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Sizing U.S. Ground Forces: From "2 Wars" to "1 War + 2 Missions"

During the Cold War, the United States varied between a "1 ½ war" and a "2 ½ war" framework for sizing its main combat forces. This framework prepared forces for one or two large wars, and then a smaller "half-war." Capacity for a major conflict in Europe, against the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies, represented the enduring big war potential. This period saw simultaneous conflict against China as a second possible big war, until Nixon's Guam doctrine placed a greater burden on regional allies rather than U.S. forces to address such a specter, and until his subsequent opening to the PRC made such a war seem less likely in any event. The half-wars were seen as relatively more modest but still quite significant operations such as in Korea or Vietnam.

When the Cold War ended, the prospect of hegemonic warfare against a major rival receded, and what used to be called half-wars became our main focal points. Indeed, the "half-wars" became "full wars" in our new lexicon, and the main basis for force planning. They remain so today, particularly for the U.S. Army. Until the overthrow of Saddam, U.S. secretaries of defense and presidents from both parties sought to sustain the capacity to wage two chronologically overlapping wars in two parts of the world at once—most likely in Korea and Iraq, but perhaps in other places. These were depicted as major regional contingencies or major theater wars, hence the acronyms "2 MRCs" or "2 MTWs." They were not assumed to begin at the same instant, meaning that strategic lift and certain other assets could be concentrated first on one conflict and then on the next, but they were assumed to occur in close enough

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proximity that each would require separate main force packages. Since the 1991 Desert Storm experience provided the predicate for much of this thinking, fairly short and intense operations were assumed.

Of course, in the last decade, we did wind up in two wars at the same time, but they were not quite as big as what had been planned for—and not nearly as quick. The 2-MRC/2-MTW lodestar for force sizing had led to an Army of just under 500,000 active-duty soldiers during the 1990s, down from a total of some 800,000 in the 1980s. The Army grew temporarily to about 560,000 in the latter George W. Bush and early Obama periods before beginning another downsizing process in the last couple of years. (Throughout recent decades, the reserve component of the Army, in the National Guard and Reserve combined, has held roughly steady at somewhat more than half a million additional soldiers.)[1]

Now—with Saddam gone, Iraq presumably no longer an overland invasion threat to its neighbors, U.S. forces downsizing rapidly in Afghanistan, large-scale counterinsurgency operations out of strategic and political vogue, and federal budget deficit pressures intense—the United States needs a whole new paradigm for sizing its main combat forces. This is especially true for the ground forces, and most of all the Army, since a combination of rising maritime challenges and ongoing smaller problems like terrorism will likely provide fairly clear focal points for planning in the Navy, Air Force, special forces, and Marine Corps.

The United States needs a whole new paradigm for sizing its main combat forces.

The 2006 and 2010 Quadrennial Defense Reviews, but most of all the Obama administration's more recent 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, have moved us away from a strict 2-MRC or 2-MTW planning framework. Specifically, the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance stated that "even when U.S. forces are committed to a large-scale operation in one region, *they will be capable of denying the objectives of—or imposing unacceptable costs on—an opportunistic aggressor in a second region*"[2] (emphasis added). The same review also stated that planning for large-scale stabilization missions would no longer drive the size of U.S. ground forces.

But considerable confusion remains. The same 2012 Pentagon Guidance estimated that some 490,000 active-duty soldiers would need to underwrite the above strategic commitment. However, in the summer of 2013, the Pentagon conducted a Strategic Capabilities and Management Review under the guidance of then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and determined that 420,000 to 450,000 active soldiers could suffice, as the 2014 QDR reaffirms. In addition, the review suggested that the number could decline further (to as little as

380,000) should sequestration or comparable long-term spending reductions remain in effect and necessitate even deeper cuts. Yet, it did not say what such cuts would do to the nation's military strategy or capacity for simultaneous major operations. (The Marine Corps might decline to 150,000 active-duty forces under this latter austerity budget, down from present levels of just under 200,000 and preferred levels closer to 180,000.)

