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American Landpower and the Two-war Construct

Richard D. Hooker, Jr.

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The Institute of Land Warfare
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AN INSTITUTE OF LAND WARFARE PAPER

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LAND WARFARE PAPER NO. 106, May 2015

American Landpower and the Two-war Construct

by Richard D. Hooker, Jr.

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Contents

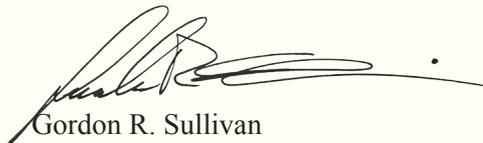
Foreword	v
Introduction	1
Making the Case	2
Sizing the Force	3
Challenges to Fielding Adequate Landpower	4
Endnotes	7

Foreword

Since the end of the Cold War, both Democratic and Republican administrations have relaxed the traditional emphasis on maintaining an ability to fight and win two major conflicts simultaneously. Often derided as old thinking, the “two-war construct” actually remains as valid as ever for the world’s only remaining superpower, as the National Defense Panel recently pointed out in its critique of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review.

With global responsibilities to secure a rules-based international system based on a world-wide integrated economy, the United States depends on a global network of alliances and partnerships involving more than 60 friendly states that collectively account for almost 80 percent of global gross domestic product and more than 80 percent of global military spending. U.S. credibility therefore hinges on a demonstrated ability to fight and win in two wars at once, as failure to honor security commitments in one theater calls all others into question. As this paper spells out, American landpower, through no fault of its own, is clearly not up to the task. As defense spending continues to drop, acquisition of high-priced air and naval systems continues unabated, while the U.S. Army is marginalized.

This trend must be reversed. Funding a competent land force, far from breaking the defense budget, would require a reallocation of only 2 percent of the Defense Department’s total obligational authority. That is a fair price to pay for a land force capable of reassuring allies and deterring potential adversaries, while also supporting America’s dominant aerospace and maritime forces.



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8 May 2015

American Landpower and the Two-war Construct

Introduction

The National Defense Panel's (NDP's) independent assessment of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) raises once again the question of America's ability to fight and win simultaneous conflicts, a thorny conundrum in a time of strong pressure on defense budgets.¹ Long a mainstay of American defense strategy, the "two-war construct" remained an explicit commitment until the Clinton administration. Subsequently, both Democratic and Republican administrations began to parse the requirement more ambiguously as the size of the military fell. The Clinton administration saw the first iteration of the "win–hold–win" formulation. The George W. Bush national security team articulated a requirement to "maintain the capability to defeat any attempt by an enemy—whether a state or nonstate actor—to impose its will on the United States, our allies or our friends."² This language was further relaxed in the Obama administration, which opined,

If deterrence fails at any given time, U.S. forces will be capable of defeating a regional adversary in a large-scale multiphased campaign, and denying the objectives of—or imposing unacceptable costs on—a second aggressor in another region.³

This may seem merely a question of semantics, but the difference is marked. The 2014 QDR language signals a projected lack of capacity to do in the second scenario what is explicitly described in the first. The 2015 National Security Strategy is similarly imprecise, stating that "if deterrence fails, U.S. forces will be ready to project power globally to defeat and deny aggression in multiple theaters."⁴ An ability to "fight and win two wars simultaneously," once enshrined in public strategic documents, sends an unambiguous signal that the United States intends to maintain military capabilities able to meet this clear requirement. For decades this commitment underpinned our alliance structure worldwide, reassuring friends and partners and deterring potential adversaries. The qualifying language of the last several administrations signals something less.⁵

The "two-war construct," as the NDP phrases it, is imperative for reasons that are fairly simple to explain. The United States bases its national security on an extensive network of alliances and bilateral defense arrangements. As Michael O'Hanlon has pointed out,

The United States leads a global alliance system of more than 60 partner states that collectively account for almost 80 percent of global [gross domestic product] and more than 80 percent of global military spending between them.⁶

This system, which provides forward basing, overflight rights, political legitimacy and additional military forces in time of conflict, is of inestimable value, but its viability as well as its deterrent effect hinges on American credibility. Our allies will be with us—if they know we will be there for them. Should the United States find itself committed to one major theater war (for example, on the Korean peninsula) but unable to respond decisively in another (say, in the Middle East or on NATO's borders), then that credibility is compromised not just at the point of collision but everywhere. Put another way, an America able to intervene decisively in only one region of the world at a time is arguably no longer a global power. So constrained, the United States will find it difficult to play its historical role as a guarantor of a stable global system, a role whose net effect has been to bring into being, largely if not entirely through America's own efforts, a rules-based international and economic order that has widely benefited much of the world.⁷

