1st Combat Camera Squadron (James D. Mossman)

Landpower and Future Strategy:

Insights from the Army after Next

By HUBA WASS DE CZEGE *and* ANTULIO J. ECHEVARRIA II

In an era of tight budgets, long-range investment decisions call for careful determination of future strategic requirements. This process, in turn, requires identifying the kinds of tasks the Armed Forces will conduct tomorrow. The Army after Next (AAN) project was launched in 1996 to examine the nature of such tasks, particularly with respect to landpower. AAN is focused on the years 2020–25, the earliest period that choices made today on long-term investment will bear fruit. Research and wargaming for this project have produced valuable insights into the nature of future strategic requirements, which indicates that landpower will be vital in both peacetime and war.

Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, USA (Ret.), founded the School of Advanced Military Studies at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and Lieutenant Colonel Antulio J. Echevarria II, USA, is currently assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.

The Geostrategic Environment

In order to determine the tasks which will appear in the national security strategy of tomorrow we must develop a tentative picture of the future geostrategic environment. AAN foresees a rapidly changing environment in which the United States remains engaged internationally and retains its leadership in multinational defense arrangements and in promoting democratic values, free markets, and human rights. Although the multipolar security system will endure, the future will be increasingly complex, characterized

by shifting power relationships and ad hoc security structures, as opposed to stable alliances. Current sources of conflict—ethnic rivalry, nationalism, religious antagonism, and competition for resources, including water—may well intensify as world population increases. Threats such as transnational crime, terrorism, and illicit drug trafficking may also grow, creating security problems markedly different from those of today. Such a dynamic geopolitical context is likely to mean that the Armed Forces will have to execute a range of missions almost everywhere in the world. Suppressing and containing conflict will become increasingly critical since economic, humanitarian, and environmental costs will often reach beyond the immediate area of conflict.

AAN also posits the ascendancy of one or more major military competitors—modernized states which threaten the interests of the United States and its allies in a specific region—rather than peer competitors with symmetrical capabilities. These military competitors will probably concede American superiority in certain areas, preferring instead to develop asymmetric strategies and niche capabilities that avoid strengths and exploit weaknesses. Asymmetric strategies are much more common historically than the literature on the subject suggests. They amount to a search for the proverbial Achilles heel. Such strategies may undermine national will by employing low-tech information warfare, terrorism, missile strikes against the homeland, or covert operations targeted at commercial or financial infrastructures. Yet one should not make too much of the projected rise of such competitors. As the conflicts in Vietnam and Afghanistan have shown, a relatively minor competitor can challenge a superpower. Thus, even without a major competitor, the United States will require a first-rate military, capable of winning across the conflict spectrum.

in contrast to the Cold War, strategy should be focused on maintaining a stable peace and growing prosperity

The current transformation of warfare (sometimes called the revolution in military affairs) is likely to continue. It may lead to critical advances in precision targeting, information, propulsion, and biogenetic technologies. Precision weapons systems will have greater range and accuracy, with a deadly zone extending to 200 kilometers within the next 25 years. At the same time, information systems are changing command and control via real-time situation awareness. Near-instantaneous flow of critical information will enable decentralized operations at a faster pace. Linear conceptions of the battlefield are moving toward a multidimensional, volume-centered representation. All-arms strikes delivered simultaneously across tactical, operational, and strategic levels have moved from the realm of the possible to the probable, though their success will require an exquisite level of precise yet flexible synchronization between land, sea, air, and space systems. Research centers across the globe are examining alternative fuel and propulsion systems to radically reduce the cumbersome logistical tail of the modern army. If these efforts are successful, military forces of the future will no longer have to execute linear, sequential campaigns defined by logistical consumption. Finally, various endeavors in biogenetic engineering may increase the endurance and cognitive capacities of individuals. Related research may lead to matching individual attributes with specific specialties.

An Overarching Concept

The second step in assessing strategic requirements is learning how the dynamic nature of the geostrategic environment affects national security strategy. For one thing, a multipolar world may require a frequent and extensive commitment of U.S. political, economic, and military assets to protect its interests. Consequently, in contrast to the Cold War, strategy should be focused on maintaining a stable peace and growing prosperity. In essence, America should pursue a course of engagement, transforming a negative strategy of containment into a positive one that is conducive to peaceful economic growth worldwide. A positive strategy has two advantages. First, it tends to create momentum and build support as it succeeds. Second, it enables the United States to take the strategic initiative—not only in shaping the peace but in resolving conflict. This strategic concept will more than likely rest upon three pillars:

- maintaining and shaping the peace through stability and support operations
- building coalitions and alliances to respond to regional crises and containing conflict
- waging decisive campaigns to limit collateral damage and achieve durable peace.

