Petraeus, 2010:92). This described decentralization of decision-making creates operational environment where priorities are not necessarily determined hierarchically from above, but emergently, through interaction of different actors at tactical level, which represents significant departure from traditional model of centralized priority determination. Decentralization also requires new type of leadership that Cebrowski describes as transition from "chess master" mentality to "gardener" approach, where leaders create conditions for success and enable subordinates to make autonomous decisions within clearly defined goals and constraints. Such approach is fundamentally different from traditional hierarchical control and requires high level of trust, training, and shared understanding of mission goals.

Asymmetric nature of contemporary conflicts further undermines concept of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. Unlike symmetric conflicts between states with similar military organizations and doctrines, today's conflicts often involve non-state actors, hybrid threats, and asymmetric tactics that do not respect conventional battlefield parameters. Asymmetry often results in situation where opponent can avoid our "priority" zones and operate in domains or geographical areas traditionally considered secondary. General Mattis, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, stated: „Asymmetric opponent does not accept our prioritization of battlefields. He will deliberately seek our blind spots, avoid our strengths, and attack where we are most vulnerable, often in domains or geographical areas we have not designated as priority" (Mattis, 2019:112). Such dynamics make traditional hierarchical prioritization potentially counterproductive, as it can lead to concentration of resources in areas where opponent decides not to engage significant forces, simultaneously neglecting zones he identifies as his priority targets. Asymmetric opponents often show exceptional ability of adaptation and innovation, using commercially available technologies in unpredictable ways or exploiting vulnerabilities in our systems that we have not recognized. Unpredictability makes traditional approaches to prioritization, which rely on relatively stable assumptions about opponent and operational environment, *largely ineffective*.

Technological complexity of contemporary weapons systems and equipment creates additional challenge for hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. Highly sophisticated platforms, such as electronic warfare systems, missile defense, or cyber weapons, often have operational effects that transcend traditional boundaries of sectors or domains. „Overlapping geometry of firepower" creates situation where effect of one weapons system can manifest far beyond its nominal area of operation. As noted by Dr. Robert Latham (*Robert Latham*),

director of International Security Institute, „contemporary precision weapons, electronic warfare systems, and cyber capacities create overlapping zones of influence that do not follow traditional sectoral logic of battlefields. System located in one geographical area can project effects over great distances, creating operational environment where geographical prioritization is often inadequate" (Latham, 2020:74). This observation points to need for new conceptual framework that transcends traditional, geographically defined understanding of battlefield and recognizes fluid, non-hierarchical nature of contemporary zones of conflict.

Implications of impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields are significant for military theory and practice. First, they require fundamental re-examination of traditional approaches to operational planning that rely on clear distinction between main and supporting efforts. Instead of rigid hierarchy of priorities, contemporary planning must recognize complex interdependencies of different elements of operational environment and develop flexible, adaptive plans that can respond to emergent opportunities and threats. This requires transition from linear to nonlinear planning, which recognizes that in complex systems, small events can have disproportionate effects, and critical points can rapidly evolve during operation. Second, this impossibility of hierarchical prioritization requires new approaches to resource allocation. Instead of concentrating majority of means on "priority" direction, contemporary operations often require distributed allocation that enables simultaneous action in different domains and geographical areas. This does not mean equal distribution of resources everywhere - which would be inefficient - but development of adaptive allocation mechanisms that can rapidly redirect means in response to evolving situation. This can include formation of reserves with high mobility, development of modular capacities that can be rapidly regrouped, and investments in command and control systems that enable rapid redistribution of resources in response to changing priorities. Third, impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields requires transformation of education and training systems for military leaders. Traditional military education often focused on developing analytical abilities for identifying key points and proper allocation of resources according to hierarchy of priorities. However, network-centric conflicts require development of cognitive abilities for understanding complex systems, recognizing emergent patterns, and adaptation to unpredictable situations. This includes greater emphasis on systems thinking, complexity theory, and understanding nonlinear dynamics - skills that traditionally have not been central in military education. Only through such transformation of education can we develop leaders capable of effectively function-

ing in operational environment where traditional hierarchical prioritization of battlefields is no longer possible.