This is why the NDP noted, “We find . . . the two-war construct to be as powerful as ever.”⁸ Fighting two wars at once is never desirable. But as the only superpower, and with the nation's security and economic well-being invested in a stable international order, America cannot fully control what lands on its plate. We might hope to fight no more than one war at a time. If we are wrong and we cannot cope, the extensive network of alliances and partnerships established over decades—a core and vital interest—is in grave danger.

Making the Case

Given the preponderance of U.S. military power, shouldn't we be able to handle simultaneous major regional conflicts? After all, U.S. air, space, special operations, naval and amphibious forces are far stronger than any that could be fielded by an adversary, and the U.S. Army, while not the largest in the world, is potent, experienced and of high quality. Why would the 2014 QDR shy away from an explicit commitment to a two-war construct?

The answer is readily apparent in the two simultaneous wars conducted by the United States in the decade following the 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland. In some scenarios (such as the closing of the Straits of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf), America's preponderant air and naval power are enough to do the job. But most of the time the challenge will be on land, and there the premise that wars can be won from the air or from the sea alone has been shown to be false. And in land warfare, the bright promise of high technology notwithstanding, size matters—and that means boots on the ground.

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan pitted U.S. and coalition forces against fairly primitive, low-tech opponents who could not begin to match our numbers and weapons technology. Except in the opening stages, the enemy generally refused to mass, defeating attempts to bring U.S. technology to bear decisively. Air and naval power, while enabling land forces to enter the theater of war and supporting them logistically, played supporting roles in combat operations. They could not substitute for landpower in holding, securing or dominating terrain or protecting civilian populations. Neither war could be described as high intensity, yet the debilitating effects of many years of conflict proved to be extraordinary, especially for Army units that deployed for year-long tours and then returned only a year later.⁹ Political and military leaders could never find the ground forces needed to prosecute both campaigns effectively.

As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs famously said in 2007, “In Iraq we do what we must; in Afghanistan we do what we can.”¹⁰

This painful experience should give pause to those who argue that other instruments—nuclear deterrence, air- and seapower, special operations forces (SOF), coalition partners or America’s large National Guard formations—can offset the requirement for robust and capable active duty ground forces. These alternatives did not suffice in Iraq and Afghanistan (both limited conflicts with a low air-defense threat). Each has a critical role to play, but their roles are far from interchangeable. The U.S. nuclear force is awesome, but useful primarily to deter the use of nuclear weapons. Air-, sea- and landpower enjoy primacy in their operational domains, and can often magnify their effects when used synergistically as part of the joint force, but none can substitute for another. High-technology, “transformative” systems can deliver better situational awareness and improved precision strike but have not proven to be decisive in their own right and carry inordinate acquisition costs. Sizeable National Guard and Reserve units were mobilized for Iraq and Afghanistan, but the political costs were high, train-up periods were lengthy and impact on civilian careers was severe.¹¹ Even with significant growth in Army endstrength and augmentation by Marine and coalition forces, the active Army was stretched to the breaking point to execute what could be described as one medium-sized regional contingency (Iraq) and one lesser regional contingency (Afghanistan). Extraordinary steps, such as deploying Soldiers multiple times for 12- and 15-month tours, could not provide enough ground forces to achieve decisive effects in both theaters at once.¹²

The experience of more than a decade at war demonstrates, first, that simultaneous conflicts are quite possible, and second, that dominant air- and seapower is not enough.¹³ America needs an Army able to fight two land wars at once.¹⁴ Ground forces actually in existence are the ultimate currency when it comes to signaling intent and driving decisive outcomes on land. They do not do it alone but always as part of a joint force. But just as airpower is dominant in the aerospace domain and seapower in blue water, landpower dominates on land.

Sizing the Force

How much landpower is needed to support a “two-war construct”? Modern Army and Marine divisions pack a terrific punch, far more than in World War II, but their ability to control terrain is limited by their numbers and the range of their direct-fire systems; long-range or indirect-fire systems, such as rocket artillery, attack helicopters and tubed artillery, generate powerful weapons effects but cannot seize and hold ground.¹⁵ Particularly in open terrain and with strong air support, U.S. ground forces can rupture and defeat far larger enemy forces, as seen in the Gulf War in 1991 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. But controlling terrain—“owning the ground”—is a different matter. For this reason, numbers are important.