Secondly, although strategy (using national means in ways that achieve desired ends) will remain constant, the ways will change, resulting in revolutionary capabilities. And landpower may have unprecedented reach, control, and potential for decision. Even though truly surgical military action will likely remain elusive, decisive results may be achieved in far less time with less collateral damage. In any case, revolutionary capabilities will have application across the conflict spectrum.

Shaping the Peace

Maintaining and shaping the peace is a continuous task. It is also labor intensive. Its prime activities—stability and support operations—require regional expertise as well as disciplined troops on the ground. When crises erupt, it may not be practical or wise to withdraw forces engaged in stability or support operations. For one thing, those forces may not be able to respond quickly. Secondly, withdrawal may undermine long-term regional objectives. Even temporary substitutions of U.S. forces by allies or coalition partners will mean delays. In short, fulfillment of national security strategy will require the commitment of forces at strategic locations throughout the world. Honoring commitments, in turn, will necessitate leaving a number of forces in place, making them unavailable for other missions despite any reshuffling of priorities.

Stability operations aid national security strategy by providing treaty enforcement through activities such as peace operations, arms control verification, and counterproliferation operations. They also stabilize democratic regimes through daily engagement. Stability operations frequently involve enforcing or facilitating treaties or agreements on boundaries, access to resources, or arms control and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They also entail a wide range of military-to-military contacts designed to lessen tension, increase communication on capabilities and intentions, and raise understanding between hostile nations. Stability operations, and participation by the United States in them, stand to grow in proportion to their strategic utility.

Peace operations ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes. Opposing parties tend to agree to settlements guaranteed by the presence of a trusted, impartial outside force. The peacekeepers expedite compliance. The professional reputation of the Armed Forces and the support which they muster have made them a popular choice to lead peace operations. The number of such operations has increased annually over the last few decades and may even accelerate in the future.

Arms control verification and counterproliferation operations are likely to be more critical as a means for achieving strategic stabilization. Arms control measures and verification regimes often result from treaties negotiated between sovereign equals interested in reducing tensions or limiting WMD proliferation. The number of such treaties has grown since 1945. Arms control measures can also be imposed as an outcome of war, like that exercised against Iraq recently. Such

OH–58D during gunnery training, Korea.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (James D. Mossman)

55th Signal Company (Christina Ann Horne)

Training in Korea, Foal Eagle '98.

Disembarking from C–17, Fort Irwin.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (John E. Lasky)

Patrolling Sekovici, Joint Forge.

982d Signal Company (Joe Lynch)

steps may prove increasingly critical to conflict termination. Verification regimes that ensure compliance are vital strategic work. Similarly, counterproliferation activities may become more common as the geostrategic environment becomes more dynamic and unstable. They will require highly skilled, direct-action capabilities such as those possessed by Special Operations Forces. Although they will be joint and combined endeavors, Army capabilities and expertise will be key to their success.

Support operations facilitate the aims of national security strategy through various means, most notably assisting in collective efforts to counter transnational terrorism and crime and provide noncombatant evacuation and disaster relief. The military will probably give increasing support to international law enforcement agencies fighting international terrorists and criminals. The illegal transfer of funds and high-value physical and intellectual property is rising sharply, and indications are that such trends will continue. As the sophistication and impact of these crimes grow, military support to national and international law enforcement will become more significant.

noncombatant evacuation and disaster relief operations are soldier-intensive, requiring landpower-specific capabilities

We have seen the use of military force expand in support of noncombatant evacuation and disaster relief operations. The former protect U.S. and allied citizens while the latter defend relief workers and ensure the delivery of supplies.

55th Signal Company (Sandra E. Morse)

Rotation 99–02, Joint Readiness Training Center.

The future may reveal an expansion of permanent multinational organizations, perhaps under American leadership, to respond to such emergencies. Support operations are also soldier-intensive, requiring regional expertise and landpower-specific skills and capabilities.

AAN wargames have demonstrated the value of building coalitions and alliances. Regional coalitions and alliances, which distribute the benefit and cost of maintaining and shaping the peace closest to home, offer the best promise for peace over the next twenty to thirty years. The day-to-day interaction of an integrated alliance builds regional stability by deterring aggression and reducing conflict among its members.