In practical sense, impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields requires development of new operational concepts that recognize distributed, non-hierarchical nature of network-centric conflicts. One such approach is concept of "distributed lethality" (*Distributed Lethality*), which emphasizes dispersion of combat platforms to create complex network of overlapping zones of influence, increasing system resilience and creating dilemma for opponent. Another approach is *multi-domain operation* (*Multi-Domain Operations*), which emphasizes synergistic action through different physical and non-physical domains, creating effects that are greater than sum of individual actions. Such approaches represent attempts to overcome limitations of traditional, hierarchical understanding of battlefield and develop operational approaches adapted to realities of network-centric warfare.

4. TOWARD MODEL OF FLUID HOTSPOTS: NEW THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING DISTRIBUTION OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN FRAGMENTED CONFLICTS

Contemporary armed conflicts show increasing deviations from traditional concepts of battlefield, requiring fundamental re-examination of doctrine of dominant battlefield and development of new theoretical frameworks that can more adequately explain dynamics of distribution of strategic importance in fragmented conflicts. Model of fluid hotspots represents theoretical breakthrough that seeks to overcome limitations of conventional understanding of battlefield through recognition of dynamic, systemic, and inter-domain nature of contemporary conflicts. Instead of static, geographically defined dominant battlefield characteristic of industrial wars, this model proposes concept of polycentric, fluid hotspots that emerge, evolve, and dissipate through complex interactions of different dimensions of conflict - kinetic, informational, cyber, economic, and cognitive (Knežević, 2025).

Unlike traditional understanding of battlefield as clearly defined geographical zone, model of fluid hotspots conceptualizes conflict space as complex adaptive system with multiple interdependent hotspots of different strategic importance. As emphasized by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation: „Rules of warfare have fundamentally changed. Focus of applied methods of conflict has shifted toward wide use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian,

and other non-military measures, which are applied in coordination with protest potential of local population. All this is supplemented by covert military measures, including information operations and actions of special operations forces" (Gerasimov, 2013:24). The observation points to fundamental transformation of nature of conflict, where traditional understanding of battlefield as primarily military phenomenon gives way to more complex understanding of hotspots as points of convergence of different dimensions of power.

4.1. Key characteristics of fluid hotspots model

Key characteristic of fluid hotspots model is temporality - strategic importance of specific hotspots is not constant, but variable that fluctuates during course of conflict. This described dynamics creates fundamentally different operational environment from traditional battlefield with relatively stable zones of priority. General David Petraeus (*David Petraeus*) articulated this dynamics by noting that contemporary conflicts are characterized by temporal oscillations of strategic importance of different hotspots, creating operational environment where secondary hotspot can „suddenly become primary, and dominant hotspot can rapidly lose strategic relevance due to changes in other domains" (Petraeus, 2018:52). Temporality requires development of adaptable operational approaches that can rapidly respond to changes in strategic importance of different hotspots, which represents significant departure from traditional, linear operation planning.

Model of fluid hotspots recognizes holistic, inter-domain nature of contemporary conflicts, where strategic importance is not determined exclusively through prism of physical, kinetic domain, but through complex interaction of different dimensions. General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized that „future conflicts will not be fought through domination in individual physical domain, but through synergistic integration of effectors through multiple domains - land, sea, air, space, cyberspace, and information environment - creating multidimensional hotspots that do not conform to traditional geographical categorization" (Milley, 2019:17). This described conceptualization represents fundamental departure from traditional understanding of strategic importance as primarily function of physical geography and force disposition, recognizing that in contemporary conflicts, informational, cognitive, and cyber domains can be equally decisive as physical ones.

Non-triviality of escalation-de-escalation dynamics represents another key characteristic of fluid hotspots model. Unlike relatively predictable escalation of conflict characteristic of conventional conflicts, fluid hotspots show

complex, often nonlinear patterns of escalation and de-escalation that can rapidly transform through cascading effects. Admiral James Stavridis (*James Stavridis*), former Supreme Allied Commander Europe NATO, noted that „fluid nature of contemporary hotspots creates situations where seemingly minor tactical actions can cause disproportionate strategic consequences, creating escalation dynamics that are difficult to predict through traditional analytical models" (Stavridis, 2016:87). Nonlinear dynamics requires sophisticated approaches to escalation management that transcend traditional escalation ladders and recognize complex, emergent nature of escalation processes in fragmented conflicts.