Thus, confusion remains in estimating the projected numbers—and, more fundamentally, in knowing what this administration or the Pentagon considers an adequate ground combat force for the nation. There is also confusion about where, besides Korea, the Army needs to be ready to conduct large-scale operations in the years ahead. And there may be more than a little wishful thinking about whether we can, from the comfortable confines of Washington, simply issue edicts claiming that the era of large-scale counterinsurgency is now over. To paraphrase the old Bolshevik line, even if we have no further interest in counterinsurgency, it may have an interest in us—that is, if unrest begins to afflict a part of the world deemed crucial to U.S. security interests. To put it differently, we cannot declare quite so categorically an end to the era of counterinsurgency if this remains an era of insurgency and of potential instability in critical strategic theaters.

Confusion remains about what this administration considers an adequate ground combat force.

Yet, there are fewer obvious threats of large ground combat globally, and federal budget pressures are real. The deficit itself remains a serious national security threat, as former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen used to underscore.

Building on this backdrop, this paper recommends that the U.S. ground forces discard the two-war requirement altogether, and instead organize themselves around a "1 + 2" paradigm—with the capacity for one prompt, large-scale combat operation (probably in Korea) along with two mid-sized and longer-term multilateral stabilization missions of one type or another. Yet this construct, even if it seems less demanding than existing policy requirements, does not allow cuts to the Army below the range of roughly 425,000 to 450,000 active-duty soldiers, by my math. If and when the North Korea challenge is resolved or defused, there may be a basis for a much smaller active-duty Army. But that day is not yet here. So while the proposal may seem to the "left" of official force planning requirements, it is actually an effort to place a floor under which Army force structure, and specifically the active-duty Army, should not descend.

Fleshing Out the "1 + 2" Framework

The early post-Cold War years envisioned two major regional conflicts at once: Saddam's Iraq and the Kim family's North Korea were seen as the most likely simultaneous opponents. The notional force packages for large regional war also contained capabilities for smaller possible missions. Recent Pentagon reviews, under President George W. Bush and especially President Obama, have begun to shift away from a rigorous two-war standard but have still held onto some variant of that original planning paradigm.

Given the evolution of global threats, that previous standard can now relax somewhat—at least for the U.S. Army. A new ground-force planning paradigm might be termed "one war plus two multilateral, enduring stabilization missions"—or "1 + 2." In other words, the new approach would assume a 50 percent reduction in the number of major simultaneous conflicts, from two to one. But the overall reduction in Army size and capability would not be anywhere near 50 percent, because now the forces for smaller missions would have to be planned and budgeted for explicitly, not just as "lesser cases" included in the larger war packages. In addition, while we may have never truly built a two-war capability, we need to have the robust capacity for one successful war given the pitfalls of falling short of this standard.

The scenario for the one major war would most likely be in Korea, though I explore other cases below. The smaller missions might, for example, include residual efforts in Afghanistan, contributions to peacekeeping in a place like Congo, or perhaps contribution to a future multilateral stabilization force in Syria, Yemen, or even Kashmir (despite the fact that such missions seem unlikely and undesirable at present). They could also include participation in an international force to implement an Israeli–Palestinian peace, or deterrent deployments to GCC states like Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE in the aftermath of worsening tensions with Iran.

This 1 + 2 approach strikes the right balance. It is prudent because it provides some additional capability (allocated for the two smaller missions) if and when the nation again engages in a major conflict. That extra capacity provides a bit of a combat cushion should the major conflict go less well than initially hoped. When combined with the nation's airpower, maritime forces, and other capabilities, it also provides some limited deterrent against an opportunistic aggressor who, seeing the United States engaged elsewhere, could find it tempting to attack—though without making such a second big war a primary basis for planning. This approach is also economical, because it assumes only one such conflict at a time and does not envision major ground wars against the world's overseas powers on or near their territories (e.g. a response to a Russian

attack on a Baltic state or Georgia, which could require a major response but not necessarily with U.S. ground troops).

