

# Toward Strategic

*This article is one of the most compelling statements I have read recently on the conceptual framework for the structure, organization, staffing and training of land forces for the near future. The authors clarify the distinct nature of landpower and articulate the roles of both the service chiefs and the combatant commanders. What is written here takes us into an important campaign to ensure that Strategic Landpower makes our armed forces the world's best.*

—GEN Gordon R. Sullivan  
U.S. Army retired



**T**he creation of the Strategic Landpower Task Force, chartered by the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, harkens back to the development of AirLand Battle doctrine in the early 1980s. The Vietnam War broke the Army, and there was growing concern that the American military would be quickly overwhelmed by the numerically superior forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a major conventional war. The authors of AirLand Battle recognized that an attrition-based strategy could not succeed against the Soviet military. A new way of thinking was required.

This new way of thinking was based upon the recognition of the interdependence of land and air forces working closely together to simultaneously attack and destroy enemy forces not just in the main battle area but also throughout the depth of an extended battlefield. The conduct of synchronized and relentless offensive action throughout the close, deep and rear areas would, in theory, simultaneously disrupt the enemy's maneuver formations, logistics, and command and control capabilities to the extent that their superior numbers would be effectively neutralized piecemeal and rendered irrelevant. Operationaliz-



U.S. Army/SPC Phil Kemisan

ing this concept required a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) overhaul. This resulted in the M1 Abrams tank, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Apache and Black Hawk helicopters, Paladin howitzer, F-16 and F/A-18 fighter aircraft, the creation of the combat training centers, and the creation and indoctrination of an Army doctrine and culture that emphasized decentralized command and control and small-unit initiative enabled by mission orders and a clear understanding of the higher commander's intent.

# Landpower

By LTG Charles T. Cleveland and LTC Stuart L. Farris



The record of AirLand Battle as a military strategic concept for prosecuting traditional warfare and combined arms maneuver speaks for itself. Its application contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union, which could not sustain the costs of trying to keep up with the United States' qualitative military advantage. It resulted in the rapid removal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991 and the subsequent rapid defeat of the Iraqi military and Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. Consequently, no one should be surprised that 21st-century enemies recognize our asymmetric advantage in conducting combined arms maneuver and have therefore sought to turn our strength into weakness, nor should anyone be surprised that our enemies pursue their own asymmetric advantage through unconventional, irregular and hybrid approaches to conflict and testing of American resolve. As we have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, while AirLand Battle remains a highly valid military strategic concept for prosecuting a war against traditional military threats, we still lack a coherent and comprehensive concept for dealing with the irregular and hybrid enemies we will continue to face in the foresee-

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*"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking that created them."*  
—Albert Einstein

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U.S. Army/SSG Shane Hamann

able future. New and creative ways of thinking are required.

Today, the Army must consider the possibility that military success in modern "wars among the people" (as described in Gen. Rupert Smith's seminal work, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*) will require ever increasing interdependence among the military services and interagency partners. It will also require that the Army develop a new set of DOTMLPF solutions for operating in an emerging domain of warfare, referred to by U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the human domain. USSOCOM defines the human domain as "the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military strategy, operation, or tactical action depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population-centric conflicts." This idea is sure to be controversial, but it is worthy of serious debate and discussion.

Military professionals have long acknowledged that war is fundamentally a human enterprise—and, yes, all wars are population-centric to varying degrees. Unlike the traditional warfare paradigm, in which the military object is the

destruction of enemy battalions, divisions and corps, in the paradigm of irregular warfare, the security objective is indeed the population itself. This requires forces—military and nonmilitary—with not only the ability to destroy but also the decisive ability to first understand the population within the context of the operational environment and then take meaningful action to effectively influence human behavior toward achieving the desired outcome. In other words, for military force to be of utility in the forms of conflict we are most likely to face, we must have military forces capable of succeeding, in conjunction with nonmilitary forces, in the human domain.

The logic for a more complete study of the human domain is compelling. The kinds of war most analysts forecast—sometimes called war among the people, other times hybrid warfare or complex contingencies—place a premium on pursuing comprehensive engagement and wider and more constructive partnerships. In addition, the strategic environment is characterized by an increasingly populated, urbanized and interconnected world. Furthermore, if we acknowledge we went into Afghanistan and Iraq with insufficient understanding of cultural dynamics, and if we believe military success will most likely require a deep understanding of foreign languages and cultures and the human factors involved in a given conflict, then recognizing the human domain becomes a critical organizing and resourcing concept for supporting national security missions.

