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## THE UNITED STATES ARMY AT THE CROSSROADS TO THE 21st CENTURY

by

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### Introduction

This paper is intended to be provocative, to generate ideas for thought and to cross those invisible boundaries formed in our minds through years of professional concepts convergence. The U.S. Army is at a crossroads — conceptually, organizationally and institutionally — as it heads into the 21st century. The notion that we should examine fundamental premises is particularly important as we set the stage for Total Army Analysis (TAA) 1996-2001. Thus, this article seeks to foster rethinking.

We are now at the beginning of an era that can be likened to the post-Napoleonic period. That era of strategic change, much like ours, marked England and reframed its focus from containment operations on the continent as the alliance leader, in concert with its Portuguese, Dutch and Prussian allies, to one of preeminent world power. The extraordinary growth of the Indian empire resulted, as well as economic growth in England which ushered in the industrial age. Paul Kennedy, in his *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, would have us believe that economic wealth and capital formation are essential to sustain great powers. One could posit that British senescence was avoided through the creative use of "trading companies" to expand Pax Britannica by minimizing its investment in standing forces.

NATO's 40-year historical GNP contribution to containment and collective security ranged between three and four percent per annum, while the United States, as the alliance leader, contributed as much as six percent per annum to sustain that effort, and ultimately prevailed in the Cold War. The question before the American body politic, now that the Cold War has been won, is how to win the peace — domestically and economically. In light of the Los Angeles riots earlier this year, where almost as many U.S. citizens were killed in three days as during the 100 hours of ground combat in Iraq, and an economy which faces enormous difficulties in expanding jobs, the issue of defense resources for containment has shifted to *constraint*. In turn, the arguments

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for burdensharing in a deterrent collective security setting have been reframed to "assurance for regional defense." The defense resourcing debate in the next three years can therefore be expected to be particularly sharp, with distinct proponents and opponents, where the very basis of U.S.C. Title 10, the National Military Strategy, in turn the Base Force, and the planning scenarios, will be challenged. The Army as an institution should welcome the forthcoming debates and thrive on them. We should give serious thought to Congressman Les Aspin's "Option C," to the consequences of the congressionally mandated AC/RC (Active Component/Reserve Component) Mix Study, to role definitions within joint warfare, the impact of technology in Operations Just Cause, Desert Shield/Storm and Provide Comfort, and to examine critically those lessons learned as we saw them, as well as how others saw them.

In short, we are now in a period where the Army can expect substantially fewer resources, will face tumultuous intellectual challenges, and at the same time must provide for combat effective forces for this decade and the next century. The crossroads immediately ahead of us is one of positing the context of 21st century warfare, refining AirLand Operations and thereafter redesigning the force structure and force mix for Army organizations required for the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. We thus have both a golden opportunity and a challenge to view roads "less traveled," to foster a climate of intellectual ferment in this interwar period, and to examine carefully the organizing paradigms for TAA 1996-2001.

### **Complexity in the Years Ahead**

The TAA 1996-2001 organizing paradigms will, of necessity, take cognizance of the new world order, the age of uncertainty and the spiraling complexity of warfare. The new world order is anything but ordered. Indeed, the virtual reemergence of 19th century nationalism, ethnic forces within seemingly secure nation states, and balkanization to the point of virulent civil combat, are all outcomes of a postbipolar world. Some would say that we are on the verge of global "incoherence." Clearly, there are selected national entities with capabilities that can impact on our national security directly but, in the main, potential threats to United States interests are limited to those areas construed as focal zones, such as the Middle East oil regions.

The age of uncertainty which lies ahead will be marked by passion, piety and progress. Others would argue that we are standing on the edge of a long wave shift of history, much as we witnessed in the post-Napoleonic War period; that the short waves of history represented by the cataclysms of World War I, World War II and the Cold War are now behind us, and the issue for all is how to shape and steer the future. These uncertainties, therefore, represent less of a threat than potential opportunities which our Army, as a handmaiden of the American peoples' hopes and aspirations, can leverage in the years ahead.