Such security arrangements greatly facilitate crisis response and conflict containment by providing a framework for cooperation, base access, and burden sharing. Landpower formations demonstrate resolve in a regional contingency and help ensure U.S. leadership of allied operations. Such teamwork requires a commitment of soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen in proportion to the degree of integration required. Programs like the Partnership for Peace may serve as a standard for future endeavors. These programs facilitate international cooperation in stability operations by removing suspicions and building a basis for future collaboration.

Responding to Regional Crises

Thus far AAN studies have examined crises ranging from WMD proliferation to the threat of territorial aggression in areas of vital national interest. Wargames have demonstrated that even when vital interests are at stake political leaders

Rangers during training exercise.

55th Signal Company (Gerald T. James, Jr.)

55th Signal Company (Michael Karp)

Rotation 99–02, Joint Readiness Training Center.

tend to wait as long as possible before approving action. Consequently, the greater the speed and reach of a response force, the longer political and diplomatic efforts have to defuse volatile situations. Wargames have also revealed that decisionmakers prefer to let crises defuse without using force, particularly since military movement may trigger escalation rather than de-escalation. Indeed, the global information environment may make it increasingly difficult to hide troop movements. Hence political leaders tend to opt for military options that afford the maximum time before committing military force.

Responding to regional crises will often require a combination of forward-presence forces and strategic maneuver by a force able to execute operational maneuver over strategic distances. For wargaming purposes, AAN developed just that, a joint expeditionary force (JEF) comprised of highly integrated land, sea, air, and space elements. JEF rapid movement capabilities, when combined with forward-deployed, operationally significant ground forces, facilitate decisionmaking and garner support from allies and coalition partners by demonstrating U.S. resolve. Operational significance varies according to circumstances. In general, it means assuming an appreciable share of the risk and committing a force large enough to make a difference on the ground. At the same time, JEF offers the strategic mobility to achieve decisive effects fast. AAN wargames have repeatedly validated the essential nature of the following tasks with regard to crisis response:

■ *Achieving information dominance.* Information operations have proven vital. Positioning of space surveillance, navigation, and communications assets has become integral to setting the conditions for victory. The insertion of low-signature special operations forces enhanced the quality of information provided to decisionmakers. Information operations also continue beyond the active fighting to stability operations. Information dominance can never be assumed, and the ability to achieve it is highly conditional. However, it is likely that the United States and its allies will possess the potential to achieve and reliably maintain it on the strategic and operational levels during critical times.

■ *Employing forward-presence forces*. The presence of ground forces demonstrated resolve, galvanized allied action, and sent a strong signal to aggressors. Special Operations Forces and conventional landpower formations must continue to provide forward presence in areas of strategic interest. Their liaison efforts facilitate the development of a desired endstate, provide accurate assessments of the condition of allied forces, and strengthen allied/coalition efforts by coordinating the arrival of U.S. combat power throughout the various stages of the campaign.

■ *Projecting operationally significant landpower.* AAN wargames have shown that the landpower component of an integrated JEF helped prevent conflict escalation. JEF can execute operational preclusion from strategic distances, the equivalent of an early checkmate in chess. The landpower force can arrive and assume a decisive positional advantage before aggression can take place. Or, if such an act has already happened or is underway, it can change the relationship of forces on the battlefield such that further aggressive actions are precluded.

■ *Evacuating U.S. and allied citizens*. Since the number of U.S. and allied businessmen and visitors abroad is growing steadily, crisis response will likely require the evacuation of numerous civilians. In the games, highly mobile, disciplined Special Operations Forces with "regional street smarts" were needed for this mission.

Waging Decisive Campaigns

If deterrence and crisis containment fail, the United States and its coalition partners must be able to win decisive campaigns. Although military procedures will continue to change, associated defeat mechanisms will remain fundamentally the same: attrition and destroying enemy cohesion. A great power should have a choice between these two alternatives. At the root of the debate over future warfighting requirements is an incomplete understanding of the pros and cons of each. Both approaches attack the will of enemy leadership but in different ways. Defeat by attrition erodes the determination of political leaders by destroying their physical power to resist. The other defeat mechanism collapses the resolution of enemy soldiers and the cohesion of enemy organizations, causing enemy warmaking capability to disintegrate. The great captains have employed both approaches. Some have combined them.

