



Landpower Essay

No. 11-2
August 2011



An Institute of Land Warfare Publication

Laying the Groundwork for the Army of 2020

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at the Association of the United States Army's
Combined Arms Maneuver Symposium and Exposition,
Kansas City, Missouri, 26 July 2011

An Army in Transition

As we near the end of our involvement in Iraq and begin the drawdown in Afghanistan, the Army is approaching a strategic transition. As an institution, we must now broaden our focus from winning current fights to preparing for life beyond them. As we look to the future, we must continue supporting our Soldiers and their families while defending our nation. The real strategic art is balancing our focus between the current and the future. That is why TRADOC is laying the groundwork for this future force—the Army of 2020.

As we transition, it is important to remember that we have not always transitioned successfully. After World War II, for example, we endured the debacle of Task Force Smith in Korea. It took the needless sacrifice of many Soldiers for the institution to learn the importance of having an adaptable Army ready to fight emerging threats. Conversely, our leaders successfully reformed our Army following the war in Vietnam to produce the incredibly resilient force we enjoy today.

The Army of 2020

As we navigate the Army through the challenges of this transition, we should seek the opportunities inherent in the choices we'll face. That is why we will need a steady vision to guide our efforts. That vision is the Army of 2020. Recently, to define capabilities for 2020, TRADOC published a series of seminal ideas called the Army Concept Framework, consisting of the Army Capstone Concept, the Army Operating Concept and the six warfighting functional concepts.

The Army Capstone Concept lays out “what we need the Army to do” while the Army Operating Concept describes “how the Army fights.” Circulated and debated for over a year, these ideas and their supporting concepts are the necessary first steps to instituting change in the force. Within a complex and volatile environment, these concepts provide intellectual challenge and help drive implementation of these seminal ideas into our doctrine, leader development and training. To make this change, we will soon publish the new version of our capstone warfighting doctrine, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*.

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The central idea of Unified Land Operations (ULO) is “Army leaders seize, retain and exploit the initiative to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage in sustained land combat in order to create the conditions for favorable conflict resolution.” This is what Army leaders must do, at every echelon, to support the Joint Force and the nation; it is essential to the future of our Army.

Seizing the initiative is the essence of what Army leaders do. We force the enemy to fight on our terms, at times and places of our choosing, in ways that place opponents at greatest disadvantage. We achieve advantage through destruction of enemy forces, capabilities or sources by seizing key terrain, protecting key populations, building partner capacity or through a tailored combination of these. Unified Land Operations incorporates the lessons of 10 years of war with the broader lessons from history. If we successfully implement and internalize this doctrine, we will achieve an adaptable Army.

Unified Land Operations is the Army’s contribution to Unified Action, our joint doctrine. ULO is a natural evolution of our doctrinal thought from Airland Battle to Full-Spectrum Operations (FSO), a concept from our most recent version of FM 3-0, *Operations*, that defines the need to conduct a mix of offensive, defensive and stability operations. Combined-arms maneuver (CAM) and wide-area security (WAS) capture the lessons of our recent past and artfully blend them with the broader precepts of warfighting. These two core competencies are the specific and unique set of capabilities that, in combination, create the ability to conduct FSO. Leaders and units employ CAM to achieve a position of physical, temporal, or physiological advantage over the enemy. Artful execution of CAM surprises the enemy by attacking from an unexpected direction and time or by employing combat power in unforeseen ways. WAS is used to consolidate and maintain advantage over an enemy or to deny the enemy a position of advantage.

Why CAM and WAS?

In 2003 Iraq, from initial contact through the fall of the Hussein regime, our doctrine and training served us well. However, once the insurgency broke out, we struggled to recognize the problem set or find an appropriate doctrinal approach to guide us to a solution. On the streets and highways of Iraq, at the company and battalion levels, our leaders and Soldiers were in a fight they did not understand. At the senior command levels, there was ambiguity and leaders struggled to gain an understanding of the adversary and to bring the appropriate organizations and structures to bear. Our training and doctrine had ill prepared us for counterinsurgency (COIN); quite frankly, we had assumed the problem away.

Coming out of the Vietnam War, we deliberately chose to train and equip the force to conduct major combat operations (MCO). So in 2003 Baghdad, we employed a force that was largely led, trained and equipped to defeat a Soviet-style army. Insurgency was not something we had thought about too seriously. In the three decades prior to 2003, a widely held belief was that if we could do MCO well, we could do other operations along the spectrum as well. Commanders in Iraq often expressed their frustration in adapting to situations they faced. Fortunately, we were able to rely on the ability of our great tactical leaders to figure it out; but leaving Soldiers unprepared and trusting them to adapt is not an acceptable way for our Army to operate. As an institution, the way we avoid ever becoming so narrowly focused on one part of the spectrum is to ensure our doctrine emphasizes full-spectrum operations underpinned by the core competencies of combined-arms maneuver and wide-area security. This is a big change for our Army.