To compensate for its modest size, this one-war combat capability needs to be responsive and highly effective. That has implications in areas like strategic transport, which should not be reduced. It also has implications for the National Guard and Reserves, which remain indispensable parts of the total force. They have done well in Iraq and Afghanistan, and merit substantial support in the years ahead—better than they have often received in our nation's past.[3] This proposal would not cut them, at least not significantly. But they are not able to carry out prompt deployments to crises or conflicts the way that current U.S. security commitments and current deterrence strategy require. As such, we should not move towards a "citizens' army" that depends primarily on reservists for the nation's defense.

What does the 1 + 2 framework mean for sizing the Army and Marine Corps? This framework should allow for roughly 15 percent cutbacks relative to recent peak levels.[4] The Army would have about 425,000 to 450,000 active-duty soldiers, depending on whether the approach of cutting by about 15 percent could extend equally well to support units and infrastructure as to main combat units. The Marines would number some 160,000 active-duty uniformed personnel.[5] The resulting combined ground force would be enough to sustain the equivalent of about 15 of the new, larger brigades that the Army is now building overseas indefinitely, able to surge to about 25 if need be. This force-sizing math is based on the principle that active forces should have roughly twice as much time at home as on deployment and that reservists should have five times as much time at home as abroad. So it could sustain deployment of 9 to 10 Army brigade combat teams, 3 National Guard brigade combat teams, and 3 Marine regiments over a prolonged period. This might be enough for one war plus two more modest, multilateral missions, depending of course on specifics.

To be sure, such a force would have its limits. For example, when the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were at their maximum combined intensity (2007–2009), the United States had up to 22 brigade equivalents deployed at that time (the equivalent of about 16 of the newer, larger brigade combat teams)—at the outer edge of what the proposed force could sustain while following normal rotation policies. If similar, or more demanding, long crises or conflicts occurred in the future, therefore, we would have to ratchet force strength back up. Similarly, if a peace operation or stabilization mission—or two—were underway when a regional war began, the Army could quickly exceed its sustainable deployment requirements (though it would probably not exceed its surge capacity). The Army and Marine Corps of the last ten years have, fortunately, already proven they can grow in size fairly quickly and effectively. They added 15 percent in new capability within about half a decade without any reduction in the

excellence of individual units. So, the capability of the smaller Army to sustain a "1 + 2" set of missions could, depending on their size and duration, require the prompt decision to increase the size of the standing Army once those missions had begun.

Scenarios for the Major War

As noted, the most plausible place for another major ground combat operation for U.S. forces is on the Korean peninsula. This would not necessarily result from the traditional scenario of an invasion of South Korea by the North. It could be sparked, rather, by an internal coup or schism within North Korea that destabilized the country and put the security of its nuclear weapons at risk. It also could result somewhat inadvertently from an exchange of gunfire on land or sea that escalated into North Korean long-range artillery and missile attacks on South Korea's nearby capital of Seoul. The North Korean aggressions of 2010, including the brazen sinking of the South Korean Navy ship *Cheonan* and subsequent attacks on a remote South Korean island that together killed about 50 South Koreans, are instructive here.[6] Alternatively, if North Korea greatly accelerated its production of nuclear bombs—it is now believed to have about ten or more, according to U.S. intelligence—or seemed on the verge of selling nuclear materials to a terrorist group, the United States and South Korea might decide to preempt with a limited strike against its nuclear facilities. North Korea might then respond in dramatic fashion.

