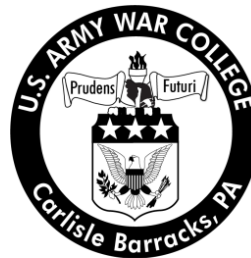


Strategy Research Project

A Pivot to “Everywhere Else:” Options for Today’s U.S. Army

by

Colonel Michael James Lawrence
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2014

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A

Approved for Public Release
Distribution is Unlimited

This manuscript is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 15-04-2014		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A Pivot to "Everywhere Else:" Options for Today's U.S. Army				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Michael James Lawrence United States Army				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Professor Robert Citino Department of Command, Leadership, & Management				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 6,847					
14. ABSTRACT After 13 years of fighting two counter-insurgency wars, the United States is entering another interwar period, and its Army must now justify its value and relevance at a time when the "biggest threat to U.S. national security" appears to be a run-away budget deficit. This Strategic Research Paper first identifies those lessons learned during previous interwar periods that are useful to Army leaders of today as they contemplate transformation in the 21st century. It then compares different arguments for how the emerging Army of the 2020's should re-organize. This paper advocates for a consolidation of existing army structure, a reorganization of its capabilities, and a transformation of its role in the joint force supporting U.S. national security interests. In sum, it offers a plan for best managing the Army's restructuring to a smaller, yet lethal, force while ensuring relevancy to the security environment of this interwar period and meeting the goals outlined in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review. In the end, it will advocate for a 380K army that is optimized on the "left end" of conflict while preserving "at-risk" armor capability and a strategic vision characterized by a pivot to everywhere the rest of the Joint Force is not.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Managed Drawdown, Macgregor Transformation Model (MTM), Range of Military Operations (ROMO)					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 37	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

A Pivot to “Everywhere Else:” Options for Today’s U.S. Army

by

Colonel Michael James Lawrence
United States Army

Professor Robert Citino
Department of Command, Leadership, & Management
Project Adviser

This manuscript is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the United States Government.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Abstract

Title: A Pivot to “Everywhere Else:” Options for Today’s U.S. Army
Report Date: 15 April 2014
Page Count: 37
Word Count: 6,847
Key Terms: Managed Drawdown, Macgregor Transformation Model (MTM),
Range of Military Operations (ROMO)
Classification: Unclassified

After 13 years of fighting two counter-insurgency wars, the United States is entering another interwar period, and its Army must now justify its value and relevance at a time when the “biggest threat to U.S. national security” appears to be a run-away budget deficit. This Strategic Research Paper first identifies those lessons learned during previous interwar periods that are useful to Army leaders of today as they contemplate transformation in the 21st century. It then compares different arguments for how the emerging Army of the 2020’s should re-organize. This paper advocates for a consolidation of existing army structure, a reorganization of its capabilities, and a transformation of its role in the joint force supporting U.S. national security interests. In sum, it offers a plan for best managing the Army’s restructuring to a smaller, yet lethal, force while ensuring relevancy to the security environment of this interwar period and meeting the goals outlined in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review. In the end, it will advocate for a 380K army that is optimized on the “left end” of conflict while preserving “at-risk” armor capability and a strategic vision characterized by a pivot to everywhere the rest of the Joint Force is not.

A Pivot to “Everywhere Else:” Options for Today’s U.S. Army

A future war of decision will occur in 10, 15, or 20 years. We will have to be ready to fight it. It will be different from our previous experiences in that we will be involved early. We will not have several years to organize, train, equip and deploy. The dysfunctional system we have will doom us to defeat, even if we theoretically win after exhausting ourselves and losing everything as Britain did in WW I.

—COL (R) Douglas A. Macgregor¹

The United States is entering another interwar period like those of the past, characterized by fiscal austerity, ambiguous threat environment, and an uncertain future. How the emerging Army of 2020 reorganizes, reforms, and rebuilds during this interwar period will determine victory or defeat in a future war certain to come in “10, 15, or 20 years.” This paper advocates for a consolidation of existing army structure, a reorganization of its capabilities, and a transformation of its role in the joint force supporting our national security interests. In sum, it offers a plan for preserving “at-risk” capabilities during a time of austerity in a much smaller army, while remaining relevant to the nation’s military strategy during the current interwar period. Lastly, it proposes potential areas of innovation where the Army can develop and maintain competitive advantage in a future war that no one sees coming on an unexpected battlefield where no one today is prepared to fight.

Lessons from Past Interwar Periods

Even as our forces prevail in today’s missions, we have the opportunity – and the responsibility – to look ahead to the force that we are going to need in the future...Moreover, we have to remember the lessons of history. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes that have been made in the past - - after World War II, after Vietnam - - when our military policy was left ill prepared for the future. We need a start – we need a smart, strategic set of priorities.²

Throughout its history, the United States failed to properly prepare for the next conflict during interwar periods.³ It is therefore the premise of this paper that history will repeat itself unless decision makers and Army leaders make bold, risky, but smart strategic choices during this interwar period. Identifying these choices, making recommendations, and offering a plan for implementing these recommendations is the purpose of this paper. So as not to repeat the mistakes of the past, this paper will begin by identifying lessons learned during previous interwar experiences that are useful to Army leaders as they contemplate transformation in the 21st century with all its uncertainties.

