

RE-EXAMINING THE ROLES OF LANDPOWER IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

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After introductory comments, this monograph briefly examines the future security environment. The analysis concludes that, despite ardent desires, historical experience indicates conflict is not going away and usually erupts on little notice. Somewhere, sometime in the coming years, some country, nonstate actor, or combination thereof will place U.S. national security interests at sufficient risk to require a military response. When, where, and how that might occur is an open question. The United States, therefore, will not have the luxury of planning against discrete security matters and must prepare for a broad range of possible challenges.

To meet these challenges, U.S. leaders, using the concept of interdependence, will continue to blend the capabilities of the military elements of power – air, cyberspace, land, sea, and space. The critical issue facing future leaders and planners in this regard will not be identifying a dominant element of military power, but how best to blend the components of military (and usually national) power to provide the desired result.

Landpower, “. . . the ability – by threat, force, or occupation – to promptly gain, sustain, and exploit control over land, resources, and people” stems from a wide variety of factors that, for convenience, fall under two major categories. Beginning at the national level, geo-strategic conditions long have influenced a country’s dominant form of military power. Continental powers historically have relied primarily on Landpower, while states or empires with extensive access to the seas relied more on sea power. For the United States, a global power, such a distinction is increasingly irrelevant. The more pertinent question, therefore, is what proportion of forces and power

will most effectively meet the specific conditions of a particular event or crisis?

Economic power stems from not only the general state of the economy, but also from how much of that economy is devoted to Landpower. The extent of the military and civil industrial base also will affect Landpower, as will the ability to sustain technological innovation. A country’s economic infrastructure, particularly communications, information, transportation, and financial networks, will influence the ability to project Landpower.

The traditional markers of population size, distribution, demographics, class structure, and education will influence economic power and people available for military use. The subset of populace mentally and physically qualified to serve, as well as their propensity to join the armed forces, will assume greater importance. The strategic culture of populations will shape the employment of Landpower.

The form of government affects the nature of Landpower and its employment. Authoritarian political systems and democratic governments have differing needs for domestic and international use of Landpower and may structure their forces differently as well.

The national will to use Landpower significantly influences its eventual employment. The best-manned, equipped, and trained force in the world can be largely irrelevant without the national will to wield that potential; or, at the least, not to oppose its use.

Under the second category, military elements, the core of Landpower obviously stems from the ground forces available. Nevertheless, national leaders should think of ground forces operating interdepen-

dently with the other elements of the armed forces, in coalition with allies and partners, in conjunction with government agencies, and in collaboration with international organizations.

The institutions that generate and sustain those forces are equally important to Landpower. Recruiting, training, equipping, maintaining, and sustaining functions that generate and undergird the capabilities of the fighting force are equally essential for creating and sustaining Landpower. Critical to an effective force are the leadership, discipline, and morale that bind the force together.

The human dimension of military power—intelligent, highly adaptable, and innovative individuals—will remain vital to effective Landpower. To be successful, land forces must recruit and retain high quality personnel, and train and mold them into cohesive teams. At the same time, wars quintessentially are fought between and among humans for control of, or at least influence on, human will. Such control usually requires defeat of an opponent's armed forces or control of an adversary's land or population.

Landpower will continue to have tremendous utility in peace, crisis, and war, and across the conflict spectrum from peaceful competition to general war. Within war, Landpower will continue to apply across all levels of warfare—tactical, operational, and strategic. Landpower will continue to play a critical role in the fundamental purposes of military power: defeat, deter, compel, reassure, engage, and support to the nation.

- Defeat of an opponent's forces seems a relatively straightforward proposition; however, as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan reinforce, victory may require prolonged control of those people, which usually requires Landpower.
- Deter. For most of history, Landpower provided the overwhelming bulk of deterrent capability. In the latter half of the 20th century, however, air and sea power, especially when augmented with nuclear weapons, added significantly to the calculus of deterrence. In the future, deterrence may take on a different form than in the recent past. The emergence of rogue states or nonstate actors, transnational organizations, criminal groups, and terrorists may lead to Landpower playing a larger deterrent role.
- Compel. Coercive diplomacy is not new. The decreased potential for nuclear confrontation, however, could lead to coercive diplomacy

assuming a larger role in future U.S. policy. Landpower, in particular, can respond to low-level conflict, conduct all missions associated with peace operations, participate in smaller-scale contingencies (such as raids, strikes, or limited campaigns), or help prosecute a major theater war. Finally, Landpower uniquely can place an opponent's sovereignty at risk.

- Assure. Assurance serves a country's interests by advancing national values and beliefs; promoting regional stability; improving cooperation among allies, partners, friends, and, occasionally, adversaries; reducing the perceived need for military competition; and cultivating good will. While the presence of air and sea power can assure friends and allies, some partners may perceive these elements as transient demonstrations of U.S. resolve. Moreover, powers without a long tradition of air or sea power may not necessarily see these elements as an ultimate guarantor.
- Engage. The U.S. military has a significant stake in the peacetime promotion and protection of U.S. national interests and objectives. While all elements of national military power support engagement activities, Landpower offers the greatest number of options and operational flexibility.
- Support to the Nation. Historically, the U.S. military has provided considerable domestic support. While the next decades will pose challenges different from the 19th and early-20th centuries, Landpower will remain engaged in domestic support operations.

The sum of these capabilities leads to the reasonable expectation that national leaders will continue to call frequently upon Landpower.

Highlighting the versatility of Landpower in no way diminishes the utility of the other elements of military power. Nor is better understanding of Landpower an end unto itself. An increasingly uncertain and ambiguous international security environment, combined with the complexity of modern warfare, argues for greater clarification of what Landpower means in 21st century terms. In this light, this monograph seeks to neither exaggerate the capabilities inherent in Landpower nor divide the "military power pie" into better defined, but increasingly irrelevant pieces. Rather, the analysis seeks to facilitate the development of effective policy options and contribute

to better decisions, for when considering the employment of military power, such decisions never come easily.

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