The Department of Defense strategic guidance, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, followed by the adoption of AirSea Battle, prescribes the concept of our military strategy from now through 2020. Much comment, many columns, and reams of advice and counsel have generated immeasurable and uncounted discussions, arguments and critiques among military personnel, particularly in the Army because the documents are almost mute concerning a combat role for the land forces.

First, of course, is the charge that the Navy and Air Force are striking first to guarantee a large share of the DoD budget, an argument that ought to be ignored, presuming the concept will be supported only on its merit, not on its preemption.

Advocates include those who have always promoted control of the air and seas as the decisive components of modern war. Today they represent those who, in the 1940s, maintained that with a growing, more lethal airpower and a little more time, the D-Day invasion of Europe would have been unnecessary. Thousands of lives could have been saved as the German government realized the total destruction impending and surrendered just as the Japanese did after the introduction of the atomic bomb. That claim still has credibility in some quarters notwithstanding the destruction of Berlin, Hamburg and a large number of other cities reduced to rubble before and after the invasion.

Others believe the strategy meets the primary requirement of defeating enemy air, missile and naval capabilities that would deny entry into Western Pacific regions, where we would wish to support allies or prevent the unwanted expansion of an enemy influence. It is an effective argument: If you can’t get there, you can’t employ military power to achieve your goals or protect your interests. But the contention also raises the question that if you don’t have the follow-on force to complete the mission, why are you going in the first place? The strategy prescribed seems to foreclose on having U.S. landpower for that phase.

Richard Sinnreich, in the September issue of *ARMY*, observes that the strategy is akin to President Nixon’s Guam Doctrine: Guarantee our treaty commitments; provide a nuclear shield for friends and allies; and when requested, provide military and economic assistance to friendly nations who will furnish the bulk of manpower required for their own defense.

That third commitment was not a new thought. We ended combat in Korea with Korean Augmentation Troops to the U.S. Army furnish platoons of soldiers, assigned to many American units, who fought as organic elements of our divisions. “Vietnamization” was the program of replacing American ground forces with Army of the Republic of Vietnam units to carry on that war. Since then numerous inquiries, studies and other proposals advocating those kinds of force development programs have been popular, but in no case have we convinced other nations to fight the ground war for us. And in every case since—Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan—the land-power element was not only needed, it was the largest element, it was the decisive force and it was overwhelmingly American. In every case the Guam Doctrine’s third principle either failed or was ignored.

To express our National Military Strategy as primarily a plan to control the air and seas and employ long-range firepower not only flies in the face of history but also limits the ability of our nation to influence the developing world. It ignores the wars we are engaged in: Afghanistan and the war on terrorism. Whatever its name, it is probably a generational problem. It ignores the threats to nations with whom we have treaty commitments: Israel, South Korea, Japan. It ignores the block of Latin nations forming an anti-American alliance, building a military threat with weapons and capabilities being made available and supported by and through an infrastructure already introduced by China and Russia. It provides little guidance to the existing unified and combined command components, even the U.S. Pacific Command, which has wide territorial responsibilities beyond the Asia-Pacific region.

It is difficult to conjure the conduct of war in any of the threat areas without the need for landpower, both Army and Marine Corps. To commit a too small army to a primary mission of training other armies to fight is to ensure degradation of its capabilities to cope with the broad spectrum of warfare. More seriously, it risks another future commitment of forces inadequate to the task, a Bataan Death March or another Task Force Smith. Coupling that demand, after years of repetitive combat and other hardship tours, with a plan requiring the continuing rotation of brigades, battalions, companies or training teams away from home stations and families is a plan that continues the stressful environment the Army has been living in for more than the past decade. Add the unpopularity and disruption associated with the social issues introduced and the impact on the Army is difficult to predict.

This is not to oppose the AirSea Battle concept. The need for air and naval supremacy is absolute and must be supported. Instead this is an expression of the need to expand the scope of our military strategy, address the threats and define the role of our

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National Strategy: Another Look

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land forces. That will at least help Army leaders deal with the oft-heard complaint that they do not clearly produce a vision for the future. When you don’t know what you are supposed to do it is hard to develop a concept of how to do it.

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