First Lesson

First, the strategic environment in the period after World War I was similar to today in that it was difficult to imagine an immediate conventional military threat to the continental United States. Therefore, the United States in 1919 reduced defense spending from 17 percent of GDP to less than 2 percent in 1922 and cut the Army from a war time high of 3.5 million soldiers to 146,000.⁴ Like the period after World War I, the United States also lacks a peer competitor, but unlike it, the withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan will not be accompanied by peace.⁵ In fact, all previous periods of downsizing in the 20th century occurred after conflict and in times of relative peace – the end of both World Wars, the end of the Korean War, the end of the Vietnam War, and then the end of the Cold War.⁶ Yet, this time the current security environment remains as violent, uncertain, complicated and ambiguous (VUCA), as ever with conflicts both “hot” and “cold” in many parts of the world like the Korean peninsula or the Russian Federation in the Crimea to new conflagrations in places like Syria and Mali.⁷ The wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan were arguably nation--building ventures of choice. Today’s

threats are asymmetric in nature and the United States is a global power, unlike the United States after World War I which chose isolationism to justify its retrenchment. Conventional threats do exist, but they are mostly regional in nature and do not pose a direct or existential danger to this country. Despite the violent nature of the world, the United States in 2014 will still drastically downsize its Army from a war time high of 570,000 to no more than 450,000⁸, partly because current guidance indicates the sizing of forces will no longer consider large-scale or long term counterinsurgency operations.⁹

The United States downsized its Army after every major conflict, but always “cut” too much, leaving the country vulnerable overseas and its military unprepared at the onset of the next conflict.¹⁰ It was this deliberate downsizing, lack of preparation, false assumptions about the security environment, and a misread of emerging threats that resulted in many failed “first battles” at places like Kasserine Pass in 1943¹¹, Task Force Smith in 1950¹², and finally the World Trade Center in 2001. The first lesson then, is that the United States was often wrong during previous interwar periods when assessing the future strategic environment¹³ and preparing its military for emerging threats. The question thus becomes, what size Army and what kind of capabilities are required to meet today’s security threats? Further, which sort of transformation will be necessary to meet emerging threats in the future?

Second Lesson

All previous interwar periods occurred during periods of austerity. Certainly the current fiscal position of the United States is fragile and every aspect of its economy suffers because of crushing debt. But, does this mean that the economic challenges the United States faces today are greater than the challenges of the Great Depression era in the decade before World War II? Our forebears would laugh at the notion that

sequestration might prevent learning activities. The military of the 1930s figured out everything from the uses for the new aircraft carrier to the development of the Army Air Corps. They understood at the time that learning and conceptualizing did not require a full suite of techno-gadgets. For example, the Marines conceived amphibious warfare before they even had functional amphibious landing craft, while automobiles with the word “tank” written on the side sufficed for mechanized studies in the Army.¹⁴

Technological innovation along the lines of a Revolution of Military Affairs (RMAs) can and will still occur during these periods of austerity. The second lesson then is that shrinking budgets are no excuse for not investing heavily in research, development, experimentation, wargaming and exercises to question old operating concepts, develop new ones, and identify the next RMA for implementation.

Third Lesson

Successful transformation occurred when U.S. policy makers and Army leaders made tough but smart strategic choices during interwar periods. In the period immediately after the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army was close to collapse. Widespread opposition to the war, shrinking defense dollars, massive reduction in forces, ill-discipline in the ranks, rampant drug use, and a broken non-commissioned officer corps were seemingly insurmountable challenges. In spite of these problems, both policy makers and Army leaders made bold and risky-strategic decisions in the early 1970's that transformed the service by the 1980's and produced arguably the finest military in world history.¹⁵

So, which experiences from this period are useful to Army leaders today as they identify strategic choices and make decisions that will certainly impact the service for years to come?

1. Take Risk

Strategic decisions involve risk. The Cold War era Army had a clear and discernable enemy in the form of the Soviet Union. Yet, the Army embraced the innovation of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in the early 1970's with the full recognition that it might take years to ready a force capable enough of defeating another superpower in a total war. The thinking of the time was that the United States would be vulnerable until such time as the AVF was functional; and of course, success was not guaranteed. Yet by the early 1990s, decisive victories in both the Cold War and Operation Desert Storm had convincingly validated the AVF. The AVF resurrected the Army in general and more importantly, it professionalized the non-commissioned officer corps.¹⁶ As a result of the AVF, U.S. military forces today are unmatched both globally and historically in their lethality, speed, and agility.

2. Be Bold

Strategic decisions must be bold. At a time of austerity in the 1970's, Army leadership developed, against strong opposition, the "big five" weapons that still sustain the Army today: the M1 tank, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the Blackhawk and Apache helicopters, and the Patriot Missile. Bold also meant going "big," in that reequipping was not confined to the Big Five, but affected every facet of service life, from redesigned barracks, training and communications gear to new uniforms, and even a replacement for the "steel pot" helmet worn by soldiers since World War II.¹⁷

3. Implement Reform

Strategic decisions involve some form of change or reform. Post-Vietnam Army leaders had either come into the service during World War II, or shortly thereafter. Consequently, they understood the key role of Army schooling and training in rapidly

mobilizing large and effective Armies in both World War II and the Korean War. Therefore, they focused on the role of military education, on reorganizing the training establishment, and on doctrine.¹⁸

First, the most significant post-Vietnam reorganization occurred with the establishment of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). It was commanded by a four-star general who became a powerful spokesman for affecting change in the army. TRADOC was instrumental in establishing a whole system of schools for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) that is credited, along with the AVF, for professionalizing both the NCO corps as well as drastically improving the quality of the service. TRADOC also established the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Ft Leavenworth, which along with the Command and General Staff College became the center for the study of the operational arts.¹⁹

Next, the Army built its first combat training center at Ft. Irwin in the high desert of California, the National Training Center (NTC). Here, every brigade sized unit rotated through to fight a mock battle against an elite opposing force employing Soviet tactics and equipment. The NTC helped to refine the combat capabilities that are the Army's hallmark as the finest fighting force in the world. It was so successful that the Army established two more combat training centers, with one designed to train light forces while the other was established in Germany primarily to train maneuver forces in Europe as NTC was doing stateside. With its training bases established, the Army first reformed its operational concepts, then tested those concepts through its training centers. It refined what didn't work, and solidified in doctrine what proved successful in live training scenarios. This doctrine became known as Air Land Battle and was a

doctrinal game-changer for the Army, driving joint service research as well as weapons development with supporting equipment procurement for decades.²⁰

Break with the Past

In sum, Army leaders in the 1970's and 80's broke the cycle of failed interwar preparation for war. Transformation can occur during interwar periods of austerity, but only if decision makers and Army leaders make bold strategic decisions to invest in innovations, reorganize and transform, and restructure as well as downsize. Therefore, lessons of the past inform decisions of the present, but knowing this fact is not enough. What is required is a plan to mitigate risk of uncertainty while the Army implements change.