The allies would surely defeat North Korea in any war and then quite probably occupy the country and change its government. North Korea's weaponry is more obsolescent than ever, it faces major fuel and spare parts shortages in training and preparing its forces, and its personnel are undernourished and otherwise underprepared.[7] Yet, North Korea has a million-man army, as well as a very large reserve. We can assume all these soldiers have workable small arms. The nature of the terrain in Korea means that much of the battle would ultimately be infantry combat, complicated by the fact that North Korean soldiers are still indoctrinated with the notion that they must defend their homeland and the Kim regime at all costs. For a half-century, North Korea has built up fortifications near the DMZ that could make the task of extricating its forces difficult and bloody. North Korea also has among the world's largest artillery concentrations and could conduct intense shelling of Seoul in any war from positions that its forces already occupy.

Even the potential for nuclear attacks by the North against South Korean, Japanese, or U.S. assets cannot be dismissed. Attempts at outright annihilation of Seoul or Tokyo would make little sense, as allied forces could respond in kind and would surely track down the perpetrators of such a heinous crime. Any

North Korean nuclear attack on a major allied city would mean overthrow of the Pyongyang regime and almost surely death (or at least lifetime imprisonment) for its leaders once they were found. But Pyongyang might try more limited actions. Perhaps it would try to use one nuclear bomb from its arsenal against a remote airbase or troop concentration. This could weaken allied defenses in a key sector, while also signaling the North's willingness to escalate further if necessary. It would be a hugely risky move, but is not totally inconceivable given previous North Korean actions.

Possible Chinese intervention would have to be considered as well.[8] Beijing would probably not be eager to come to the military defense of the most fanatical military dictatorship left on Earth, but it has treaty obligations with the North that may complicate its calculations. And it would worry about any possibility of U.S. encroachment into North Korean lands near its borders. China might seek to preempt that possibility by moving its own forces into northern North Korea to establish a buffer zone. For all these reasons, a Korean war could have broader regional implications. This requires that Washington and Seoul maintain close consultations with Beijing in any future crisis or conflict, and perhaps find ways to anticipate or even welcome a possible limited Chinese military role in such a scenario, as Jim Steinberg and I argue in our new book, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve*. But it also suggests that U.S. and South Korean forces would want to have the capability to win any war against the North quickly and decisively, before for example, Seoul was destroyed or nuclear weapons used or nuclear materials smuggled out of the country. Moving fast would also reduce the odds that China would unilaterally decide to establish a buffer zone with its own forces in an anarchic North Korea, which could perhaps bring Chinese and allied soldiers into close and tense proximity once again.

Chances are that none of the above will happen, precisely because North Korea knows the potential consequences. This is an argument for making cuts carefully and retaining U.S. engagement in Korea. Deterrence is working. U.S. strategy on balance is successful here and elsewhere in keeping the peace, and the United States must not lose sight of this key reality in its efforts to cut the deficit. To sustain deterrence, U.S. forces available for Korea should remain quite substantial. They might focus largely on air and naval capabilities, given South Korea's large and improved army. But they should also involve U.S. ground forces, since a speedy victory would be of the essence, and since as noted, the fighting could be quite difficult and manpower requirements intensive.

Some have argued that, given the mathematical requirements of a stabilization mission in a country of some 24 million, South Korea's army could in principle handle much of the stabilization task itself, since it could generate up to 400,000 soldiers.[9] But that perspective overlooks the potential challenges of defeating North Korea's army militarily on such complex terrain

in a serious fight—in contrast to the requirements of a more benign stabilization mission. Deterrence also works better when leaders in Pyongyang cannot persuade themselves that they could intimidate South Korea into a coerced compromise if allies abandoned Seoul. For all these reasons, being able to bring several U.S. divisions to bear makes eminent military sense.

U.S. ground forces would also prove important because U.S. mobile assets, such as the 101st air assault division and Marine amphibious forces, provide capabilities that South Korea does not itself possess in comparable numbers. These U.S. forces could, among other things, help seal North Korean borders so nuclear materials could not be smuggled out. U.S. forces might not be needed long in any occupation of the North, given South Korea's large capabilities, but they could be crucial for perhaps 6–24 months.