Seeing the facts of our strategic situation as they are should compel the Army to organize, educate, train, equip and provide forces for operating in the human domain as



U.S. Navy/HMC Josh Ives

we already do in the land, air, maritime, space and cyber domains. New DOTMLPF solutions were required to enable AirLand Battle and American dominance in the air and land domains. Similarly, the Army must develop new DOTMLPF solutions for providing forces to ambassadors and geographic combatant commanders capable of navigating, operating and prevailing within the most complex and unpredictable of all environments—the human domain. AirLand Battle recognized the fully integrated nature of the air and land domains in order to ensure success in conducting combined arms maneuver against traditional threats. Now is the time to similarly recognize, develop and combine human domain competencies with our traditional land domain competencies. Doing so will provide senior decision makers with the range of options correctly aligned with the strategic realities they face.

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**LTG Charles T. Cleveland** assumed command of U.S. Army Special Operations Command in July 2012. Previously, he served as commanding general of Special Operations Command Central at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., and Special Operations Command South at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, he holds a master's degree from the U.S. Army War College. **LTC Stuart L. Farris** is a Special Forces officer currently assigned to U.S. Army Special Operations Command. He has served six tours in Afghanistan as a member of the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne). A graduate of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, he holds master's degrees from the Command and General Staff College's School of Advanced Military Studies and Webster University.

**T**he recognition and ability to effectively operate in the human domain become even more critical given current fiscal constraints. We are entering an uncertain strategic security environment paradoxically framed by diminishing defense resources and an increasing number and variety of potential threats. These threats are well-documented and may emanate from state actors such as Iran and North Korea; al Qaeda and its associated franchises; the continued export and spread of ideological extremism to Africa; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of advanced military and cyber-attack technologies; and the resurgence of great powers competing for increased regional and global influence. How does the United States prepare and posture itself to deal with such

myriad potential threats in an emerging era of domestic fiscal austerity?

Clearly, the United States must look beyond our own inherent capabilities in order to form long-term and durable security relationships abroad. In essence, America's land forces should look to develop a global landpower network. This network would consist of allies, expeditionary global and regional partners, and host-nation forces. It could ultimately include nonmilitary "forces" and even friendly non-state actors that have a direct relationship to success in wars among the people in places like Libya or Syria. The network can be bound together by the common interests of peace, regional stability and global prosperity—very useful in shaping, deterring and winning.

To be clear, this network is not intended to simply do the bidding on behalf of America's defense and security interests. This is not about outsourcing our global security responsibilities to witting or unwitting actors. Rather, it is designed to generate strategic options for senior defense officials and policymakers, both domestically and abroad, who can work together to determine who should lead regional security and stability efforts and how and where military capabilities can best be used to support the successful achievement of a desired outcome on land. These decisions can be better informed by strategists, planners and commanders with regional expertise who are organized, trained and educated to operate in the human domain. Potentially, the more established, capable and competent this network is perceived by real or potential adversaries, the less likely they will be willing—or perhaps more importantly, able—to take actions resulting in an intolerable change to a regional or global status quo. Conceivably, the global landpower network would occupy the strategic "high ground" and retain a globally distributed position of advantage that effectively deters significant adversary misbehavior. If deterrence fails, or if the situation warrants other effects, the network might provide flexible options to senior defense officials and policymakers for further coercing, containing, disrupting, defeating and/or imposing long-term costs on enemies across the threat spectrum, from traditional nation-state to irregular or hybrid.

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Today, AirLand Battle remains a valid and viable concept and doctrine for conducting combined arms maneuver warfare against traditional military threats. If there is one lesson the Army has learned (or relearned) in the past 12 years of war, however, it is this: The application of military force in its current form has limited utility when fighting modern

wars among the people. Combat power in the form of superior weapons systems, cutting-edge technology and disproportionate force ratios may enable tactical success on the ground but does not guarantee strategic victory. Strategic victory requires a wider understanding of "forces" that includes military and nonmilitary. Strategic victory requires a more complete understanding of the human domain.

Looking to the future, the Army should have the foresight and courage to adapt its structures and prepare its soldiers for operating in the human domain, supported by a coherent strategy that knits together the proper joint, interagency and international partners resident within a global landpower network. The changes required are largely cognitive and cultural in nature. The solutions lie mainly in investing in people and ideas, not platforms. Recognizing a human domain of warfare, analyzing and producing the associated DOTMLPF outputs, and working to create a global landpower network that continually evolves is but a proposed first step.



U.S. Army/SFC Ken Scar

This will require significant investment in critical thinking and a willingness to change, and therein lies perhaps the most significant challenge.

When a superpower decides it must achieve a desired outcome on land, the Commander in Chief should have the appropriate tools and options ready and able to get the job done. Land forces designed to prevail in the human domain and dominate in the land domain, combined with senior decision makers enabled by a global landpower network, will help ensure that the necessary suite of options is available when results matter and America must employ land forces to prevent, shape and win across the spectrum of conflict. Having the options capable of achieving desired outcomes is ultimately what strategic landpower is all about. ★