



UNITED STATES ARMY

The Myths of Army Expansibility

A Study from World War I to the Present

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A study of the US Army's mobilization and demobilization experiences in from World War I to the present provides historical context to the emerging debate on the future expansibility of the Army.

The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or US Government.



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Executive Summary (EXSUM): An Analysis of Army Expansibility

Facing the realities of fiscal constraints that will require force reductions while the world remains a volatile and dangerous place, defense documents and Army policies are full of terms like "reversibility" and "expansibility" to explain how the smaller service will be able to deal with major contingencies. However, those terms are rarely if ever clearly defined. There is an obvious assumption that the Army will be able to conduct major wars.¹ A detailed analysis of those situations reveals that the capacity for growth was based upon institutions and practices that no longer exist or are extremely degraded, bringing into question the viability of the concept. With the demise of the draft and significant reductions in both the industrial and training bases, the bulk of assets for growing active forces will have to come from the Reserve Components, a course of action generally avoided in the past.

Background

This study analyzes the US Army's experiences from the twentieth century to the present, given the demands of modern war and associated structures, including political, industrial, and military.² These examples generally mirrored those from earlier wars. Broadly speaking, United States defense policy has relied upon a small regular army (RA), expandable upon the outbreak of war. That expanded army then largely demobilized upon war's end. Reliance upon state militias to augment the regular army in the American Revolution of 1775-83 and the War of 1812 to 1814 changed to volunteer troops vice militia in the Mexican War of 1846-48 and the American Civil War of 1861-65. The war with Spain in 1898 was then a sobering experience in preparedness, especially strategic deployment and logistics. The United States had in essence inherited and perpetuated major aspects of English, then British, military policies, given traditional political suspicions of standing armies. American practice has been to assume strategic, operational, and tactical risk at the start of a conflict, whose history has become associated with the theme of "America's first battles."³ One enduring theme that stands out among all the conflicts studied is the lack of preparedness for immediate action, driven either by strategic surprise or lack of popular and political will. World War II provides an exception because of preparatory steps taken prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, but the declaration of war still found the US Army ill-trained and ill-equipped to take the field immediately.

World War I

Participation in two world wars demanded the explosive growth of the Army to unprecedented size. This massive expansion filled the ranks using three broad approaches:

¹ For example, Secretary of Defense, *Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, D.C.: OSD, 2012), 4 and 6 regarding "Deter and Defeat Aggression" in the context of two regions, and the conduct of even much scaled-back stability and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.

² This study capitalized upon great effort across the Army in the last three years. Special mention goes to Dr. John Bonin, Professor of Concepts and Doctrine, Center for Strategic Leadership and Development (CSLD), US Army War College.

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

bringing the regular army to authorized strength; the federalization of the National Guard, formerly the Organized Militia; and the use of draftees to fill new reserve formations. The results were astounding. The pre-WW I regular army possessed some 75,000 of its authorized 100,000 when America declared war on Germany in April 1917. By late 1918 the total force boasted over 3 million men in 62 divisions, of which 43 were overseas.⁴ The interwar years saw the investment in intellectual capital, e.g. education, planning staffs, and war plans. Nonetheless, drastically-reduced funding affected the training and equipping even of a smaller peacetime force.⁵

World War II

World War II often appears as an example of past victories and a template for future ones. National pride in overcoming such long odds and defeating multiple enemies in widely separated theaters is justified, and some cause for the confidence to tackle the many more complex and difficult tasks the world has presented since the end of the Cold War. Yet the overweening focus on V-E Day and V-J Day, has obscured the tremendous difficulties the Army overcame to make those events possible. Moreover, that distraction continues to distort current planning nearly seven decades later. The Army is often governed by the precept that whatever it did in the past was what it meant to do.

Even with an early mobilization and the beginning of the draft in 1940, US Army units did not see action until November 1942 -- 11 months after Pearl Harbor drove American entry into the war. The size and scale of the World War II mobilization is difficult to fathom: from some 200,000 soldiers in 1939, the Army grew to over 8 million by 1945. This 4,000 percent increase in manpower required a concomitant expansion of infrastructure and war production, and the methods the Army used to expand were often at odds with its own requirements. Such expansion may appear as a model for the future, but detailed analysis reveals that the process produced many problems which hindered the Army's deployment.⁶ Following VJ-Day, the Army executed a typical, post-war demobilization, but on as grand a scale as the expansion. From a high of 8 million in 1945, the Army again reduced to 591,000 by 1950, a 93 percent reduction.