Some idea of the scope and scale of major theater war can be seen in the size of potential adversaries. In a Korean war scenario planners must contend with a North Korean army of 1,020,000 with 600,000 reserves and, in the event of intervention (as happened in 1950), a Chinese army of 1,600,000 soldiers with a further 520,000 reserves. In the Middle East, confrontation on the ground with Iran would engage a land force of 475,000 backed by 350,000 reserves. In Europe, Russia fields an active army of 285,000 supported by 519,000 paramilitaries and up to 2,000,000 reservists.¹⁶ Depending on the scenario, the United States might fight with substantial support from allies (particularly in Korea). On the other hand, we must project and sustain the land force at great distances from the homeland, requiring large numbers

of support troops and fewer combat troops, while likely adversaries will fight much closer to home with shorter lines of communication and a higher tooth-to-tail ratio. U.S. tolerance for casualties must also be far lower than that of our opponents—a very real constraint.

Historical examples of major theater war in the modern era similarly portray a need for robust land forces. In the Korean War, U.S. forces totaled three corps with nine divisions; in Vietnam, three corps with ten divisions; and in the 1991 Gulf War, three corps with nine divisions. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israeli forces totaled two corps (“fronts”) with eight divisions; in the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, eight divisions under three “sector” commands. In all U.S. conflicts, many allied units also participated.¹⁷ Each of these single major theater wars (MTWs) saw a crushing superiority in the air by the U.S. and Israeli air forces, but nonetheless required ground forces in numbers almost as large as the entire current U.S. Army.

The U.S. Army and Marine Corps can, of course, fight outnumbered and win. The quality and training of U.S. land forces is among the best in the world, while U.S. technology, strategic intelligence systems and air- and seapower mean the joint force can contend with far larger land forces and prevail. Still, these numbers are sobering. At some point force sizing begins to matter very much. Each scenario will be different, but an accurate estimate for the ground force needed to fight and win two major theater wars simultaneously (based on historical examples and the size of likely adversaries), is 12 Army and two Marine divisions of three maneuver brigades/regiments each, with an appropriate number of operational—corps or Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF)—headquarters and support units. As a “force sizing construct,” this equates to seven divisions and two operational headquarters per MTW. For the Army, this means an endstrength of approximately 540,000.

By way of contrast, the Army is currently mandated to downsize to 420,000 and the Marine Corps to 180,000, yielding a land force of some ten Army and two and two-thirds Marine divisions and four deployable corps or MEF headquarters.¹⁸ At this level of manning most Army divisions will not be full-strength. (Expanding the Army is always an option but cannot be done realistically in short time frames.) The Army also lacks a readily available pool of combat replacements, has lost much of its artillery and armor communities and—due to the massive reductions that followed the end of the Cold War—finds itself heavily reliant on civilian contractors for much of its logistical support, a parlous liability in high-intensity warfare. This force is well short of what would be required to fight two MTWs at once.¹⁹

Challenges to Fielding Adequate Landpower

The foregoing suggests that General Colin Powell and General Eric Shinseki, both Army four-stars, were correct when they opined, a decade apart, that post-Cold War U.S. strategic commitments required an active Army of 12 fully manned divisions.²⁰ Though not a massive increase, since the drawdown of the mid-1990s this has been deemed “undoable.” Why?

The answer lies principally at the nexus between Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition programs and electoral politics. Since the Vietnam War at least, system procurement costs have soared, far outstripping the rate of inflation. Modern ships and aircraft are fantastically expensive and complex, consuming most of the DoD acquisition budget.²¹ Defense industry has consolidated into a few giants, driving out competition and outsourcing across dozens of congressional districts to lock in political support. Unneeded bases around the country also consume budget share but cannot be closed due to congressional opposition. The Army fares poorly in this competition because its programs cost far less than jets and warships, are

typically not spread across the country and are correspondingly less attractive when bidding for congressional support.²²

