

Executive Summary

We've converted from a conventional force to focus on counterinsurgency. That said, I think we've got to broaden our training and readiness with respect to full spectrum conflicts, put in balance the counterinsurgency requirement, which is very much in evidence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and preserve the capability to prosecute a conventional war.

—Admiral Michael G. Mullen
September 23, 2008

If you think about what landpower is in the 21st century, you realize it's the ability to generate decisive results on land. And who does that? It's not just the Army, it's the Marine Corps, it's Special Forces, it's our allied forces, it's indigenous forces, and also, it's all the interagency forces. And all those elements have to come together to generate the decisive results we are seeking.

—General George W. Casey, Jr.
October 21, 2008

Our Forum's long-planned focus on land warfare coincides with a number of contextual developments that influenced and altered its content. In August 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates released the National Defense Strategy, which is a derivative of the 2006 National Security Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review, incorporating lessons from irregular warfare in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere in the war on terror. As Secretary Gates has written in this issue's first installment, his strategy for supporting the President's national security objectives includes the goal of mastering irregular warfare to a degree of prowess that compares with U.S. military competence in large-scale conventional conflicts. It is well known that Army Field Manual 3-24/ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, has played an important role in the success of operations in Iraq, but perhaps more interesting is the fact that this manual and the success of U.S. land forces in extrapolating from it have also informed subsequent strategic planning guidance.

Admiral Michael Mullen is crafting a National Military Strategy (NMS) that is guided by the preceding National Defense Strategy (NDS) and tempered by the reality of a worldwide financial crisis that emerged shortly after the NDS release. The NMS delineates how the Armed Forces shall strike a better balance between a force structure optimized for low frequency, large-scale conventional military operations and one optimized for higher frequency irregular warfare. The critical expectation is that nonmilitary Federal agencies shall improve their expeditionary capabilities and bring their unique core competencies to bear on national security challenges, thereby improving the legitimacy and effectiveness of U.S. power. Yet the devil is always in the details, as H.R. McMaster has noted:



Marines aboard USS *Boxer* perform weapons training

U.S. Navy (Daniel A. Barker)

“War’s conduct and outcome depend in large measure on subjective factors such as the will of the people, the wisdom of political objectives, and consistency between those objectives and military strategy.” In the face of dwindling resources and long-term demand, our Forum explores the training, equipping, and future employment of land forces in support of the 2008 National Defense Strategy.

The Forum begins with the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General George Casey, whose recent experience as commander, Multi-National Force–Iraq, and current Title X responsibilities for recruiting, training, and equipping the U.S. Army

make him an ideal candidate to outline today's challenges and the future of U.S. land forces. We began our interview with force generation and personnel management issues against the backdrop of protracted conflict, changing public attitudes, and demographics. General Casey walked *JFQ* through current operational strategies, then future combat systems, and finally his vision for the Army 20 years from now. General Casey believes that future land forces must be versatile, expeditionary, agile, lethal, sustainable, and interoperable. He concludes with his assessment of progress in the ongoing effort to improve jointness in the U.S. military.

The second and third Forum entries were invited to catalyze thought regarding the proper balance of training and equipment between low- and high-intensity conflict. To achieve this objective, we introduce two accomplished Army officers well known to land warfare professionals who debate this and other compelling limited war issues on military-oriented Web sites such as the *Small Wars Journal*. Honest military professionals can examine historic and contemporary facts and nevertheless arrive at opposite conclusions, as Colonels John Nagl and Gian Gentile demonstrate in this informative point-counterpoint.

In the opening salvo, Dr. Nagl notes that many U.S. defense analysts are voicing concerns over an emerging atrophy of conventional warfighting skills among U.S. land forces. He argues that anticipating future conflicts is important, but it is much more important to organize for and win the conflicts in which the United States is presently engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. He surveys the legacy of lessons inferred from the Vietnam conflict and the complementary effect of the Cold War on doctrine development. Operation *Desert Storm* seemed to validate the U.S. bias toward conventional state-on-state warfare, and the Army consequently neglected to adapt to a changing global context that was evident in places such as Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans. Dr. Nagl argues that the Army has not taken today's wars seriously enough and is too slow to recognize evident trends that should be shaping the forces that the United States will need tomorrow. The continuing inclination of defense institutions to devalue irregular warfare is irresponsible.

Colonel Gentile's counterpoint begins with a startling assertion that land force officers have not seriously debated the content and implications of recent field manuals addressing conventional military operations, counterinsurgency, or stability and support operations. He fears that the Army is placing primacy on nationbuilding over armed combat and that this trend exposes the United States to strategic peril. He doubts the capability of the military to reshape foreign cultures and governmental institutions, asserting that the Army should engage in such endeavors only for brief periods. In the face of limited resources, the training and organization of forces should focus on the core competency that is not resident anywhere else: fighting. The Army's emphasis on insurgency and foreign populations as the default center of gravity has become dogmatic and subtly shapes American foreign policy by improving military readiness for foreign interventions in pursuit of global stability. The current intellectual climate in the Army appears to emphasize short-term expedience, rather than longer term strategic goals.

In our fourth installment, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hoffman hypothesizes that new environmental conditions are changing both the frequency and character of conflict. The character changes that he outlines boil down to the blending of war forms, resulting in increased lethality and aimed at perceived U.S. vulnerabilities. This construct, described as hybrid warfare, is distinguished by the simultaneous application of various forms of conflict, including criminal activity and terror. The author notes that hybrid wars are not new, but different and more complicated than compound wars, which describe operationally separate forces under unified direction. This article features a hybrid warfare case study exploring Hizballah's operations in the second Lebanon war of 2006. Hoffman warns that a bifurcated focus on war forms, as presented by Nagl and Gentile, tends to overlook the most likely and dangerous of combinations: hybrid war.

The fifth essay is a denunciation of the trend toward a systems approach to war and an argument for a return to the traditional reductionist methods of military operational art. Professor Milan Vego points to recent conflicts and notes that scientific approaches to human competition are badly

flawed and that most efforts and resources devoted to them have been wasted. Beginning with the Air Corps Tactical School and strategic bombing, Vego surveys industrial web theory, Colonel John Warden's Five Ring Model, effects-based operations, and systemic operational design. The author argues that a systems approach to warfare is not much different than the "geometrical" or "mathematical" school that dominated military thinking in the late 18th century and to which Clausewitz was vehemently opposed. The strength of Professor Vego's article is his description of how military leaders develop operational thinking, which is "far more comprehensive . . . realistic, dynamic, and flexible than systems thinking." Excellence in the art of war, as in other art, cannot be reduced to paint-by-numbers.

Our concluding Forum entry explores innovative proposals to support land forces facing the dual challenges of long-range precision weapons and the logistic burden of dependence upon fossil fuels. The authors, Marvin Schaffer and Ike Chang, examine the requirements to support alternative propulsion systems for vehicles, and then associated fuel production options, most prominently hydrogen. In the category of electrical power generation, four nuclear reactor concepts are reviewed with an eye to mobility and safety. The authors conclude that the Army should develop a fleet of vehicles powered by a combination of electricity and hydrogen and fueled by theater-mobile nuclear reactors and hydrogen manufacturing facilities. These technologies already exist and may become practical in a decade. In the face of a predictable rise in the cost of fossil fuel, planning for theater-mobile alternatives must begin now. **JFQ**

—D.H. Gurney