Plan for Austerity

I believe the single, biggest threat to our national security is our debt, so I also believe we have every responsibility to help eliminate that threat. We must, and will, do our part. Yet, as achievable as I believe these cuts to be, they will also be difficult to identify and to execute – more difficult, I think, than they would be for you.²¹

The conditions for a major war with any power or group of powers do not exist now and will not for at least 10, most likely 15 or 20 years. The reason is obvious. The entire globe is laboring under crushing debt, and that debt makes it impossible for any large powers to wage war against each other.²² How long it takes for another peer competitor or conventional threat to arise and a war of decision to occur is directly related to everyone's ability to resolve their respective debts. The greatest national security challenge is then restructuring the debt so our economy can grow. Only then will the country have the industrial base to rebuild future capacity and field new capabilities when this interwar period ends.

There have been proposals introduced in Congress in the last several years that would balance the budget and eliminate the debt within ten years.²³ The importance of this to Army leaders is one of risk mitigation and future planning. Therefore, the Army should plan to mitigate national security risks with a much smaller, less capable force while Congress and the American people work to resolve the “biggest threat to our national security – its debt.” Today’s choices will be a reflection of how much Army the nation can afford. But, more importantly, those same choices will determine how well the nation and its military is prepared when the next war begins.

Strategic Options

Last year, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directed a Strategic Choices and Management Review (SCMR) to determine the impact of further budget reductions on the Department of Defense and to develop options to deal with those corresponding cuts. It was also intended to inform the ongoing QDR.

The review examined two strategic approaches to reducing force structure and modernization that will inform planning for sequester-level cuts. Basic tradeoff is between capacity measured in the number of brigades and capability which is our ability to modernize weapon systems and to maintain our military’s technological edge.²⁴

2013 SCMR Options

The SCMR determined that the Army could reduce end strength to between 420,000 and 450,000 in the active force without impact or realignment of mission. It then generated two options or approaches. Option One trades away size for high-end capability further shrinking the active Army to between 380,000 to 450,000 soldiers. This choice results in a smaller force that can go fewer places and do fewer things, but would maintain technological dominance over time. Option Two trades away high-end capability for size. This choice results in a force structure exactly as it was before OIF at

approximately 490,000 and with little money left to maintain equipment as well as readiness.²⁵

2014 QDR Splits Difference

The 2014 QDR published just six months after the SCMR attempted to split the difference between the two options with “1+1” guidance to the service chiefs for force sizing and recommendation to Congress for a reduction in force structure between 440,000 and 450,000.²⁶ It also advocated for a budget resolution to prevent further sequestration cuts planned for 2016 that would further reduce Manning to 420,000.²⁷

“1+1” Force Planning Constructs

Force planning constructs have changed over the years. Constructs used in the 1990’s to justify the current size of the Army were based on a 2x Major Regional Conflict (MRC) scenarios; in other words, the joint force required the size or capacity as well as the war-capability to fight two Desert Storm like wars simultaneously.²⁸ Current planning construct is a “1+1” or 1 MRC with the ability to simultaneously deny the objectives of an aggressor in another region. So, where a “2MRC” planning construct requires an Army force structure of 490,000 and a “1+2” force structure equates to an Army of 425,000 to 450,000,²⁹ a “1+1” construct requires a force of approximately 380,000 soldiers. Obviously, the Army is reluctant to embrace such a reduction in force. The question is. Why does it object, when analysis has shown that a much smaller Army could meet mission requirements within the Joint Force in today’s security environment?

Short Term Risk

Based on interviews with Army war planners, this author has determined that the Army’s resistance to embrace SCMR Option One is based on its concerns for

maintaining operational flexibility during the interwar period to manage uncertainty and regenerating an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) structure if and when the interwar period ends.³⁰ Therefore, any large reduction in force also now requires a plan for regenerating capacity later.

Graduated, but Bold Reductions in Force

Although the Army knows well the lessons of the past interwar periods and does not want to repeat the cycle of failed first battles, it is in fact repeating failed Army efforts during interwar periods by not implementing the kind of bold strategic, although risky, decisions Army leaders made in the 1970's that resulted in the Army we have today.

Beginning with the 2014 QDR published just last month (March 2014), Army leaders must immediately shape a force towards one that is smaller than at any time since World War II. Additionally, the Army must weigh future sequestration decisions that could force continued reductions. If Congress fails to rein in the budget in the years after 2016, it is likely to expect even more cuts to force structure. To best handle this uncertainty, the Army should manage reduction of an active duty force structure for this interwar period with an end strength decreasing to 420,000 soldiers by 2016 and further shrinking to 380,000 by 2020. The savings accrued from reducing the force from its wartime high of 570,000 to 380,000 can then be used to maintain a high state of readiness and invest in future capability during this interwar period. Therefore, pursuing an option that neither optimizes capacity nor boldly invests in capability, risks the Army's competitive advantage on future battlefields.

In sum, the Army is overly concerned with short term risk and will forfeit long term gain unless it develops a risk mitigation strategy during this period of austerity.³¹ The Army can reorganize and restructure around a force sized at 380,000 soldiers without

increasing risk to national security interests overseas.³² SCMR Option One provides the best framework for addressing both short term and long term risks. This paper recommends that the Army choose Option One, with a plan to implement gradual reductions of force over five years to the low-end of force sizing as determined in both the SCMR and outlined by force planning constructs.