Rising personnel costs since 9/11 also placed the manpower-intensive Army squarely in the budget crosshairs once Iraq and Afghanistan wound down and sequestration hit through the Budget Control Act. Manpower costs, and in particular health care costs, now account for approximately one-third of DoD's total budget.²³ Some of the increase is related to hazardous duty, family separation and other special pays associated with the global war on terrorism, as well as generous family care services provided for junior enlisted servicemembers who, a generation ago, were overwhelmingly not "married with children." Pay raises that exceeded the rate of inflation also contribute heavily. But the most serious cost driver is military health care.²⁴ Even so, as recently as 2012 the military personnel account in the defense budget stood at 23.3 percent, compared to 25.4 percent in 2001, and well below 1991, when it stood at 31.8 percent.²⁵ According to White House and DoD public documents, the overall defense budget grew more than the personnel account from 2000 through 2012.²⁶ This suggests that while manpower costs are a key consideration, and controlling them is imperative, the choice is far from "either/or." Personnel costs are spread across all services, yet steep manpower cuts are being imposed only on the Army. Disproportionate cuts in Army forces—already the weakest tool in America's strategic arsenal—to preserve expensive procurement programs of questionable value deserve a hard second look.

Resourcing a 12-division Army with its supporting infrastructure would mean reallocating defense dollars toward more strategically relevant priorities and away from others. One way to calculate cost is to divide the Army's base budget (\$125 billion in 2014) by the number of its active divisions, yielding a figure of \$12.5 billion per division. However, this figure overstates the case, as the portion of the Army budget devoted to supporting—among others—the Army National Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers with its thousands of civilian construction projects and much of the Army's institutional base would be unaffected either way by adding two divisions. Also, Army reserve stocks of tanks, infantry carriers, tactical vehicles, helicopters, artillery howitzers and other materiel are ample to equip new divisions. The actual cost of fielding an additional Army heavy division is closer to \$6–8 billion per year.²⁷ This represents slightly more than 2 percent of DoD's current Total Obligational Authority. Given the huge sums programmed for new planes and ships, a 12-division Army is great value for the taxpayer, more strategically relevant and well within the logic of a \$500 billion defense budget.

How likely is it that the United States would find itself in two wars at once? Recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan is illustrative. The United States also maintained large, MTW-sized ground forces in Europe (more than eight divisions), even at the height of the Korean and Vietnam wars, from strategic necessity. Without them, NATO stood small chance against the Soviets. Critics may deride such thinking as "Cold War," but history teaches a different lesson. We sometimes hear that the days of state-on-state conflict are over. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we see in Ukraine today.

Facing a "two-war" requirement is also more likely the weaker we are. There is no crystal ball, but simultaneous conflicts in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region, or the Middle East and Europe, are well within the realm of possibility. Here deterrence is a huge consideration. Deterrence in the nuclear realm is relatively simple, because the pain that can be inflicted and the price of miscalculation are so high. Conventional deterrence is much more complicated, involving questions of size, capability, intent, force projection, theater logistics, alliances

and a host of others.²⁸ A common perception is that U.S. ground forces are worn out, exhausted and focused on getting smaller, none of which enhances deterrence. A strong, viable ground force yields important political dividends, reassuring allies and partners and making conflict less likely. When conflict does occur, a full-strength, rapidly-deployable force of 12 Army and two Marine divisions is adequate to fight and win in two separate major contingencies as the land component of the joint force.²⁹ This force is also better postured to cope with an MTW that persists beyond six months (as historically most have), providing a pool of fresh divisions that can be rotated in, as well as multiple smaller contingencies such as stability or humanitarian relief operations.³⁰ Should either conflict persist beyond 12 months, the nation's strategic reserve in the form of the National Guard (eight divisions) can be brought into play. Should requirements exceed that, the National Command Authority and Congress may direct full mobilization and a return to the draft.

The foregoing is by no means a call for strategic primacy for land forces. Airpower must and will remain the crown jewel of America's military establishment, and as a maritime nation and the guarantor of the global commons, U.S. seapower is essential to the common defense and to alliance structures. Yet landpower deserves an equal place. This strategic balance is all-important. Without it, deterrence falters, options are diminished and global reach limited. In times of peace there is a high propensity to "accept risk" with land forces, as we see now with dramatic reductions in the size of the Army, to bring down defense spending while still protecting congressionally supported acquisition programs.³¹