The complexity of warfare, or four-dimensional "quadlexity," is another matter. Within the short span of two decades we have ushered in the age of smart to brilliant weapons, added space to the height of the third dimension, exploited the fourth dimension of the electromagnetic spectrum of the battlefield, and added information systems as a major suite to weapons systems. (Note: The impact on time decompression and decision cycles, plus accelerating/decelerating the fog and friction of war, is clearly enormous.) Indeed, a crucial aspect of TAA 1996-2001 is the reconciliation of force design and force structure mix with the dynamic interaction between complexity and level of warfare intensity.

Against this backdrop for the organizing paradigms is also the relevancy of what one can call the “age of simultaneity” and “asymmetric warfare styles.” Operation Just Cause highlighted that a force dispersed — in the continental United States and its contiguous waters — *over* time and space can be synergistically concentrated *in* time and space to overwhelm an opponent’s force ratios and decision systems. The shock effect of full kills for everything targeted within the span of 24 hours is debilitating on any decision node and command authority. Further, when such a shock can be concentrated within selected 15-minute segments and the weapon systems recycled numerous times during the course of a day, preconflict force ratio assumptions (that drive force structure requirements) in an age of global research can now be reconsidered. Simultaneity, with concurrent deployment and employment at various levels of warfare, thus has a profound impact on organizational power projection requirements.

Correspondingly, Operation Desert Storm points out that asymmetric warfare opportunities can be generated at the tactical, operational and strategic levels of warfare through the use of technology, training optimization, joint warfare organizational effectiveness mix, and strategic will — to say nothing of leader competency disparities. (Note: Symmetric engagements are battles between similar forces where superior correlation of forces and technological advantages are important to ensure success with minimum losses. Asymmetric engagements are battles between dissimilar forces such as sea launched cruise missiles against land-based C<sup>3</sup>I {command, control, communications and intelligence} targets.) The complexity of synchronizing and integrating a four-dimensional Desert Storm campaign will stand out in the annals of history as much as the blitzkrieg campaigns of 1939-1941. Much will be made about this “new American style of joint warfare.” However, the next step requires that we explicitly focus on “interactive symmetric/asymmetric warfare opportunities” in the development of our doctrine, force design and force structure.

As our Army moved from a European, high intensity, attrition/force ratio doctrine to AirLand Battle and is now embarked on AirLand Operations/Army Operations, viewing doctrine as a means to facilitate asymmetric interactive outcomes can have high payoffs in the 21st century.

To the extent that we deliberately imbed within our doctrine, and in turn our force design and force structure, the capacity to wage joint power projection warfare — in all four dimensions — not only at the strategic and operational levels of war but also at the tactical level of war, we generate additional opportunities for asymmetric warfare outcomes. General William E. DePuy, in his hallmark article “Concepts of Operation: The Heart of Command, The Tool of Doctrine” (*Army*, August 1988), highlighted the growth of complexity associated with increasing battlefield functions and agencies. He also pointed to the requirements for synchronization and integration to control forces and functions. Yet, this entire warfighting architecture was dominated by a single theme: the creative role of the commander in formulating a dominating concept for his concept of the operation. The paradigm for the next century, then, is to create opportunities for our commanders, within our doctrine, to define dominating asymmetric concepts for their power projection operations, harnessing the four-dimensional “quadlexity” toward our own ends.

## **Force Design**

In the wake of the Polish campaign of 1939, the German General Staff undertook an exhaustive, critical, no-holds-barred self-analysis of all facets of that successful operation. They subsequently applied their lessons learned to the campaigns in France and Russia with spectacular results. Few winning armies have such a predilection, leaving such studies to the vanquished. We

have much to learn from truly constructive analysis, particularly in the post-Cold War era. Fundamentally, the central operative scenario of an expeditionary force, reinforced in the European theater, has been replaced by the requirement to field a power projection force, mounted from a power projection base. Further, to the extent that we were tied to an initial defensive strategic and operational level of war framework during the Cold War, we now have the freedom for offensive strategic and operational maneuver.