Strategic Choices

A nation that does not prepare for all forms of war should then renounce the use of war in national policy. A people that does not prepare to fight should then be morally prepared to surrender. To fail to prepare soldiers and citizens for limited, bloody ground action, and then to engage in it, is folly verging on the criminal.³³

In order to manage short term risks for long term gain, the Army is confronted with three choices:

- Downsize both the active duty (A/C) and reserve component (R/C) Army to a smaller version of itself, and maintain R/C ready to deploy on short notice.³⁴
- Develop “expeditionary army (A/C)” with shift of maneuver (ie armored) warfighting capabilities to reserves and only mobilize for war when need arises.³⁵
- Transform army maneuver (ie armored) warfighting capability in the A/C and develop both A/C and R/C “niche” capabilities within the Joint Force.

The first option is the easiest of the three since it affects the least disruption to current planning, but implies the Army remains prepared for everything. The potential failure here is when resources and forces are spread so thin the effect is a “hollowing” of the force similar to what occurred in the 1970’s. The second option is actually a return to Army initiatives of the 1990’s that also led to the development of medium forces. It still permits the Army to retain a conventional base in the reserves that allows the

service to scale-up to large maneuver warfare, if required. It does save the Army money by shifting heavy, more expensive formations to the reserves, but risks redundancy throughout the joint force, particularly between the Marine Corps and the Army. Redundancy equates to wasted cost that the nation simply cannot afford, but also creates gaps in the security environment, when services unnecessarily overlap in places where one service is suitable.

The third option is best. It is reminiscent of the bold strategic decisions of the 1970's that initiated ground breaking reforms while also investing in modernization that resulted by the 1980's in the most powerful force the world had seen. The potential is there for an equally great joint transformation. Choice three not only facilitates the 2014 QDR directive to rebalance the joint force across the broad spectrum of conflict, but "flattens the curve" across the spectrum by eliminating redundant capacity. It also provides the joint force the greatest flexibility to re-organize for uncertainty in the future security environment, thereby eliminating security gaps. Finally, it requires development of joint strategic operating concepts that best posture the force for a transformation during this period of austerity.

Rebalance for a Broad Spectrum of Conflict³⁶

After more than twelve years of conflict and amid ongoing budget reductions, the Joint Force is currently out of balance...Although our forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale prolonged stability operations, we will preserve the expertise gained during [OIF and OEF]. We will also protect the ability to regenerate capabilities that might be needed to meet future demands.³⁷

A core theme of the FY 2014 QDR is one of "rebalance." The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dempsey, states that the Joint Force has focused on a single type of conflict for so long that it has lost readiness for the full spectrum of

potential conflict, and so a rebalance of capability to other types of conflict must occur.³⁸

Unfortunately, the likely outcome is a rebalance based primarily on cost and benefit analysis, leaving the services to argue which is the more affordable option.

Develop Framework for Rebalance

Unless an adequate analysis or framework for balancing capability across the spectrum of conflict is developed, then capability gaps will inevitably occur and the nation will fail to see or address certain threats before they form. With a revised definition, this paper proposes that the Joint Force “flatten” the spectrum of conflict and mitigate any security gaps with Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) as well as align organizational capability by mission.

Revise ROMO

Current framework for “spectrum of conflict” is defined as a range of military operations (ROMO). Joint Publications (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*, describes military operations as varied in scope, purpose, and conflict intensity across a range that extends from military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities to crisis response and limited contingency operations and, if necessary, to major operations and campaigns.³⁹

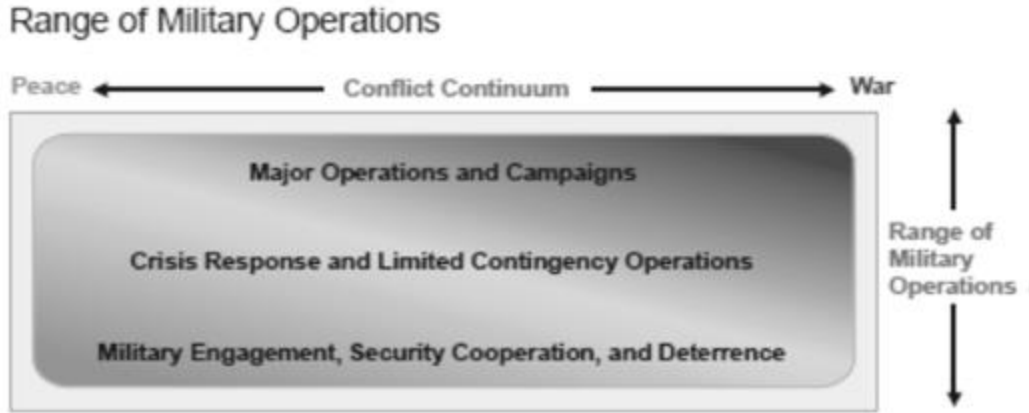


Figure 1:

The problem is that the ROMO only delineates military operations by scope, purpose, and conflict intensity. It fails to capture critical qualitative differences among COIN, hybrid threats, conventional military operations, and now operations against A2/AD threats. All of these operations require different capabilities, methods, and concepts of operations.⁴⁰ If the ROMO was redefined to include scale and sophistication of adversary capabilities, then the services could adequately clarify where the Joint Force must rebalance.

Include Sophistication in ROMO

A spectrum that varies in scale and sophistication of adversary capabilities better describes how various kinds of conflict affect U.S. forces.



Figure 2:⁴¹

For example, at the “low end” conflict we see irregular operations like counterinsurgency (COIN), counterterrorism (CT), and stability/support operations (SASO), while major combat operations (MCO), anti-access/area denial (A2/AD), and nuclear war (Nuke) on the “high end.” As one moves from the “low” toward the “high” end of the spectrum, the adversary’s capabilities increase in technological sophistication, training, and ability to scale up operations into larger organized coherent fighting formations.