Korean War

The Army's end strength, balanced against its worldwide commitments, was the key issue facing the service in 1950. In this "come as you are" war, the US Army suddenly found itself committed to a land war in a country that, prior to the initial attack, had received no strategic priority. In what was to become the pattern for nearly all conflicts to follow, the Army's involvement in one theater, while maintaining presence in others, consumed nearly all its available resources worldwide, not just in the combat theater. The Army juggernaut of World

⁴ See Tab 1: Army Expansion for World War I.

⁵ See Tab 2: Interwar Army Preparation, 1919-41.

⁶ See Tab 3: The Army in World War II.

War II had been reduced in five years, through slashed defense spending and strategic drift, to a shadow of its former self.⁷

Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was largely a fight for an expanded Regular Army as Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson hesitated to mobilize the RC. Three policy decisions affected the Army's ability to execute its missions: the decision not to activate reserve components; the liberal draft deferment policy; and the individual replacement policy for Vietnam. The Regular Army grew from 16 divisions and 6 separate brigades to 19 divisions and 8 separate brigades and from 969,000 to 1,570,000, primarily with draftees and regular Army cadre. There were significant second- and third-order effects which this course of action created. A generous draft deferment policy reduced the overall quality of the conscript pool, and the large influx of draftees onto active duty sorely taxed the training base. The one-year individual tour replacement policy wrought havoc on non-deployed active Army units, as they became the replacement pool. As had been the case during the Korean War, the Army was forced to balance its combat requirements against its ongoing commitments to NATO and elsewhere and the necessity of keeping a General Reserve.⁸

Gulf War

The Gulf War began as strategic surprise, but unlike in times past, the Army was at an unparalleled state of readiness. The large defense budgets of the 1980s had yielded a well-trained and well-equipped Army designed to operate with NATO in high-intensity combat operation, and it proved a formidable opponent for Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army. Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War had brought the "peace dividend" of sharply reduced defense budgets and dwindling end strength. The Army had begun its drawdown, but paused it when the emergency arose and conducted a deliberate mobilization and deployment. The active Army saw no end strength increases, but it required a major mobilization of RC assets, including Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and individuals in the Selected Reserve. These aspects require further research with potential for future expansibility.⁹

OEF/OIF/OND

Post September 11, 2001 operations in Afghanistan and Iraq coincided with the transformation of the Army to the Modular Force. Two areas are of especial relevance for this study, and merit deeper investigation. First, the expansion of the AC from 480,000 to a peak 569,000 constituted the major case study in bona-fide expansion of a regular army, though not all numbers reflected new troops. Second, both campaigns revealed challenges in "troop-to-task" responsibilities of the Army's higher headquarters.¹⁰ As war has grown more complex, the

⁷ See Tab 4: Korean War.

⁸ See Tab 5: Post- Korean War and Vietnam.

⁹ See Tab 6: Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

¹⁰ See Tab 7: Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn (OEF, OIF/OND).

Army's responsibilities have grown accordingly. Simple ends strength reductions do not account for ongoing headquarters coordination responsibilities.

Other Areas of Recommended Study

This analysis also highlights other, critical factors regarding expansibility, frequently subsumed due to narrow emphasis on units. These topics are not new, but merit recognition here, understanding that previous studies have dissected them, and ongoing analysis continues.

Personnel. Current discussion should focus broadly and deeply, but the concept of expansibility rests upon personnel expansion of the AC. The most obvious recourse is to recruit a larger active Army. The Army's most-recent example merits additional study. The transformation to the modular force ca. 2003 to 2011 replaced some thirty (30) Army of Excellence (AOE) brigade equivalents with forty-five (45) more-robust and hence far more capable modular BCTs. A comprehensive analysis of this experience would be beneficial. This recent experience obviously took place in the midst of waging two large-scale conflicts.