Continued support for hyper-expensive aircraft and warships in times of resource scarcity highlights the fact that, perhaps inescapably for the political appointees and civil servants who produced it, real strategy is not at the heart of the QDR.³² Even as defense spending drops precipitously, spending on politically protected programs goes forward, starving the ground force of resources and driving Army endstrength to pre-World War II lows. This is not a new phenomenon, as the Army has seen every major acquisition program for the past 30 years cancelled.³³ Its major combat systems, conceived in the 1970s and fielded in the 1980s, have no follow-ons; they will continue as the backbone of the ground force for decades to come. Current planning will reduce the Army from five to three heavy divisions (light divisions are far cheaper) and place the majority of the active Army's ten divisions in lower states of readiness.³⁴ Where the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps are by far the strongest in the world, projections will yield an active Army capable of fighting one major regional contingency, with months needed to generate enough forces to fight a second.³⁵

Decades of experience in many conflicts have shown that, while air and naval forces are indispensable to success, ground forces remain necessary to seize, hold and control the land and the populations and resources found there.³⁶ To overawe U.S. adversaries, or to prevail decisively should deterrence fail, the United States needs a land force as strong as its air and naval brethren. Defense experts may point out that the political trends run strongly in the opposite direction, and they are right. But as we have seen, the financial resources to realize a truly balanced joint force are there, if the political will can be found to be genuinely strategic. A quick glance at today's strategic environment—with chaos in the Middle East, a resurgent Russia on NATO's doorstep and a rising China—show clearly that now is not the time to accept high risk. Far better to be prudent, responsible and safe. That means a 12-division active Army.

Endnotes

- ¹ William J. Perry and John P. Abizaid, Coauthors, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense for the Future: The National Defense Panel Review of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 31 July 2014), http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Ensuring-a-Strong-U.S.-Defense-for-the-Future-NDP-Review-of-the-QDR_0.pdf; hereafter referred to as NDP Review.
- ² The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>.
- ³ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 4 March 2014), http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf.
- ⁴ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, February 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf.
- ⁵ Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel made clear in a 24 February 2014 press conference (<http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1831>) that with the current budget, “this force would be capable of decisively defeating aggression in one major combat theater—as it must be—while also defending the homeland and supporting air and naval forces engaged in another theater against an adversary.” Here the admission that the United States lacks the capacity to fight two land wars is explicit.
- ⁶ Michael O’Hanlon, *Budgeting for Hard Power: Defense and Security Spending Under Barack Obama* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2009), p. 24.
- ⁷ “It falls to the dominant state to create the conditions under which economic interdependence can take hold (by providing security, rules of the game and a reserve currency, and by acting as the global economy’s banker and lender of last resort). Without a dominant power to perform these tasks, economic interdependence does not happen. Indeed, free trade and interdependence have occurred in the modern international system only during the hegemonies of Victorian Britain and postwar America.” Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the 21st Century,” *World Policy Journal*, November 1998, p. 15.
- ⁸ “[T]he U.S. military must have the capability and capacity to deter or stop aggression in multiple theaters—not just one—even when engaged in a large-scale war.” *NDP Review*, p. 2.
- ⁹ Iraq and Afghanistan severely stressed the Marine Corps as well, but Marine units typically deployed for seven months and were generally able to retain a 2:1 deployment cycle (i.e., home for 14 months for every seven deployed).
- ¹⁰ Admiral Mike Mullen, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, 11 December 2007. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates echoed this view in his memoirs: “With the surge in Iraq and 160,000 troops there, the Army and Marine Corps didn’t have combat capability to spare. My intent upon becoming secretary had been to give our commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan everything they needed to be successful; I realized on this initial visit to Afghanistan I couldn’t deliver in both places at once.” Robert M. Gates, *Duty* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2012), p. 200.
- ¹¹ Large National Guard combat forces, up to 28 combat brigades, exist in the force but require lengthy mobilization and would not be available to participate in a near-term crisis. “No large [reserve component] brigade combat teams (BCTs) or combat aviation brigades have deployed as full brigades in the first year of a global contingency in more than 50 years.” Joshua Klimas et al., *Assessing the Army’s Active–Reserve Component Force Mix* (Arlington, VA: RAND, 20 October 2013), p. 2. Their sustained use also raises political questions which, in all but the most serious scenarios, are problematic. For Iraq and Afghanistan, the Department of Defense adopted a “1:5” rule for National Guard brigades, meaning that after one 12-month deployment, each would be “fenced” for the next five years.