Model of fluid hotspots also recognizes *gravitational effect* - tendency of these hotspots to attract and absorb resources, attention, and energy of different actors, creating self-reinforcing dynamics that can transform initial strategic calculation. This indicated phenomenon often results in situation where secondary hotspots, through cumulative accumulation of resources and attention, can become strategically more significant than initially prioritized hotspots. Professor David Kilcullen, leading theorist of counterinsurgency warfare and advisor to General Petraeus during *Surge* in Iraq, described this phenomenon as "strategic gravitation" - situation where „certain hotspots, through complex interactions of different factors, develop gravitational attraction that fundamentally changes operational calculations and resource distribution, often in way that undermines initial strategic conception" (Kilcullen, 2020:142). Such phenomenon represents significant challenge for traditional approaches to strategic planning, which often assume relatively stable hierarchy of priorities during course of campaign.

4.2. Operationalization of fluid hotspots model

Operationalization of fluid hotspots model requires fundamentally different approach to understanding, planning, and conducting operations. Instead of focusing on identification of static dominant battlefield, this model suggests development of dynamic, adaptable approaches that can recognize, track, and respond to evolving nature of strategically significant hotspots. This includes development of advanced systems for monitoring and analysis that can identify emergent patterns, recognize potential cascading effects, and predict transformations in strategic importance of different hotspots. Development of specialized methodology for identification and assessment of fluid hotspots is proposed, based on complex analysis of multi-domain indicators. Such methodology, which we can call *Analysis of strategic hotspot dynamics* (ASHD),

would integrate traditional military indicators (force disposition, combat actions, logistics) with indicators from other domains - communication patterns, cyber activities, economic parameters, political rhetoric, and social dynamics. Through sophisticated analysis of these multi-domain data, ASHD would enable recognition of emergent patterns and identification of hotspots of potential strategic importance before their significance becomes obvious through traditional metrics.

For implementation of fluid hotspots model, development of new operational concept is proposed - *Distributed adaptive synchronization* (DAS). This concept would combine elements of network-centric warfare and mission command, creating operational approach that enables decentralized adaptation to emergent hotspots while simultaneously maintaining strategic coherence. Through clear articulation of commander's intent, combined with distributed situational awareness and decentralized authority for decision-making, DAS would enable tactical units to autonomously react to changes in strategic importance of different hotspots, without need for constant micromanagement from higher levels of command. Technologically, operationalization of fluid hotspots model requires development of advanced command and control systems that can process and visualize complex, multi-domain data in way that enables intuitive understanding of distribution of strategic importance. General Stanley McChrystal, analyzing experiences from Afghanistan, identified need for „systems that can recognize and display emergent patterns in seemingly chaotic operational environment, transforming enormous amounts of data into understandable visualizations that enable commanders to recognize strategically significant hotspots in real time" (McChrystal, 2015:207). This described observation points to need for development of sophisticated analytical tools that transcend traditional, static representations of battlefield and enable dynamic visualization of evolution of strategic importance of different hotspots.

In practical application, fluid hotspots model requires development of innovative approaches to force disposition that transcend traditional logic of concentration on dominant battlefield. Instead of massive concentration, this model suggests development of distributed, modular formations with high degree of mobility and adaptability, capable of rapid reconfiguration and redirection of effort in response to changes in strategic importance of different hotspots. This includes development of concepts such as *distributed lethality* and *swarm warfare* that enable dispersion of combat power while simultaneously maintaining ability for rapid concentration of effectors on emergent hotspots.

4.3. Modular operational packages

We articulate *concept of modular operational packages* (MOP) - adaptable configurations of forces that integrate different capabilities (kinetic, informational, cyber, logistical) into cohesive operational modules that can be rapidly deployed in response to emergent hotspots. Unlike traditional joint forces, MOP would be designed with inherent adaptability, enabling rapid reconfiguration and adaptation to different operational contexts. This described modularity would enable efficient action in fragmented conflicts, where different hotspots can require fundamentally different combinations of capabilities and approaches. Modular operational packages should possess several key characteristics. First, *interoperability* - ability for different modules to be combined and recombined according to needs of specific hotspot. Second, *scalability* - possibility of expanding or reducing capabilities according to intensity and complexity of hotspot. Third, *autonomy* - ability for independent functioning for certain time without constant support from central resources. Fourth, *adaptability* - possibility of adaptation to different types of operational environments through reconfiguration of internal structure and procedures.