Prior to 2003, we focused almost entirely on major combat operations; since then, primarily on counterinsurgency. Going forward we must be prepared to do either, or both simultaneously. The core competencies of CAM and WAS force us to understand and prepare for conflict more broadly. This will ensure the future Army is adaptable and that commanders in the Army of 2020 are fully supported by our Army’s doctrine and training systems.

In the last 10 years, we have significantly advanced our understanding of the complexity of the operational environment. Our understanding of human terrain, enemy networks and culture has evolved significantly, as has our understanding of how to apply these factors in fusing operations and intelligence. All of this takes place in the vast context of host nation, multinational and interagency frameworks that

require their own training and leader competencies. We need to improve the individual, collective and institutional competencies that will enable successful CAM while developing training venues that allow us to maintain the richness and complexity of the operational environment. This requires a fundamentally different approach to training and learning.

The Army Learning and Training Concepts are engines of change that will bring a 21st century/Information Age approach to the way our Soldiers and leaders prepare for future challenges. TRADOC is also working on the necessary training support mechanisms to provide the richness and complexity of the current battlefield to home station training. An example of this is the “Training Brain” that is capable of providing our intelligence sections and staffs with the highly comprehensive data to challenge analysts and maintain their proficiencies.

There are those who assert we will fall back into traditional garrison routines of the past or that it simply isn’t possible to pull all this together in a resource-constrained environment. I agree that these are significant challenges, but returning to the past is not acceptable to me or to this young generation of experienced combat leaders. We have an opportunity to capture this next generation of officers and NCOs with the challenge of designing and shaping their home station training as well as their future doctrine. Due to their experiences in the “time constrained” approaches we have used to make deployment dates, many of these young leaders view our current training programs as overly prescriptive. These leaders will seek greater autonomy and bigger challenges as they face the reality that they are not on the next patch chart and will likely move into the Contingency Expeditionary Force (CEF) pool. We need to challenge this generation of young leaders to apply their substantial combat experience and creative energy to address the problem of training a broader set of requirements amidst the context of an increasingly complex operational environment.

Implications of the Core Competencies

Successfully implementing the core competencies into doctrine will drive changes to our training and education programs that will build the adaptable units and leaders required by the Army Capstone Concept. Experience, be it in training or while deployed, or both, is just one of the three pillars of leader development. To support a broader perspective on warfare, our professional military education (PME) will have to evolve.

The most critical change to PME is already underway through our promotion and selection policies, as we reestablish the importance of actually attending PME. Over the last ten years, the need to win the current fight kept many leaders either downrange or preparing to go downrange. This demand for leaders in the fight coupled with the tendency of selection boards to reward those with extensive combat experience has kept our best away from the schoolhouse. At some point, brilliant, well experienced tactical leaders have to transition to become operational or even strategic leaders and thinkers. It’s very hard to do that if they have not attended the schools that refine and broaden their thinking. But we will also have to adjust the curriculum to provide leaders a broader perspective. PME must instill in leaders the mental agility to contextualize and manage transitions. This is incredibly difficult to do well; and that’s why we need to understand the implications of mission command.

Mission Command is defined as “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of Unified Land Operations.” Our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan required an expanded role for commanders at every level. No longer do commanders directly control all elements and resources they must marshal, synchronize and lead to be successful. Today, to create a unified effort, commanders must integrate the capabilities of joint and coalition forces, as well as governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Inherent within Mission Command is the concept of decentralized and centralized operations. CAM usually involves more centralized control to tightly synchronize all elements of combat power.

WAS favors a more decentralized approach. Mission Command, through its focus and expanded role of the commander, supports a rapid transition from centralized to decentralized operations and back as the situation dictates. The ability to transition rapidly builds adaptability into units as called for in the Capstone Concept. Mission Command enables the core competencies and is a necessary change in our leadership doctrine.

Conclusion

A better understanding of the type of combat operations we are likely to conduct is a critical step forward. The introduction of the core competencies of CAM and WAS are major steps toward a more adaptable force. Their implications are already being felt across the force. Earlier this year, the Army conducted the first full-spectrum Joint Readiness Training Center rotation. Our leader development programs are undergoing significant balancing with increased attention to PME, while Mission Command is enabling leaders to be more adaptive and ready to succeed in uncertainty and adversity. We've found the right balance of focusing on the current fights as we learn and implement the lessons of 10 years of war. There is still much to do as we lay the groundwork for the Army of 2020; and this vision is firmly guiding our efforts in the right direction.



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