- ¹² With 180,000 U.S. and coalition ground troops, Multinational Forces–Iraq (MNF-I) fielded a strong presence in only a handful of Iraq’s 18 provinces. In Afghanistan (a country with 215,000 more kilometers of surface area than Iraq), 130,000 U.S. and coalition troops could provide moderate coverage in the east and south and only modest presence in the quieter north and west. In contrast, coalition forces in the Gulf War totaled 956,600, of which 73 percent or 699,000 were American.
- ¹³ American dominance in air- and seapower is impressive. The U.S. fighter and bomber inventory in all services totals 2,643, a crushing superiority over China (1,089) and Russia (1,393); both would likely fight without allies. Ready reserves add another 720 combat aircraft to the U.S. total. The U.S. Navy operates ten fleet carriers, all nuclear powered; no other country has even one (the French *Charles de Gaulle*, with a displacement of 37,000 tons, is far smaller than U.S. fleet carriers with displacements above 100,000). The United States has 58 nuclear-powered attack and cruise missile submarines—again, more than the rest of the world combined. Eighty Aegis-equipped surface combatants carry roughly 8,000 vertical-launch missile cells, outmatching the next 20 largest navies. All told, the displacement of the U.S. battle fleet exceeds that of the next 13 navies combined, of which 11 are allies or partners. See Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’ prepared remarks to the Navy League, National Harbor, MD, 3 May 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1460>; and *The Military Balance* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 2014).
- ¹⁴ “Senior decisionmakers across five administrations, Republican and Democrat, have been unable to avoid the reality that, in a world of continuing globalization and growing political and military uncertainty, the United States needs a military that is large enough and has a sufficient range of capabilities to cover multiple major military contingencies in overlapping time frames.” Daniel Goure, “The Measure of a Superpower: A Two Major Regional Contingency Military for the 21st Century,” *Heritage Foundation Special Report No. 128*, 25 January 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/01/the-measure-of-superpower-a-two-major-regional-contingency-military-for-21-century>.
- ¹⁵ United States Marine Corps (USMC) three-star operational headquarters are considered corps headquarters equivalents and division totals include USMC divisions, which are larger than Army divisions but with fewer tanks and artillery systems (a factor largely offset by the superb close air support organic to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, or MAGTF). U.S. corps also include large artillery, aviation, logistical and other support units.
- ¹⁶ U.S. reserve component forces will also come into play for extended conflicts, but not as quickly. See *The Military Balance*, 2014.
- ¹⁷ Better technology does not invalidate these historical examples because the ability of land forces to “seize and hold ground”—i.e., occupy terrain—is as dependent on troop strength as on weapons technology.
- ¹⁸ DoD, *QDR 2014*, p. ix. This force includes the Army’s III Corps (1st Cavalry Division, 1st Armored Division, 1st Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Division) and XVIII Airborne Corps (82d Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division [Air Assault], 10th Mountain Division, 3d Infantry Division) plus the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii and the 2d Infantry Division in Korea. I Corps headquarters, based in Washington state, is manned at 50 percent strength, with the remainder in the reserve component. The U.S. Marine Corps has two three-star operational headquarters, I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and II MEF, each with an associated Marine division, air wing and logistics command. The USMC III Marine Expeditionary Force headquarters and III Marine Division are partially manned and would likely not participate in large-scale conflicts inside a planning horizon of six months or so. The USMC has no operational headquarters above the MEF. The U.S. Army has two field army headquarters (Eighth Army in Korea and Third Army, oriented on the Middle East), which can command two or more corps.
- ¹⁹ Goure argues that ten Army divisions are sufficient to fight two major regional contingencies, a conclusion at odds with U.S. experience from 1950 through 2010.