Educationally, fluid hotspots model requires transformation of process of education and training of military commanders, from traditional focus on linear planning and hierarchical prioritization toward development of cognitive abilities for understanding complex systems, pattern recognition, and adaptation to unpredictable situations. General James Mattis (*James Mattis*), former U.S. Secretary of Defense, emphasized that „contemporary operational environment requires development of commanders who can think systemically, recognize emergent patterns in seemingly chaotic environment, and adapt their approaches in way that recognizes fluid distribution of strategic importance through different hotspots" (Mattis, 2019:134). This described transformation of education includes greater emphasis on complexity theory, systems thinking, and understanding nonlinear dynamics, which represents significant departure from traditional military educational paradigms. New approach to military education must include interdisciplinary elements from areas of systems analysis, game theory, behavioral sciences, and complex adaptive systems. Officers must develop abilities for working with large amounts of data from different sources, understanding probabilistic assessments, and managing uncertainty as inherent element of operational environment.

In context of measures of success, fluid hotspots model requires development of more sophisticated approaches to measuring operational effectiveness that transcend traditional, linear metrics such as seized territory or casualties

inflicted. Instead, this model suggests development of multidimensional, dynamic metrics that can track evolution of influence through different domains of conflict and recognize systemic effects that can be indicative of transformations in strategic importance of different hotspots. This includes development of indicators that quantify informational, psychological, and social effects of operations, recognizing that in fragmented conflicts, these non-traditional effects can be equally important as traditional, physical results. New measures must be capable of capturing nonlinear effects, cascading consequences, and emergent patterns that characterize fluid hotspots. This can include metrics such as "speed of adaptation" of enemy, "coherence of network effects", "information dominance" in specific domains, or "resilience of systemic capabilities".

4.4. Doctrinal implementation

Doctrinal implementation of fluid hotspots model requires development of innovative operational concept - *Dynamic multi-domain operations* (DMO). Such concept would integrate elements of multi-domain operations, distributed lethality, and network-centric warfare, creating doctrinal framework adapted to complexity of fragmented conflicts. Unlike traditional doctrine that assumes relatively stable hierarchy of priorities, DMO would explicitly recognize fluid nature of strategically significant hotspots and develop methodologies for adaptive planning and conduct of operations in such environment. This includes development of concept of *strategic agility* - ability for rapid reconfiguration of effort and resources in response to emergent hotspots, without loss of coherence of overall campaign. Dynamic multi-domain operations should include several key components. *Continuous hotspot mapping* through advanced analytical tools that enable tracking evolution of strategic importance in real time. *Flexible resource allocation* through modular structures that can be rapidly regrouped according to needs. *Decentralized execution* that enables tactical commanders to autonomously react to emergent opportunities within broader strategic parameters. *Adaptive quality control* that enables rapid correction of approaches based on feedback from operational environment.

Strategic level implementation of fluid hotspots model requires fundamental re-examination of traditional approaches to strategy formulation. Instead of linear process model that assumes relatively stable strategic priorities, this model suggests development of adaptive, iterative approaches that can evolve in response to changing nature of strategically significant hotspots. Professor Lawrence Freedman (*Lawrence Freedman*), leading strategic theorist, stated that „in fragmented conflicts, strategy is not deterministic plan

but adaptive process that must constantly evolve in response to emergent patterns and transformations in strategic importance of different hotspots" (Freedman, 2017:291). Such conceptualization of strategy as evolutionary process represents significant departure from traditional strategic paradigms that dominated military thinking during industrial era. Strategic approach to fluid hotspots must include mechanisms for continuous strategic learning, where *lessons learned* from operational level are rapidly integrated into strategic framework. This requires development of "learning organizations" that can rapidly adapt their procedures and approaches based on new information and experiences.

Model of fluid hotspots recognizes fundamental uncertainty inherent in fragmented conflicts - uncertainty that cannot be eliminated through improved intelligence activity or more advanced analytical methodologies, but must be explicitly incorporated into operational approaches. This described concept requires development of concept of *robust adaptability* - ability for efficient functioning despite fundamental uncertainty through development of systems and procedures that are inherently adaptable and resistant to unforeseen transformations in operational environment. Instead of attempts to eliminate uncertainty through more detailed planning, this approach explicitly recognizes uncertainty as inherent characteristic of fragmented conflicts and develops models of operation that can function efficiently despite that uncertainty.