Sourcing senior and mid-grade leaders for new formations in general has been problematic. The Army historically has used the RA as cadre, most notably in WW II, but using cadre from one division to fill another created its own problems. Future Army expansion using cadre elements, with the already reduced end strength, may not be practical.¹¹ Multi-component manning is an option for individual RC personnel utilization, but there are difficulties discussed here as well.¹² First, recourse to Multi-Compo AC units must account for the differences in 21st-century peacetime, garrison operations compared to pre-2001, especially with the explosive growth in Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) activities. Second, exploration of other options to integrate individual RC personnel must take careful account that AC, USAR, and ARNG are subject to different legal authorities, personnel management, and financial systems. This reality yet challenges effective integration and synchronization, along with the topic of rapid deployability.

Another option, with frankly a poor historical track record, is the IRR, perhaps the greatest tool available for genuine expansibility. The Army has used the IRR since 1990. Its use, advantages, disadvantages, strengths, and weaknesses are not well documented, but deserve further study. An in-depth study of IRR use since 1990 is warranted.¹³

Army EAB HQ. Army operational headquarters are a zealously-favored target during force reductions. The most recent cuts have been no different, i.e. the 25 percent reduction. Significantly, these 25 percent cuts are in truth far deeper, as they follow earlier reductions in authorized personnel. The Army needs to address fundamental aspects of the modular force transformation of corps and division HQ. Their large growth from AOE TO&Es allowed each

¹¹ For example, see US Army Capabilities Integration Center (ARCIC), "Reversibility and Expansibility Construct Approach: Discussion with HQDA, 2 April 2012" and subsequent work. This brief is FOUO.

¹² Ibid., and work on corps and division HQ. These sources are FOUO.

¹³ More recent studies exist in US Army War College student research projects (SRPs). See the listing at: <http://usahec.polarislibrary.com/polaris.1search/searchresults.aspx?ctx=1.1033.0.0.1&type=Advanced&term=IRR&relation=ALL&by=KW&term2=student%20papers&relation2=ALL&by2=SE&bool=AND&bool4=AND&limit=&sort=PD&page=O&searchid=1>

headquarters to assume much wider responsibilities over a much larger geographic area deployed theater in today's joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment. These responsibilities include mission command for up to six modular BCTs, rather than three AOE brigades, and the potential duties of a Joint Task Force Headquarters. Given personnel eliminations and/or grade-plate reductions, the Army must plan how it will posture these HQ for crisis response, OPLAN implementation, and steady-state engagement, such as potential mission-command responsibilities for RAF activities.

The current posture of the individually-tailored ASCCs is cause for further, and perhaps greater concern, the more so given the general lack of appreciation and ignorance among Services and the Joint Staff of the ASCC mission. The ASCC is the embodiment of the Army's commitment to the joint force, especially to the Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC). The ASCC as Theater Army has three (3) major roles with nine (9) key tasks.¹⁴ Most occur daily during steady-state operations. Implementation of a phased OPLAN or crisis-action scenario, would be in addition to ongoing actions throughout the entire Area of Responsibility (AOR). Current events highlight the sheer breadth and depth of steady-state activities and additional crisis actions.

In brief, the continued reduction of Army headquarters for short-term personnel savings provides fleeting results: the rapid cut in personnel numbers. The short-, mid-, and long-term efforts will most likely impact overall Army capability and credibility significantly. Expectations of "an agile, responsive tailorable force capable of responding to any mission, anywhere, anytime," as prescribed in the 2012 Army Strategic Planning Guidance, are problematic.¹⁵ Mission command for the Army's current and projected worldwide commitments necessitates long-term, sustained investment in capable HQ. The historical analysis in this document highlights the effect of short-sighted personnel and budgeting policy decisions.

Army EAB Force Structure. Army leaders recognize that the Army must provide critical capabilities to the joint force, units collectively at echelon above brigade (EAB) which are the joint enablers for a theater.¹⁶ As of August 2014, the Army is responsible for 47 of 90 Component tasks as DoD Executive Agent (EA).¹⁷ The identification and echelonment of the right balance of combat forces, support forces, materiel, protection, and mission-command elements to conduct sustained operations effectively in and AOR or joint operations area (JOA) in accordance with the Combatant Commander's (CCDR's) vision and a Joint Force Commander's (JFC's) requirements will tax any ASCC. A CONUS-based force will challenge GCCs and ASCCs to a far greater extent, given the limited number of forward-deployed assets. Army units across the Army's warfighting functions (WfF) and the joint functions at EAB are far fewer, especially for force sustainment (FS). The Army has previously deactivated both capability and capacity during the decade ca. 1990-2000. Institution of the modular force cut

¹⁴ HQ, Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-94, *Theater Army, Corps, and Division Operations* (Washington, D.C.: US DA, April 17, 2014), 1-4 to 1-6. Pages 2-1 to 2-4 then outline fifteen (15) overall tasks.