The lessons of Operations Desert Shield/Storm, therefore, have to be placed in the context that we took a Cold War force design, with a Total Force structure approach, and placed it first into an operational level of defensive war, then offensive milieu. While this permitted the United States Army to make outstanding contributions to the successful prosecution of the coalition's war with Iraq, a reassessment is warranted. Any force design specifically targeted on strategic/operational offensive power projection in the 21st century will potentially generate alternative options and set the stage for breaking the historical paradigms. Some propositions that warrant examination are:

- How do we, through force design, enhance simultaneity, vice sequential operations, in a joint environment, in all four dimensions of land warfare? Further, can force design reduce the vulnerabilities of information nodes and decision cycles?
- Given that an operational level of war joint force commander maneuvers by fire (precision guided munitions {PGMs}, sea/air assets) and fires by maneuver — ground and air (AH-64/A-10) task forces — can organizations be slimmed to maximize maneuverability and aggregate effectiveness? If so, should we reexamine the design for 58 tanks per tank battalion, or 4x8 tubes (four batteries of eight tubes each) per artillery battalion? (Note: James Fallows wrote an article on muscle-bound giants some years ago that is germane in the power projection era.)
- Within AirLand Operations/Army Operations and the emerging joint operational doctrine, is offensive, agile combat effectiveness enhanced by building around trim, self-contained brigades or divisions? If the answer is divisions, should they be slimmed to no more than six maneuver battalions, with reinforcing aviation brigades allocated out of the corps base to accelerate tempo, and recycling of combat power in time and space? (Note: We are virtually at the threshold that ground weapons systems complexity, lethality and integration with air/indirect fire systems require officers crewing such systems.)
- The role of the corps headquarters is central to the nexus between tactical and operational levels of war. Since that headquarters is the gatekeeper to national intelligence systems and facilitates joint offensive and defensive targeting, a careful force design review ought to be undertaken in terms of logistics tailoring to prospective missions. Operational level of war effectiveness is directly related to the ability to marshal logistics capabilities. This entails potentially leading with logistics force modules to set the stage for decisive corps level maneuver by fire and fire by maneuver. Such logistics tailoring should be carefully examined within the Louisiana Maneuvers (LAM) framework and specifically focus on forecast-push logistics simulations.
- In the era of increased warfare complexity, force effectiveness may be predicated more on the sustained quality of information systems that distribute and disseminate information over vast distances; continuously functioning intelligence systems to acquire, verify and assess targets; and robustness of logistics organization rather than combat forces

(which can be recycled). To the extent that intelligence and logistics organizations come from the reserve components, the force redesign must consider degree of federalization/mobilization access, skill redundancies, independent functional cells and enhanced deployability profiles.

- Force design for a power projection force, bent on maneuver warfare, operating in four dimensions and possessing joint weapon systems with probability of kills (PKs) approaching .95, must take cognizance of redefining relationships between organizational structures and supporting force allocation rules. In short, we need to scrub the TAA rules for joint warfare assumptions in the late 20th century, vice continue to promote requirements based on World War II and Cold War attrition warfare data. Such a scrub will clearly highlight that the interrelationship between joint warfare assumptions — lethality, firepower, mobility and sustainability — has substantially changed. The outcome of such an analysis will have a decided impact on sustaining EAD/EAC (echelon above division/echelon above corps) force structure and lift requirements.

## Force Structure

Force structure paradigms of the American armed forces are deeply rooted in the history of the nation, its experiences at home and abroad, and the perceptions of its citizenry. America has rarely mobilized and when the threat passes, the bias has been to demobilize rapidly its large standing formations. As we view the future, it should not come as a surprise that in the wake of the Cold War and the successful Gulf War, this bias may ultimately prevail. To be sure, this administration is committed to the Base Force, indeed sufficient congressional support has been mustered to preclude further dramatic downsizing for the moment, but the impetus for further reductions to the active force structure is but an election and a strengthened economy away.

Cogent institutional discussion should be undertaken to examine our current force structure paradigms and to define new alternatives. Alternatives do exist! The Israeli Army constitutes a clear example of an effective citizen-soldier defense establishment with minimum numbers of soldiers on active duty at any given time. And, the Israeli Army has demonstrated numerous times that its force generation model is sufficiently honed to mobilize rapidly and win decisively. The issue then for our army is to examine force structure requirements not only in terms of the prism of optimization criterion, but also minimum essential effectiveness criteria to assure successful execution of any National Military Strategy requirement.