Robust adaptability implies development of "anti-fragile" capacities - systems that not only survive stress and chaos, but become stronger through exposure to uncertainty and volatility. This includes distributed command structures, redundant communication systems, and culture of continuous experimentation and learning. Model of fluid hotspots also implies need for new approaches to international cooperation and coalition warfare. Fluid nature of hotspots often means that strategic importance can rapidly shift across national boundaries or between different spheres of responsibility, requiring sophisticated coordination between different national and international actors. This includes development of flexible agreements on division of responsibilities, mechanisms for rapid transfer of resources, and protocols for real-time coordination that can function despite different national procedures and constraints. Model of fluid hotspots represents significant theoretical breakthrough in understanding contemporary conflicts, offering conceptual framework that better reflects complex, dynamic, and fragmented nature of contemporary warfare. Through recognition of temporality, inter-domain nature, nonlinearity, and "gravitational effect" of strategic hotspots, this model enables

more sophisticated understanding of distribution of strategic importance in fragmented conflicts and development of more efficient approaches to planning and conducting operations in such environment. Although it requires significant transformations in doctrine, organization, technology, and education, this model offers path toward more efficient operational approaches that can more adequately respond to challenges of contemporary warfare. Through further development and operationalization of concept of fluid hotspots, it is possible to bridge gap between traditional military theory and complex reality of fragmented conflicts of 21st century.

5. CONCLUSION

Conceptual paradox of dominant battlefield represents fundamental challenge for contemporary military theory and practice, requiring thorough re-examination of traditional doctrines and development of new theoretical frameworks. Analysis has shown that fragmentation of war zones - through geographical, technological, and socio-political dimensions - creates operational environment in which classical concept of dominant battlefield becomes operationally inadequate. In network-centric conflicts, impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields manifests through fluidity of operational space, inter-domain dependencies, and nonlinear dynamics that nullify traditional logic of centralized center of gravity.

Model of fluid hotspots, proposed as alternative theoretical framework, recognizes polycentric, dynamic, and adaptive nature of contemporary conflicts, where strategic importance is not tied to static location, but to emergent points of convergence of different dimensions of conflict. Such model requires development of new operational concepts such as Distributed adaptive synchronization and Modular operational packages, which can respond to changing nature of strategically significant hotspots. Military leaders of 21st century must develop cognitive abilities for understanding complex systems and recognizing emergent patterns, abandoning traditional reliance on linear planning and hierarchical prioritization. Implementation of fluid hotspots model implies transformation in four key areas: doctrine, organization, technology, and education.

Contemporary conflicts require development of more sophisticated approaches to measuring operational effectiveness that transcend traditional metrics and recognize systemic effects through different domains. Accepting inherent uncertainty of fragmented conflicts imposes need for development of *robust adaptability* - ability for efficient functioning despite unpredictability

through adaptive systems and procedures. Fragmentation also requires integrated inter-agency and international approach to conflict management, as no organization can independently address complexity of contemporary fragmented conflicts. Development of efficient coordination mechanisms between different elements of national power, as well as with international partners, becomes critical for success in such environment. Operation planning must evolve from rigid, sequential plans toward adaptable frameworks that enable flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances. Concept of "mission command" becomes especially relevant, enabling decentralized decision-making while maintaining strategic coherence.

Information superiority and cyber domains create new possibilities but also new vulnerabilities, requiring holistic approach to security that integrates physical and virtual aspects of conflict. Technological complexity of contemporary weapons systems creates overlapping zones of influence that do not follow traditional sectoral logic of battlefield. Asymmetric nature of contemporary conflicts enables even weaker opponents to challenge traditionally superior forces through innovative use of available technologies and tactics. Such dynamics makes traditional approaches to prioritization potentially counterproductive. Education of military professionals must adapt to prepare leaders for understanding interdisciplinary aspects of contemporary conflicts. Development of systems thinking, complexity theory, and abilities for managing uncertainty become key competencies. Implementation of new theoretical frameworks requires cultural change in military organizations, which can be one of greatest challenges. Traditional hierarchical structures and procedures must evolve toward more flexible, adaptable models of organization and functioning.

This presented theoretical breakthrough does not imply complete rejection of traditional principles of warfare, but their sophisticated reinterpretation and adaptation for needs of radically transformed nature of conflict. Principles such as concentration of forces, economy of force, and maintaining initiative remain relevant, but their application must be adapted to realities of fragmented, network-centric conflicts. Only through such fundamental transformation of military thinking is it possible to bridge gap between traditional military theory and complex reality of contemporary warfare, enabling development of more efficient approaches to planning and conducting operations in fragmented conflict zones of 21st century. Future of military theory lies in ability to adapt to this new reality, retaining what is eternally important from military traditions, while transforming what has become inadequate for contemporary challenges.

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