

A Civil Affairs Campaigning Framework

Major Nicholas Ashley

In a global security environment characterized by strategic rivalry, the U.S. must be prepared to engage in a prolonged contest to secure its interests while preventing conflict and ensuring a stable environment conducive to American prosperity. The 2022 National Security Strategy and 2022 National Defense Strategy offer up *integrated deterrence* and *campaigning* as two concepts for organizing the U.S. military's activities in support of these ends. To better posture the Civil Affairs Corps in support of these efforts, a Civil Affairs campaigning framework should consist of three lines of effort to guide CA planning and operations.

First, Civil Affairs forces must seek to understand the civil component of the operational environment to inform a combined, joint, common operational picture and to provide commanders with the decision space necessary to shape, and react to, challenges and opportunities within the operational environment. This is the foundational component of the framework and the one upon which the other lines of effort build upon.

Second, CA forces must prepare for crisis and conflict in tandem with unified action partners by enhancing Allies' and partners' preparations and resiliencies in the civil domain, thereby freeing up partner military and governmental resources to focus on other threats. These efforts can develop dual-use capabilities that help to operationalize the concept of 'total defense,' thereby taking a holistic, whole of society approach to security.

Lastly, CA forces must compete for influence and relative advantage in key geographic, informational, and human terrain. Targeted Civil Affairs and Civil Military Operations in both the physical and information domains reinforce the desired narrative, counter malign influence, and help to ensure the joint force is not out of position in the event of crisis or conflict.

Operationalizing this framework requires several DOTMLPF-P changes. Primarily, the Corps must focus on training and leader development by getting out of the special operations bubble to understand more clearly both how the civil domain impacts, and is impacted by, large scale combat. This includes understanding the throughline between building civilian capacity in peacetime and activating civil resiliencies during crisis and conflict. Correspondingly, refining doctrine and professional education can build expertise in governance to support these efforts.

The framework outlined in this paper offers *a way* for contributing to integrated deterrence while improving our position in key human and geographic terrain during competition in order to set the conditions for a more successful transition to crisis and conflict. By adopting this campaigning approach, the Civil Affairs Corps can better organize and prioritize efforts while increasing its value proposition to the joint force.