Traditional War in the Middle

By this revised definition of military operations, what was once on the high-end of conflict is now in the middle. Traditional maneuver warfare against conventional militaries is no longer the most sophisticated challenge the Joint Force could face.⁴² The most sophisticated challenges are threats from adversaries that possess area access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities as well as intercontinental ballistic missiles, means to conduct cyber warfare, and the ability to weaponize chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear devices.

This revised spectrum is useful because it better articulates the notion that different methods, capabilities, and concepts of operations are necessary to counter adversaries who fall at various points along the spectrum. For example, the capabilities and approaches useful against conventional adversaries generally fall short in A2/AD environments. While tanks, helicopters, bombers, aircraft carriers, and satellites are qualitatively adequate for operations with a conventional adversary fighting traditional maneuver warfare, counter-A2/AD requires new weapons and new operating concepts like long range strike weapons as well as hardened bases more resilient to missile attack.⁴³

ABCTs in the Curve

Most U.S. Army capabilities occupy the middle part of the spectrum in traditional maneuver warfare where it has been historically strong. Those Army capabilities aligned in the middle of the spectrum are principally composed of Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCTs). SBCTs are also considered maneuver formations, but lack the heavy armor to fight traditional maneuver warfare. Therefore, SBCTs primarily operate with Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs) and Special Forces Groups in the middle to low end of the spectrum. Unfortunately, ABCT capabilities do not translate well across the spectrum towards the low end without a significant loss of maneuver proficiency in their primary mission capabilities.

DoD Optimizes on the Ends

The problem for the Army's armored brigades in the contemporary operating environment is that traditional maneuver warfare is now only a relatively small slice on the spectrum of conflict.⁴⁴ The threat environment favors hybrid threats in the middle to the left end of the spectrum or the high end of the spectrum where U.S. historical strengths are either neutralized or irrelevant. For the last twelve years, DoD has also converted armored capability at the middle of the spectrum to create more infantry-centric formations useful for the COIN fight in both OIF and OEF.⁴⁵

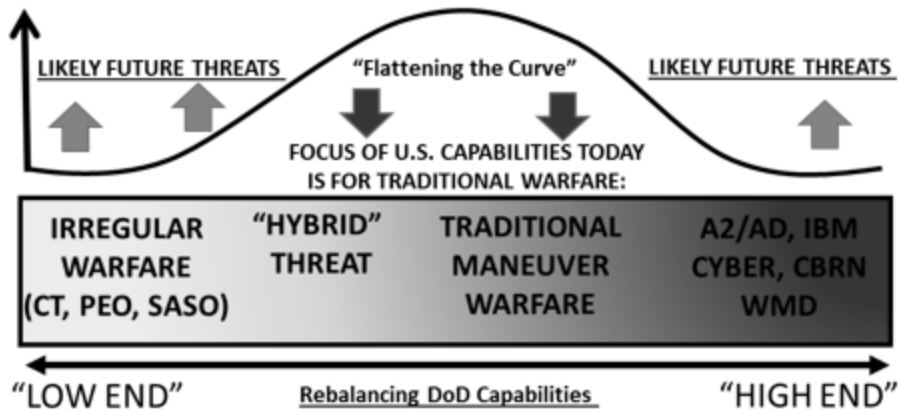


Figure 3: ⁴⁶

Based on threat assessments and QDR guidance, it appears that investments will continue on the left end even after U.S. forces finally depart Afghanistan in 2014. Additionally, DoD is prioritizing investments in the high end (A2/AD) on the spectrum as part of its “pivot to Asia,” which requires offsets in other areas of capability. The end result is an obvious “flattening of the curve” to rebalance towards the ends. The question, then, is where the Army re-invests itself on the spectrum of conflict: on the low end, both ends, or right-middle? Surviving the current fiscal crisis while preserving “at-risk” maneuver capabilities demands that the Army reshape capabilities for future very different from the kind of traditional war that will likely not reoccur.

Flattening the Curve

Army has a total of sixteen ABCTs with eight in the active component and another eight in the National Guard. The Army can choose from three different courses of action (COA) in order to “flatten the curve” and facilitate DoD investment at the ends of the spectrum:

- COA1: Simply disband Active Component ABCTs and mothball the capability with all its equipment. Retain National Guard ABCTs.

- COA2: Deactivate at least half of all maneuver (ie armored) warfighting capabilities in both the active component and National Guard component.
- COA3 (Preferred): Reorganize 8x Active Component Army ABCTs into 2x Joint Combat Groups composed of both Marines and Soldiers. Convert half of National Guard ABCTs into IBCTs.

Of the three courses of action, COA 1 provides the greatest savings that DoD could quickly reinvest on the high end, readiness, or research and development of innovative technologies. A potential failure, however, is a misreading of the security environment, particularly when clear warfighting strength provides a deterrent to would-be adversaries. COA2 provides some savings, but not really enough to pay back dividends in research and development over the long term. Deactivation of National Guard units is also politically impossible, so the only possible option is a conversion to IBCTs which equates to marginal savings since the largest overhead cost is in personnel. COA3 provides the greatest change opportunity which could serve to force transformation of U.S. landpower. Additionally, the Marine Corps would reciprocate an equal commitment to Joint Combat Groups as the Army, resulting in the elimination of armored formations above company in both services. Hence, the only heavy armored formations in the U.S. inventory would exist in these 4x Joint Combat Groups. Joint commitment in men and material would create a net savings greater than if the U.S. Army eliminated all of its active and reserve component ABCTs.

