



# Land Warfare in the 21st Century: Strategic Studies Institute

*General Gordon R. Sullivan, Lieutenant Colonel James M. Dubik*

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Land warfare in the 21st century will be shaped by the cumulative effects of many revolutionary changes that have yet to merge in a clear or predictable pattern. This paper identifies three elements of change that are likely to have the greatest impact on the Army and the joint conduct of land warfare. First, the international system is undergoing its third major transition of the 20th century in response to the end of the cold war. The bipolar world has disappeared, replaced by uncertainty and instability. The United States as the world's sole superpower is debating its role and responsibilities in such a world, a debate that is greatly influenced by domestic pressures to resolve a complex set of economic and social issues at home. Together these trends are forcing a dramatic shift in strategy from the Soviet global threat to regional crises that require collective applications of military power in "operations other than war." These include humanitarian relief, peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, and peace-building (nation assistance) that will require a wide range of forward presence/peacetime engagement operations. Second, changes in military technology are culminating in what many believe will be a "military-technical revolution" that brings unprecedented depth and transparency to the battlefield. Five of this "revolution's" most significant technological developments for land warfare are lethality and dispersion; volume and precision of fire; integrative technology; mass and effects; and invisibility and detectability. These developments will drive adjustments in tactics, organization, doctrine, equipment, force mix, and methods of command and control. The authors believe that these innovations indicate that smaller land forces can create decisive effects IF technology is used by high quality, well-trained and well-led troops employing proper doctrine. Implicit in this analysis is the assumption that there is a line below which technology can no longer compensate for cuts in force structure. That line will ultimately be determined by the capabilities of our adversaries and the will of the American public.

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