¹⁵ HQ, Department of the Army, *2012 Army Strategic Planning Guidance*, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷ See Tab 11: DoD Executive Agent Tasks, from Department of Defense Executive Agent website, available at: <http://dod-executiveagent.osd.mil/agentList.aspx>.

EAB capability and capacity further by embedding more active structure organically to the BCTs. The lack of capability and/or capacity in both the AC and RC could require fallback to contracting, which is potentially problematic in the future environment.

Future scenarios must confront adversarial recourse to anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategies, most likely in austere environments with little infrastructure. Due to the drawdown of overseas bases, the ASCC will receive most forces from a CONUS-based force. This causes additional logistical implications for future deployments. Deploying forces must acclimate rapidly to a more austere environment, quite unlike most Soldiers' recent experience with established forward operating bases (FOBs), with considerable materiel to receive from a predecessor unit via relief in place/transition of authority (RIP/TOA). The 21st-century environment could provide a harsh case study for a "come-as-you-are" war.

The RC's major contribution to the Total Army after 2001, i.e. from strategic reserve to operational force, were formed units bringing capability and/or additional capacity, generally ARNG division HQs and BCTs and USAR EAB enablers in the form of C2 HQ and separate companies. A detailed assessment of RC unit effectiveness during this decade of augmentation is needed.¹⁸ Planners need to understand what specific constraints and restraints concern RC unit deployment, including which will be unavailable due to long-term commitment to defense of the homeland.

Infrastructure. Future plans for expansibility must account for associated planning requirements to implement expansibility, comparing and contrasting capability and capacity at present, proposed structure, and their growth to execute expansibility. These aspects are particularly crucial for the entire generating force, and the training base in particular. The divestiture of Army installation real estate and base closures have affected the Army's capacity to expand quickly or effectively. Future planning must address this infrastructure deficit, and potential funding for this support. Installation planning must also consider how military and civilian personnel cuts affect CONUS installations as genuine power-projection platforms, both for manning for the immediate requirement and the depth of knowledge required to support these operations.

Defense Industrial Base (DIB). A singular imponderable is the posture of the current defense industrial base (DIB), very different from its 20th-century predecessors. Latent American productive capacity could not supply the AEF in the Great War for the bulk of its heavy combat vehicles. Its accomplishments in World War II were outstanding. However, holistic analysis must account that the prodigious American effort was not enough in the short term. There was also a similarly-massive critical, complementary effort by Britain throughout the British Isles, Empire and Commonwealth.¹⁹ The greater takeaway is that, while the combination of the world's two greatest economic juggernauts was sufficient to wage a three-front war, it was insufficient to deter or defeat Japan, Germany and Italy in the short term. The Allies could not

¹⁸ See Also: Army Heritage and Education Center-Historical Services Directorate (AHEC-HSD), "The Question Not Asked: Comparisons of Active and Reserve Component Effectiveness" (Carlisle, PA: AHEC, June 2012).

¹⁹ Aside from the official histories, see David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources, and Experts in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

man, train, and equip sufficient combat power in time for a "short" war. The interwar period from 1919 to 1941 appears the most similar scenario to today, but is deceiving given the existence of considerable untapped capacity. The materiel shortcomings during the Korean War are also instructive, as that conflict was localized against a minor power. Detailed analysis of materiel shortages for OEF and/or OIF is required. However, there remain also questions as to the condition and posture of the DIB a half decade after the 2008 recession, response to a contracted Army and DoD, and prognosis within the specific nature of the economic recovery.

This study has analyzed Army expansibility through historical examples from 20th and 21st century conflicts. In general, the authors believe deeper analysis of the period 2001 to 2011 is warranted. Army expansion to the Modular Force while waging two conflicts with an intervening major economic recession will likely provide many more insights.