MacGregor Transformation Model (MTM)

Today's international security order is an order with the United States at its center, but an order built without ground forces is an order whose foundation rests on sand. American strategic dominance will erode quickly without an Army organized, trained, and ready to operate in a new

strategic environment where traditional service distinctions are increasingly meaningless.⁴⁷

COL (R) Douglas MacGregor published Breaking the Phalanx: a New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century in 1997, and described a military transformation that would result in a smaller, less expensive force which would produce greater combat capability than the larger formations that exist in the military today. Those recommendations were rejected then as too far radical, and the Army opted instead for incremental changes that has left it little changed from the version of itself that won Desert Storm. MacGregor then updated his “MacGregor Transformation Model” (MTM) in order to incorporate the lessons of both Iraq and Afghanistan in his next book, Transformation under Fire. His recommendations are straightforward and simple to understand, but also address all the intangibles like culture, training and leadership. More importantly, his solutions utilize existing structure, equipment, and strategic conditions to affect reform. Whether anyone wants to downsize the Army or not, massive reductions are coming. The question is how those cuts are to be made. MTM offers the best blueprint for “flattening the curve,” preserving “at-risk” armor capability, and transforming old organizations into new ones designed to defeat emerging 21st century threats.

COA3: Build an Elite, but small, Armored Corps

The core of MTM is a reorganization of Army and Marine forces into “Combat Groups” that would replace the current brigade-centric system for organizing forces now. These Combat Groups would include the major elements of fighting forces like maneuver, strike, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and sustainment units that are self-sustaining, but can “punch above their weight.”⁴⁸

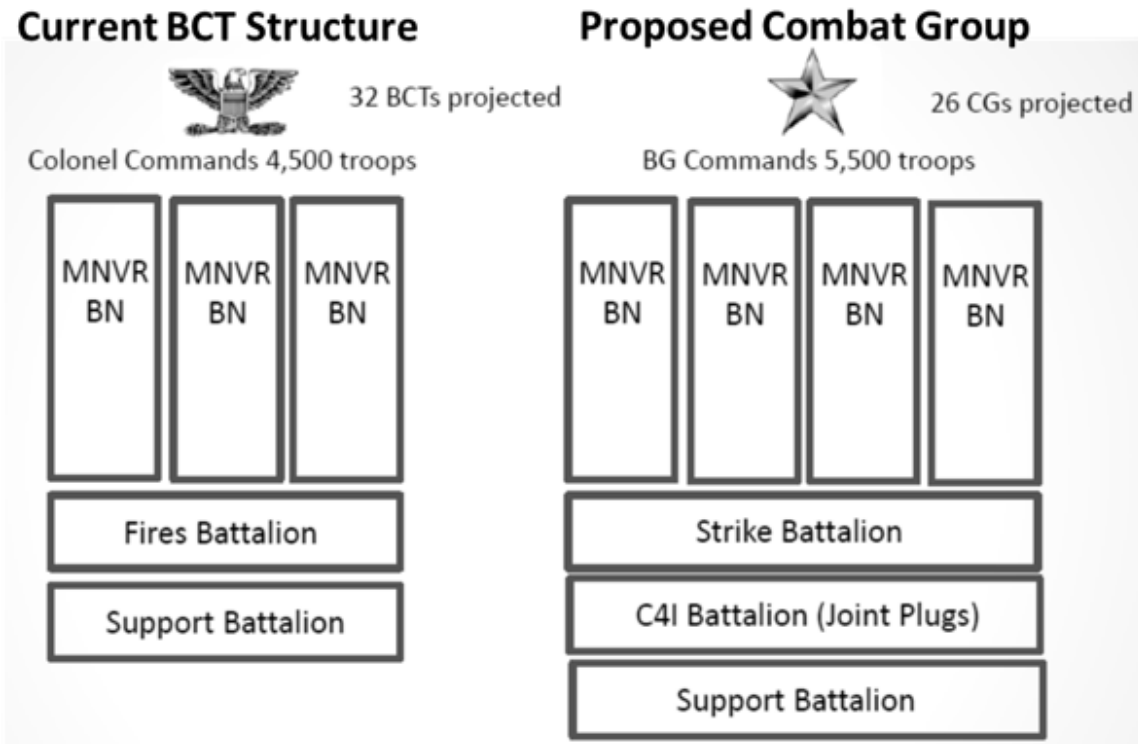


Figure 4: ⁴⁹

The organizational differences between MacGregor’s Combat Groups and the current Army brigade structure depicted above are obvious – more capability, more capacity, and commanded by more senior war fighters. Additionally, all heavy armor formations above the company level in both the Marine Corps and the U.S. Army are either consolidated into these four Joint Combat Groups, or disbanded to fund the transformation. The Marine Corps would serve as the base element for two of the Combat Groups and the Army the base for the other two. The formations are a mix of both Marines and Army soldiers specially selected from performance records, joint board process, and validated during exhaustive physical tryouts and mental exams. These four Joint Combat Groups would then become an elite, but sizeable 20,000 man armored fighting corps that will serve to effectively deter conventional war during this

interwar period, but also posture a smaller U.S. military for competitive advantage when the next war of decision begins.

In sum, just “flattening the curve” while still implementing the MTM will cut approximately 50,000 more soldiers from the Army inventory and roughly 25,000 Marines from the Corps. Based on MTM success, it could then be applied against the remainder of the Army and Marine Corps, restructuring both services for more effective application of military power while still increasing savings that could be reinvested towards innovation and readiness. Joint operating concepts and transformation also eliminates redundancy. More importantly, the U.S. military retains landpower capability to ensure readiness for the unexpected, as well as deterrence for an emboldened adversary.

Army “Niche” Capability – Hybrid Focused Ground Force

Having “flattened the curve” to fund a rebalance towards the ends of ROMO during this interwar period, it becomes ever more important for the Joint force to invest in capability with a “hybrid-focus” that could destroy enemy conventional forces and just as effectively influence populations in a COIN fight. The Army should advocate for their SBCTs as this hybrid ground force. To ensure that an SBCT can fight conventional forces effectively, it requires no less than one company of M1 tanks per SBCT with necessary maintenance and support structure. Bill payer for those M1 companies are all the ABCTs that the Army will otherwise disband. Every SBCT currently has one Anti-tank Guided Missile (ATGM) Stryker Company. The simple solution is to trade one ATGM company for one M1 tank company. The best tank killer is another tank.

