

Applying Ends, Ways, & Means to the Spectrum of Conflict

Tom Clark and Bruce Stanley

Can we have a meaningful discussion of full spectrum operations in one dimension? If we take the 2008 edition of [FM 3-0, Operations](#), spectrum of conflict at face value the answer is yes. As depicted, full spectrum operations consist of a “ways” based framework. Such a framework stands in stark contrast to the remainder of FM 3-0 as well as other new doctrine manuals such as [FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency](#), and [FM 3-07, Stability Operations](#).

All good models clarify complex topics. In using a simple model there is a danger of losing the clarity and completeness necessary to gain understanding. This is the problem with a one-dimension model to explain full spectrum operations – we traded clarity and completeness for simplicity.

FM 3-0, *Operations*, tells us that military operations occur within a complex framework of environmental factors. A contributing factor to complexity is the integration of activities of government and non-government entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort. Joint planning integrates military power with other instruments of national power to achieve a desired end state. Full spectrum operations involves more than simultaneous execution of offensive, defensive, and stability operations.

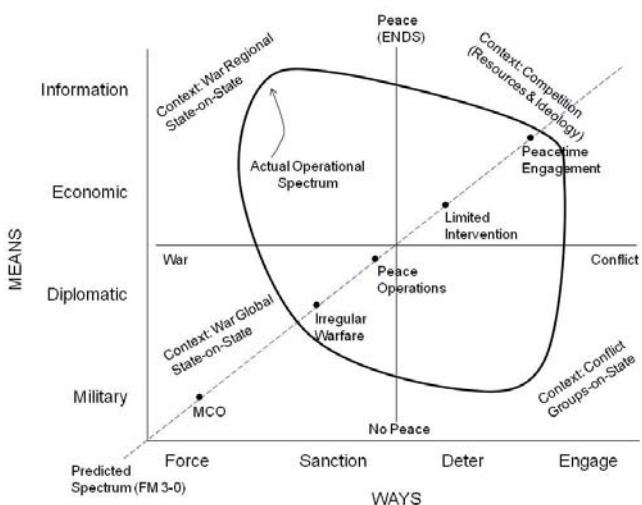
FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, tells us counterinsurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through subversion and armed conflict. Political power is the central issue as each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate. Counterinsurgents use all instruments of national power to sustain the established or emerging government.

FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*, tells us that our military history is one of stability operations punctuated by episodes of major combat. Conflict transformation focuses on converting the dynamics of conflict into processes for constructive, positive change. Conflict transformation is the process of reducing the means and motivations for violent conflict while developing more viable, peaceful alternatives for the competitive pursuit of political and socioeconomic aspirations.

In the Fall 2006 *Air and Space Power Journal*, Dr Jack Kem [wrote](#) that transformation effects are difficult to assess under a one-dimension model. He proposes that effective transformation involves four specific considerations: the strategic context, the ends or purpose for transformation, ways or methods to achieve the ends, and means or resources to accomplish the ways.

The context, ends, ways, and means framework matches how doctrine describes full spectrum operations. Each of the recent doctrine manuals emphasizes the necessity to develop understanding within a given context. Likewise, each highlights the central role that common aims (ends) play in unity of effort among all elements of national power, U.S. as well as coalitions and alliances (means). Finally, each manual discusses the various ways that relate to conflict along a continuum that runs from major combat operations to competition for resources and popular support.

The preponderance of evidence and pattern of doctrine discussions suggest that we need to reconsider our spectrum of conflict model that traded clarity and completeness for simplicity. Accordingly, we have some thoughts on an alternative model that incorporates the essence of full spectrum operations within a transformation framework.



Our model explains full spectrum operations within a context, ends, ways, means design. We incorporate the notion of themes from FM 3-0 to describe the nature of dominant activities that combine ways with means. Themes run along a line that represents a linear world. The oval primary operational spectrum represents the non-linear world we now experience. The majority of United States security activities occur inside the primary operational spectrum.

In any security environment, the ends or aim is to achieve a maximum level of peace. So our spectrum of conflict model places peace as the measure of effectiveness for all types of operations. At any point on the “war – conflict” axis, there is an associated level of peace. The two upper quadrants each have a higher level of peace. The goal is to be in the upper right quadrant that has a context of competition for resources, markets, and support. All means are in play with ways that serve to shape and reinforce behavior. In the upper left quadrant, ways involve operations to change behavior. Themes run from irregular warfare through peacetime engagement.

Alternatively, the lower half of the peace axis shows the least desirable conditions. The lower two quadrants draw primarily on military and diplomatic means. In the lower two quadrants, means highlight diplomatic and military resources. In the lower quadrants ways focus on changing behavior through sanctions, deterrence, and engagements. Themes focus on irregular warfare, peace operations, and limited intervention.

This model frames full spectrum operations according to explanations in recent doctrine manuals. In all cases, full spectrum operations orients ways and means to strategic ends – the largest possible measure of peace. In a recent *Small Wars Journal* blog, Janine Davidson [noted](#) that the majority of our operations are not rocket science – they are more complex and uncertain. If we are to grasp the essence of full spectrum operations, we cannot rely on simplicity to explain difficult concepts. Our graphic combines simplicity with sufficient clarity and completeness to provide planners a framework to think about highly complex operations.

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