



# Chinese Theorists Consider New Perspectives of Land Supremacy for the PLAA

**OE Watch Commentary:** Prompted by the expansion of battle domain in an information age, two Chinese theorists writing in *Jiefangjun Bao* have portrayed a fundamental shift with regard to land supremacy and the army. The article starts off by briefly describing the evolution of warfare. According to the authors, while “human warfare has taken place mainly on the land battlefield” and required “land supremacy” delivered by an army, mechanization in warfare evolved to include sea and air supremacy as well. Warfare has further evolved with the shift to informatization and, “seizing information supremacy as the core of comprehensive battlefield supremacy is now a key to war victory.”

Most interesting, in the last two paragraphs of the article, the authors offer some details on how to achieve comprehensive battlefield superiority through the use of army forces on the informatized battlefield. Due to its increased complexity, a number of measures are needed to engage in a multi-dimensional domain battle. The authors list some of these: using a frontier military presence to deter the opponent and create a favorable strategic environment, having a full awareness over the battlefield through intelligence and effectively monitoring specific campaign and tactical areas, obtaining superiority over information in specific areas, achieving domain-wide mobility, carrying out rapid and decisive deployments in key areas at the right time, combining information for precision fire strikes, and seizing and controlling important areas.

As the authors portray, the concept of achieving battlefield supremacy has changed. Whereas each of the services (army, navy, air force) had once been responsible for ensuring their own supremacy, “comprehensive supremacy” in the information age is now the key to dominating the current battlefield. The authors note that while “the status of the land battlefield as the main place of war activities has not fundamentally changed,” the confrontation in systems warfare demands that “the power base of land supremacy,” i.e. the army, must be supplemented by networked combat power, including air and sea. Having supremacy over just one domain is no longer enough. Integrating the army’s system into the joint combat force system is what is essential, according to the authors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“If one still sticks to the traditional concept of thinking about the issue of land supremacy, it is tantamount to taking foolish actions without considering the changing environment...”*

**Source:** Xia Chengxiao and Yuan Yi, “长期存在却被忽视的“灰犀牛”——以新视角审视制陆权 (Neglected ‘Gray Rhinos’ – Reviewing a New Perspective of Land Supremacy),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 10 June 2020, [http://www.81.cn/theory/2020-06/10/content\\_9832326.htm](http://www.81.cn/theory/2020-06/10/content_9832326.htm)

*Neglected ‘Gray Rhinos’ – Reviewing a New Perspective of Land Supremacy*

*For a long period in history, human warfare has taken place mainly on the land battlefields, the land battlefield is the core place for war activities. The control of a specific land battlefield for a certain period often becomes the purpose of the entire war or battle. Even in the era of mechanized warfare where the battlefield space is expanded three-dimensionally, the status of the land battlefield as the main place of war activities has not fundamentally changed. Based on the traditional understanding that “combat is control” on land battlefields, land supremacy has not been given attention for a long time.*

*If one still sticks to the traditional concept of thinking about the issue of land supremacy, it is tantamount to taking foolish actions without considering the changing environment, and it is not conducive to the full play of the role of land warfare in future joint operations and the overall transformation of the army. Therefore, we should re-examine land supremacy which is a long-standing but neglected “grey rhino.”*

*From the standpoint of status and role, land supremacy is essentially creating a favorable land battlefield situation.*

*... The seizing and preservation of comprehensive battlefield supremacy are achieved by using various means to engage in a multi-dimensional domain confrontation. It essentially reflects the overall use of various combat elements and units. In the same way, the means of achieving supremacy, and the use of army forces have also formed a clear mapping relationship. Through terrestrial deterrence, deter opponents with a frontier military presence, and create a favorable strategic environment; through battlefield awareness, achieve effective information monitoring of specific campaign and tactical areas, and obtain the superiority of joint information supremacy in separate areas; through domain-wide mobility, carry out rapid and decisive deployment in important areas and key areas at the crucial time node to create a localized or overall favorable situation; through firepower strikes, in a certain battlefield space, form an “information + firepower” combat effectiveness precise release area; through the seizing and control of important points and areas to occupy and control targets with important military value to maintain actual control rights of important combat pivot points and regions in the mission area.*

*From the perspective of power support, the main body of land supremacy is a multi-element power system dominated by the army. In traditional wars, supremacy has a strong military flavor, and supremacy in various domains is based on and supported by military services. In informatized warfare, comprehensive supremacy exists in a manner that dominates the battlefield situation, subverting the traditional stereotype that supremacy exists as a power. The air supremacy and sea supremacy are not the same as the supremacy of the air force and the navy, and land supremacy is not equivalent to the supremacy of the army. Proceeding from the concepts of system of systems confrontation and joint victory, the power base of land supremacy should be based mainly on the army’s combat power, and at the same time include a multi-element power system including air, sea, and network combat power, to facilitate full play to the main role of the army in seizing control of the land battlefield, and is also conducive to making up for the limitation of single supremacy, and driving better integration of the army’s system into the joint combat force system.*