Teaming armor capabilities with an SBCT enables that formation the flexibility to tailor task organization depending on mission requirements. If the SBCT principally

operates on the low-end of the spectrum fighting irregular warfare, then it task organizes a light infantry task force using the large number of dismounts organic to the organization. The further to the right-middle of the spectrum, the more capability the SBCT adds back to its task organization to ensure mission accomplishment.

In sum, the SBCT deploys enough force to over-match adversaries and mitigate the risk of uncertainty during this interwar period without wasteful and expensive excess. It also preserves “at-risk” armor capabilities within the operational force that would otherwise forfeit heavy armor capability during this time of austerity. And lastly, it provides a hybrid-focused capability unique to the Joint Force.

Army “Niche” Capability – Advisory Brigade Combat Teams

Maintaining U.S. global posture and presence to support stability, security, and prosperity will become more challenging – but perhaps even more essential – in an environment of constrained resources.⁵⁰

The Army is best suited within the Joint Force to “build security globally.”⁵¹ Since the end of World War II, it has been involved advising foreign forces and partners in Greece, China, Korea, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Columbia, Japan, and numerous other locations including Iraq as well as Afghanistan.⁵² During OIF and OEF, the Army task organized many of its BCTs as “Advise and Assist Brigades” or AABs and built partner capacity with great success in both those wars. Arguments at the time ran the gamut of developing a standing 20,000 man advisory brigade⁵³ to continue this AAB-type mission globally to committing conventional forces to war fighting missions⁵⁴ only while Special Forces focused on training foreign military forces. The Army clearly dominates the “left end” of the spectrum within the Joint Force characterized by irregular warfare and terrorism with its Special Forces. The question in this period of shrinking resources becomes what to do with the Army’s Infantry Brigade Combats that are highly

deployable, but lack organic armor protection to effectively fight hybrid threats and the firepower as well as mobility to fight conventional maneuver warfare.

In the range of options between Special Forces teams and AABs developed during OIF and OEF is another “bold decision” equivalent to the 1970’s decisions on deep changes in the Army’s makeup.⁵⁵ There are numerous options to include making IBCTs the secondary bill payer for investing in future innovations, but understand that the Army’s Special Forces primarily recruits from its light and airborne infantry units. Additionally, the 2014 QDR directs investment in Special Forces and joint optimization in irregular warfare. For this reason, the Army should heavily invest in IBCTs as its General Purpose Force (GPF) and optimize that investment in building partner capacity, advising foreign armies, and supporting Special Operations Forces (SOF) in its missions. How the Army organizes around that advisory mission is debatable and the end result will be one of experimentation.

The Army must continue to improve upon the lessons learned during the COIN fights of the last thirteen years. One of those lessons was increased inoperability between SOF and conventional forces. In order to secure those hard lessons learned in battle and best develop a solution to organizing its IBCTs around an advisory mission that can and predictably will last decades, the Army should allow Special Forces officers to compete for infantry battalion and brigade commands on centralized competitive boards. Conversely, infantry officers should be able to branch Special Forces (SF), command an SF team, and still return to the infantry for follow-on commands of infantry and headquarters units. This kind of cross-pollination within the officer and even non-commissioned officer corps will return an investment back to the Army in the form of

bold innovation through ideas. The body of junior leaders within each service already have the answers to the questions that decision makers are struggling with today, it's just a case that no one is asking for a solution that starts from the bottom-up.

Pivot to "Everywhere Else"

Rather than arguing against the current strategy or defending its budget share, the Army should counterattack by rethinking its fundamental purpose, what political scientist Samuel Huntington called a "strategic concept," or a description of how and when the service expects to protect the nation.⁵⁶

Beginning with the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance redirecting an "East Asia Pivot," the U.S. Army has struggled to defend relevancy in a part of the world that is really an air and maritime A2/AD challenge. There is a great deal of discussion over the Army's role in a pivot to East Asia. Some argue that the Army take an active role in AirSea Battle, even if in a supporting role to the other services. This author argues against a role more suited to the Marine Corps or, better yet, to allies in the region, principally because it is a redundant and inefficient use of military power.⁵⁷ In this era of austerity, the Army would be wise to invest its limited resources in research at the middle to low end of the spectrum to develop or innovate "niche" capability that no other service can contribute to the Joint Force. In sum, the best way the Army can support U.S. national interests is with a focus on missions and areas of the world where the Navy and Air Force are not focused - a "Pivot to Everywhere Else" but Asia.⁵⁸ A2/AD is only one mission for which the U.S. military must prepare, and Asia is only one area of many in the world where the United States has interests. While the Air Force and Navy overcommit on one specific threat and mission, the Army should focus on the more pressing and likely threats around the world during this interwar period.⁵⁹

Recommendations

The Secretary of the Army firmly believes: “The opportunity we have at this moment in time is to break with historic trends whereby budget cuts led to a diminished military might. The fact is, unlike in years past, we’ve been given a real chance to ‘get it right.’”⁶⁰ Again, it is a premise of this paper that history will repeat itself unless decision makers and Army leaders make bold, risky, but smart strategic choices during this interwar period of austerity. The following recommendations are a summary of those choices this paper advocates for above:

- Adopt a Pivot to “Everywhere Else” and stop competing with the other services in their own domains.
- Instead, develop a new and different strategic concept for an Army that is better sized, shaped and trained to build partner capacity over the next 10-15 years and win the next war of decision in 20 as a balanced Joint Force.
- Go big and bold with recommendations to cut force structure to 380,000 soldiers (SCMR Option One) in order to invest in future innovations.
- Build a joint standing war fighting force structured around the Macgregor Transformation Model (MTM). Specifically, re-organize A/C ABCTs into Joint Combat Groups with the Marine Corps.
- Optimize remaining force structure around irregular warfare while supporting the other services to win wars at sea, in the air, in space and cyberspace. Specifically, blend SF and IBCT formations allowing SF leaders to command infantry formations and infantry leaders service in SF formations.