In examining various West European force structure/force generation models during the 1970s, one was enlightened by their intent and ability to place reserve component (RC) soldiers and units into active component (AC) formations ranging from combat units through combat service support organizations. More recently, the Air Force has led the way in defining force structures which are both effective and cost efficient. Consequently, our critics are not too far off the mark when they insist that *de jure* the Army complies with the Total Force policy, but *de facto* it maintains three armies at the disposal of the nation.

The Army has two fundamental choices in its force structure/force generation approach: frame the issue itself, or have Congress frame it for the active Army. The current congressionally mandated AC/RC Mix Study is therefore of significant import, but one ought to break the previous paradigms and examine those that have the greatest relevancy for the 21st century. Simply posing

the question “How might the Army be structured at an authorized AC strength of 350,000 to 400,000?” is sufficient to begin a creative examination of alternative approaches to force structure and force generation. What then are some new approaches?

- Review the integration parameters of RC personnel and units ranging from company to echelons above corps (EAC) for combat, combat support and combat services support (C/CS/CSS) organizations. For example, roundout divisions could have appropriate CS/CSS slices appended as RC slices to reconfigured roundout brigades. Aviation organizations could be substantially reconfigured with RC manning. Similarly, given the level of technology imbedded in multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), these battalions could be manned by mixed densities of AC/RC personnel.
- RC personnel policies and force structure manning authorizations should be reviewed. We must recognize predeployment constraints such as time available for training upon mobilization. Rather than create templates of AC organizations in the RC, we ought to be more sophisticated and allow for cells, skill development, fully trained authorizations, plus companion holding organizations for personnel undergoing military occupational specialty (MOS) qualifications.
- Mobilization access and training strategies for logistics organizations which underpin our future power projection requirements should be fundamentally realigned. Recall access to critical skills and logistics units can in fact be garnered, much as the Air Force has been able to accomplish in a number of its selected organizations. Alternatively, such access can be forged through additional legislative vehicles.
- Aggregate AC/RC force effectiveness can be facilitated through regional alignments of Capstone units/individuals, RC support infrastructure and Army corps. High priority organizations could be cycled and the balance would be Capstone-affiliated with the appropriate corps level organization for power projection/force generation missions.
- Training technology, standards and deployment certification for mixed AC/RC training of CS and CSS organizations should be placed into a “mission readiness” context based on stipulated deployment times and resourced accordingly.
- RC organizations dedicated to nation-building missions — such as Task Force Badger — or for appropriate forward deployment tasks (such as maintenance of equipment on prepositioned {PREPO} ships), would enjoy high priority fills of personnel and appropriate resourcing through greater institutional flexibility.
- RC organizations and RC facilities can be optimized by eliminating duplication between AC, U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and National Guard (NG) where appropriate. Selected RC training organizations could be utilized to assure training missions for all components.
- The Army’s Total Force policy should be used as a basis for cutting selected active Army organizations and functions which can be either consolidated, eliminated, passed to other military services or, more effectively, left to contract services.

## Conclusion

In summary, Army force design must have its eye on the next millennium. Army force structure paradigms must take into account the emerging budget realities to generate an effective aggregate AC/RC force capability within a joint context. These all point to the rethinking of the means our service is to provide to attain the nation's ends on some future battlefield. As we forge ahead, the age of simultaneity will pose great opportunities — and risks — for decision makers. Warfare as we know it today has been raised to a level of professional excellence the likes of which has not been seen before in terms of complexity of battlefield functions, synchronization and integration requirements, and level of joint sea, air, land and space warfare.

The Army, with its view on TAA 1996-2001, has a singular opportunity to reflect conceptually, institutionally and organizationally as it heads into the 21st century. It is a time for rethinking. It is time to examine our historical paradigms and, in some cases, break them. Tumultuous changes are directly ahead of us. We ought to relish the intellectual ferment in the prospective interwar period because it allows us iteratively to shape the context of how to conduct 21st century warfare. Given the fundamental shift from the central operative European scenario to power projection roles, our doctrine — that focuses on interactive outcomes, flexible force design paradigms and alternative force structure mixes — is at the crossroads awaiting a fresh set of eyes. We truly are at a watershed period! We have a singular opportunity, if we can get away from the marginal, incremental approach.

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