- ²⁰ General Powell as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs made this “Base Force” recommendation as part of the George H.W. Bush administration’s post-Cold War strategic review in the early 1990s, while General Shinseki, as outgoing Army Chief of Staff in 2003, declared in his final missive to the force “beware a twelve-division strategy and a ten-division Army.”
- ²¹ “The Defense Department plans to spend more than \$54 billion on major weapons systems in fiscal 2015 . . . 70 percent [will] go toward aircraft and maritime systems, from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the P-8A Poseidon naval patrol plane, to the *Virginia*-class submarine and *Aegis*-class destroyer. Just \$1 billion of the overall total, or about 2 percent—the lowest percentage of any category for acquisition programs—would go toward ground systems.” Matthew Cox, “Army’s Acquisition Strategy Stuck in Reagan Era,” *Military.com*, 14 March 2014, <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/03/14/armys-acquisition-strategy-stuck-in-reagan-era.html>.
- ²² For example, for the price of a single B-2 bomber, the U.S. Army could equip its entire planned armor force with new M1A2 main battle tanks. No Army program is included in the top ten acquisition programs; the first to appear is the UH-60M helicopter program, which ranks fifteenth. Todd Harrison and Jacob Cohn, “FY2015 Weapons Systems Factbook,” *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, 4 September 2014, p. 2, <http://csbaonline.org/publications/2014/09/fy2015-weapons-systems-factbook>.
- ²³ “Trends in Military Compensation,” Bipartisan Policy Center and American Enterprise Institute, July 2014, p. 7, <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/BPC%20AEI%20Military%20Compensation%20Chartbook%20July%202014.pdf>.
- ²⁴ Military pay has increased faster than the rate of inflation since 2000. See “Costs of Military Pay and Benefits,” Congressional Budget Office, November 2012, p. 3, http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/11-14-12-MilitaryComp_0.pdf.
- ²⁵ Table 6-11, DoD Outlays by Public Law Title, “National Defense Budget Estimates for FY2015,” Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Department of Defense, April 2014, p. 150, http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2015/FY15_Green_Book.pdf.
- ²⁶ “Report: DoD Emphasizing Personnel, But Overall Costs Up,” *Stars and Stripes*, 25 November 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/report-pentagon-emphasizing-personnel-but-budget-costs-up-across-the-board-1.254546>.
- ²⁷ According to senior civilian experts with the Department of the Army, the standard cost planning figure is \$1.2 billion for every 10,000 Soldiers for personnel costs and individual equipment. Planners assume that for a 15,000-Soldier division added to the operating force, an additional 5,000 will be needed in echelons above division and the institutional base, yielding personnel costs of \$1.8 billion per division.
- ²⁸ R.D. Hooker, Jr., and Ricky L. Waddell, “The Future of Conventional Deterrence,” *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1992.
- ²⁹ Traditionally, and for sound reasons, the Army has maintained a balance between its heavy and light divisions and should do so going forward as well. A predominantly light force, while cheaper, lacks the firepower, mobility and survivability to prevail in most high-intensity scenarios.
- ³⁰ Such as the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo.
- ³¹ “The QDR . . . takes risk in the capacity of each service but most notably in land forces.” General Martin Dempsey, “Chairman’s Assessment of the Quadrennial Defense Review,” *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, p. 61, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf.
- ³² The Joint Strike Fighter program, plagued with reliability and cost-overrun issues, has been described as “the most expensive program in history.” Nearly \$400 billion has been invested to date, with a planned life cycle program cost of \$1.5 trillion. David Francis, “Pentagon’s \$1.5 Trillion Jet

Punches Back,” *The Fiscal Times*, 31 October 2013, <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2013/10/31/Pentagon-s-15-Trillion-Jet-Punches-Back>. The Navy is currently fielding the Littoral Combat Ship, a \$37 billion program with similar teething problems, a next-generation fleet carrier (the USS *Gerald R. Ford*) at \$13 billion per copy and a new class of destroyer (USS *Elmo R. Zumwalt*) at \$3.5 billion per ship.

- ³³ Examples include the Crusader artillery system, the Army Future Combat Systems, the Ground Combat Vehicle, the Grizzly combat engineer vehicle, the Armored Gun System and the Comanche armed reconnaissance/light attack helicopter. The Stryker Combat Vehicle, fielded in the early 2000s, was issued to only six of the Army’s 45 combat brigades.
- ³⁴ Senior Army official interviewed for this study.
- ³⁵ DoD, *QDR 2014*, p. ix. Army staff experts estimate that mobilizing and deploying one complete National Guard division would take up to one year, highlighting the Guard’s traditional and imperative role as a strategic, but not operational, reserve.
- ³⁶ A key point is that the ability of ground forces to control terrain has not materially improved with technology. The range of their systems—artillery, mortars and the direct-fire systems found in armor and infantry units—have not advanced much since World War II. Multiple launch rocket systems and attack helicopters have far greater range but cannot physically occupy and control terrain. The common perception that an Army division is now far more capable than in the past is true in that its destructive power is far greater. But it can only control its immediate battlespace. World War I U.S. divisions, which numbered some 30,000, were far larger and, counterintuitively, arguably more capable in this regard.