- Mitigate risks of uncertainty by teaming “at-risk” armor capabilities with stryker formations to develop a hybrid-focused ground force that can operate anywhere on the spectrum of conflict.
- Advocate for a national dialogue and strategy to resolve America’s debt crisis within the next 10 years.

Conclusion: Emerging Army of the 2020’s

The Army at the end of this interwar period will look a whole lot like a smaller version of itself today, using essentially the same equipment, projecting national influence from the same bases, and deploying to places where the United States expects partner cooperation in pursuit of shared interests. It will primarily be a light infantry-centric formation with a Special Forces mission and elite-joint armored maneuver Combat Groups at its core. The difference between now and 2025 lies primarily in how both the Army and Marine Corps are organized as a joint landpower force ready to fight and win a war of decision in 10, 15, or 20 years.

Endnotes

¹ COL (R) Douglas A. Macgregor, Burke-Macgregor Group LLC, Executive Vice President, telephone interview by author, March 10, 2014.

² President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Defense Strategic Review,” public speech, The White House, Washington, DC, January 5, 2012.

³ Charles E. Heller and William A. Stoft, eds., *America’s First Battles, 1776-1965* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), ix.

⁴ Melvyn P. Leffler, “Defense on a Diet...How Budget Crises Have Improved U.S. Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs Online*, November/December 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139985/melvyn-p-leffler/defense-on-diet> (accessed January 10, 2014).

⁵ David Chinn, “Preserving Combat Power When Defense Budgets are Falling,” *McKinsey Quarterly Online*, April 2013,

http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/public_sector/preserving_combat_power_when_defense_budgets_are_falling (accessed January 10, 2014).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Charles T. “Chuck” Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 2014), 29.

⁹ President Barack Obama, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: The White House, January 2012), 6.

¹⁰ Michael O’Hanlon, “How Big an Army do We Need?” *Brookings*, November 15, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/11/15-us-army-cuts-ohanlan> (accessed December 15, 2013).

¹¹ Heller, *America’s First Battles*, 226.

¹² Ibid., 266.

¹³ Chinn, “Preserving Combat Power.”

¹⁴ Peter W. Singer, “Lessons on Defense Strategy from the Interwar Years,” *Brookings*, August 2013, <http://brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/08/strategic-defense-reform-singer> (accessed December 15, 2013).

¹⁵ Robert Killebrew, “Rebuilding the Army – Again,” *Armed Force Journal Online*, March 1, 2013, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/rebuilding-the-army-again/> (accessed January 23, 2014).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Admiral Mike Mullen, “Remarks to Business Executives for National Security,” public speech, Washington, DC, September 22, 2011.

²² Macgregor, telephone interview by author, March 10, 2014.

²³ Representative Paul Ryan, *The Path to Prosperity: A Blueprint for American Renewal*, Republican Budget Proposal for 2013 (Washington, DC: U.S. House of Representatives, March 2013), http://budget.house.gov/uploadedfiles/path_toprosperity2013.pdf (accessed March 1, 2014).

²⁴ Charles T. “Chuck” Hagel, *Statement on Strategic Choices and Management Review* (Washington, DC: Pentagon Press Briefing Room, July 2013).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 22.

²⁷ Ibid, IX.

²⁸ Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 134.

²⁹ O’Hanlon, “How Big an Army do We Need?”

³⁰ COL Jeffery A. Hannon, Department of the Army, G-3-5-7, Chief of Strategy, Concepts, and Doctrine (DAMO-SSP), telephone interview by author, March 11, 2014.

³¹ Professor Tom Moriarty, Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Security and Conflict Studies, George Washington University, email survey by author, April 3, 2014.

³² Hagel, *Statement on Strategic Choices and Management Review*.

³³ T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 656.

³⁴ Killebrew, “Rebuilding the Army – Again.”

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 27.

³⁷ Ibid., VII.

³⁸ General Martin Dempsey, *Chairman’s Assessment of the Quadrennial Defense Review*, Quadrennial Defense Review (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 2014), 59.

³⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), V-1.

⁴⁰ Paul Scharre, “Spectrum of What?” *Military Review*, November – December 2012, 74, http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20121231_art012.pdf (accessed March 15, 2014).

⁴¹ Ibid., 75.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ COL (R) Douglas A. Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 25.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁹ COL (R) Douglas A. Macgregor, "Shaping the Army for Joint Warfighting," briefing slides with scripted commentary, Washington, DC, Capitol Hill Club, November 19, 2013.

⁵⁰ Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 34.

⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

⁵² MAJ Mike Jason, "Integrating the Advisory Effort in the Army: A Full-Spectrum Solution," *Military Review*, September – October 2008, 32, http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20081031.pdf (accessed March 15, 2014).

⁵³ LTC (R) John Nagel, author of *Eating Soup with a Knife*, email survey by author, February 21, 2014.

⁵⁴ COL (R) Gian Gentile, author of *Wrong Turn*, email survey by author, March 11, 2014.

⁵⁵ Killebrew, "Rebuilding the Army – Again."

⁵⁶ Christopher Dougherty, "US Army Must Redefine Its Role," *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA)*, March 10, 2014, <http://www.csbaonline.org/2014/03/10/us-army-must-redefine-its-role> (assessed March 15, 2014).

⁵⁷ Moriarty, email survey by author, April 3, 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ John M. McHugh, "Proud of our Past, Confident on Our Future," *Army Magazine*, October 2012, 18.