Consider another scenario. Even if such an operation is extremely unlikely, it is nonetheless desirable that U.S. forces retain the inherent, implied capacity to overthrow a regime that carries out a heinous act of aggression or terror against U.S. interests. Such a regime could exist in Tehran.[10] That type of operation is highly improbable and would prove extraordinarily difficult. But the capability to conduct it, in extremis, could offer a useful deterrent. (Such a capability could also prove useful against any other powerful extremist government with ties to terrorists and nuclear ambitions or capabilities.) Overthrowing Iran's government and leaving it in chaos (since stabilizing a country of 80 million would be beyond our means with any plausible future Army force structure) is hardly an ideal outcome. But the prospect could nonetheless be a meaningful deterrent against Iranian extremism, as the United States could, if absolutely necessary, defeat and largely destroy the Revolutionary Guard and Quds forces that keep the current government in power. The aggregate size, combat capability, divisional force structure, combat aircraft inventories, and other capabilities of the Iranian forces are broadly consistent with those of the nominal regional foe that has focused U.S. defense planning for two decades.[11] These facts suggest that what has been viewed as a "one regional war" U.S. force package would likely be adequate to defeat and/or largely destroy the Iranian military.

In such a scenario, if the international community wanted to help re-establish Iran, U.S. allies could also provide ground forces in a subsequent coalition to stabilize the country—a job that could require half a million troops. (Even today's U.S. ground forces would in fact be inadequate to the job of stabilizing Iran, which with 80 million people is three times as populous as either Iraq or Afghanistan.) Other ground combat scenarios exist: imagine, for example, the possibility that Iran could retaliate against a U.S. or Israeli air strike by invading a neighbor. This is an unlikely but also hardly unthinkable contingency.[12]

The Smaller Missions

It is fairly easy to imagine a number of plausible cases for future multinational intervention—such as helping to implement a peace deal, shore up a beleaguered government, or stabilize a failed state. An obvious short list could include Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, a future Palestine (as part of a peace agreement with Israel), as well as Afghanistan. Only slightly more intellectual creativity is needed to include a number of other possible cases such as Nigeria, Congo, Sudan, parts of Pakistan (if help were requested by Islamabad), parts of the Philippines (if localized insurgencies worsened), or Burma (if political reform goes bad and leads to conflict rather than peaceful evolution). The typical mission could range from 20,000 to 100,000 total troops in size, based on recent cases. Assuming a U.S. contribution of roughly 20 to 40 percent of the total force, based again on recent precedent, one can imagine a U.S. ground force deployment of up to roughly 40,000 troops.

Some would say the United States is averse to intervention in such places now, much more than before. But the United States was highly casualty averse in the 1990s and still wound up in two major missions in the Balkans as well as several smaller ones in Africa and the Caribbean, to cite just one period from recent history. Some would also push back against the specific cases above. Indeed, most are quite unlikely—which is why it should suffice for the United States to have the capacity to conduct just two at a time on any substantial scale. But for the sake of argument, consider a case that seems hopeless to most observers right now—the situation in Syria. With Sunni, Alawite/Shia, and Kurdish populations so intermixed in most of the country's central cities, and with al-Qaeda affiliates as well as Hezbollah now a part of the witches' brew of extremist elements on the ground, it admittedly does seem a reach to imagine an international peace implementation force (presumably with U.S., other NATO, and Arab League participants) deploying to the country. But in life, and in war, things change.

Recall Bosnia in 1992–1993, when Balkan hatreds and military obstacles deterred any outside intervention. By 1994–1995, however, a combination of reshaped demographics (due to ethnic cleansing), altered military balances, cumulative Western shame from not stopping the violence earlier, and strategic considerations about the importance of stability on Europe's flank led to a much different Western policy and a much different outcome. Should Syria's populations become less mixed due to ethnic cleansing, and should the prospect of seeing groups like al-Nusra and the al-Qaeda affiliate ISIS (loosely translated as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) unsettle Western leaders even more than it does today, the situation could change dramatically. It is entirely imaginable that a compromise might ultimately be negotiated—perhaps

patterned in part after the Bosnia peace deal and "soft partition" of the country—and international forces required to help police it. Given the potential threat from an al-Qaeda affiliate there, to the region as well as the world, it is difficult for a force planner to rule out such a scenario preemptively.