precision engagement may punish an enemy and risk few casualties, but it is difficult to be sure of success

The first approach, defeat by attrition, relies on destroying military capability—people and matériel. It stresses the physical dimension of war and power. The principle is eliminating the capability to fight. Defeat results when resistance becomes impossible or is believed to be so. This perception depends on such imponderables as morale, discipline, and leadership. Attrition has traditionally involved great numbers of casualties on both sides. Commanders are forced to assess combat results in terms of exchange ratios, the grisly calculus of losing so many of our soldiers for so many of theirs. Modern weapons increase the attractiveness of attrition because they proffer the advantage of overhead platforms, intelligence superiority, and long-range precision strikes to destroy an enemy at a distance.

A current school of thought holds that precision munitions have revolutionized combat to the point that wars can be won through long-range precision strike alone. It argues that neutralizing key enemy capabilities is sufficient and that close combat forces are not required. This may succeed in some cases but not others. Precision engagement, relying on attrition with standoff weapons, may punish an enemy and risk few casualties, but it is difficult to be sure of success. Attrition effects can be slow to produce decisive results. What is effective in the open desert will not necessarily suffice in forests, mountains, or urban areas where precision firepower is disadvantaged. History suggests that an entrenched, disciplined force can resist after lengthy bombardment and massive damage. Moreover, the effects of attrition are usually transitory. It posseses no forcing function to compel enemy compliance even after inflicting great destruction. Attrition works best when vital interests are *not* at stake and time and resources are unlimited.

The second approach—defeat by disintegration—emphasizes the psychological dimension of warfare. It attacks the state of mind of combatants individually and collectively. Its object is to incapacitate organizations. The classic case was the dramatic collapse of France in World War II. A more recent example was the air-ground campaign against Iraq during Desert Storm. Although these campaigns were far from bloodless, resistance disintegrated because organizations ceased to function effectively. Separated pockets of resistance, lacking overall direction, were isolated and overcome. This approach avails best when vital interests *are* at stake and decisive results are important.

The disintegration approach economizes the use of destructive fires, exploiting them more completely. Firepower not only destroys, it psychologically suppresses soldiers and disrupts their organizations. The rapid arrival of troops on the ground to take control of a local situation before the transitory effects of firepower pass enables the

CINC virtual office, Foal Eagle '98.

55th Signal Company (David L. Pate)

exploitation of those effects. On the operational level of war, disintegration occurs when the effect of numerous tactical engagements are combined with dislocating maneuver, as occurred in France in 1940 and the Persian Gulf in 1991. However, disintegration methods require a mobile and well-trained force.

In most cases, winning a decisive campaign will require disintegration rather than attrition. Decisive results can be achieved and guaranteed only when sufficient combat power is available to control people and places. Such control normally requires the kind of presence provided only by landpower. AAN studies indicate that forces capable of simultaneous and fully integrated land, sea, air, and space operations can achieve rapid disintegration of enemy resistance. Sea, air, and space operations isolate the relevant battle space while air-ground operations quickly defeat key enemy organizations, and follow-on stability forces restore control and secure the peace. To be sure, military action only resolves a crisis if the peace that follows is durable.

We began by emphasizing the importance of determining future strategic requirements with regard to landpower. Soldiers, probably no fewer than the United States currently possesses, will prove indispensable to executing national security strategy which reflects the theme of engagement. American landpower, in concert with allies and partners who share our interests, bears the burden of maintaining and shaping the peace. It is also critical to alliances and coalitions capable of crisis response and conflict containment. We will have to contribute an operationally significant landpower force in order to lead any regional contingency effort. The number of troops engaged in such missions is already substantial, and the demand is likely to increase. Landpower also allows winning decisive campaigns in pursuit of a durable peace. It permits a broader range of options in terms of military action, to include a choice of defeat mechanisms. When resistance is overcome, the presence of landpower provides the force to guarantee compliance with peace terms. Finally, it supplies the protection to establish legitimate authority and rebuild the area of conflict.

Strategy, operational art, and tactics entail asymmetries, specifically leveraging them to gain advantages. Too much of one kind of power—land, sea, air, or space—may result in asymmetries that invite exploitation. Likewise, leadership in the dynamic, unstable geostrategic environment of tomorrow will periodically call for a demonstration of U.S. resolve. Sea, air, or space capabilities are unlikely to suffice alone. Resolve means being willing to put American men and women in harm's way and then standing by them. **JFQ**