Another quite worrisome scenario could involve a new Indo-Pakistani crisis leading to war between the two nuclear-armed states over Kashmir. This could result, for example, if a more extremist civilian or military leader came to power in Pakistan, or another major terrorist attack occurred. Were that to happen, and a crisis to ensue that ultimately saw a nuclear weapon or two detonated above an airbase or other such military facility, the world could face the specter of all-out nuclear war in the most densely populated part of the planet. It is imaginable that, if such a war began and international negotiators were trying to figure out how to end it, they might consider an international force to help stabilize the situation for a number of years. India would be adamantly against this idea today, but things could change if war broke out and such a force seemed the only way to reverse the momentum toward all-out nuclear war in South Asia. U.S. forces would quite likely need to play a key role, since other countries do not have the capacity, or in all likelihood the political confidence, to handle the mission on their own.[13]

Hopes that U.S. allies would do more to share the global military burden are proving unwarranted.

The Role of U.S. Allies

What is the presumed role of U.S. allies in all of the above? And is it possible to encourage them to do more in the future? Consider the situation in Afghanistan: the other 47 troop-contributing nations in Afghanistan, at the ISAF mission's peak size in 2011, collectively provided fewer than one-third of all foreign forces; the United States by itself provided more than two-thirds. That simple statistic reveals a great deal about the capacities as well as the limits of U.S. military allies today. A peak of more than 40,000 non-Afghan forces from countries besides the United States is nothing to trivialize, but it was collectively less than half the number of forces provided by the United States.

The allies took the lead in Libya in 2011. But this may be the exception that proves the rule—the mission that the Europeans led was a very limited air campaign in a nearby country (and arguably everyone has fallen short in the post-conflict period, since no country has done much to help the new Libyan state get on its feet). The French also helped depose a brutal dictator in their former colony of the Ivory Coast in 2011, and helped stabilize northern Mali

thereafter. These operations have on balance been courageous and somewhat effective, but limited in scope and size, as has more recent French intervention in the Central African Republic. Some European and Asian allies, as well as other nations, continue to slog away in UN peacekeeping operations in places such as Congo and Lebanon, again in a brave but limited way.

Any hopes that the election of Barack Obama with his more inclusive and multilateral style of leadership would lead U.S. allies to do a great deal more to share the global military burden are proving generally unwarranted. NATO defense spending is slipping downward, from a starting point that was not very impressive. The fraction of GDP that the NATO allies spend on their armed forces declined to about 1.7 percent by 2009, well under half the U.S. figure, and to a bit less today.[14] (That 1.7 percent compares to NATO's average level of 2.2 percent in 2000, and about 2.5 percent in 1990.)[15]

When allies feel directly threatened, they will contribute. South Korea in particular can be counted on to provide many air and naval forces, and most of the needed ground forces, for any major operation on the peninsula in the future. (South Korea is generally, and understandably, less enthusiastic about being pulled into an anti-China coalition in other places and for other missions.)[16] Taiwan would surely do what it could to help fend off a possible Chinese attack, not leaving the whole job to the U.S. military in the event that terrible scenario someday unfolded.[17]

Britain could probably provide a brigade or two—up to 10,000 troops, perhaps, as in Afghanistan—for most major operations that the United States might consider in the future.[18] Some new NATO allies like Poland or Romania, and some potential aspirants like Georgia, will try to help where they can, largely to solidify ties to the United States that they consider crucial for their security. The allies also *may* have enough collective capacity, and political will, to share responsibility for humanitarian and peace operations in the future. However, the record of the entire Western world, including the United States, is patchy at best for such operations.

The United States need not, and should not, accept primary responsibility for future military operations of a peacekeeping or humanitarian character. But in terms of planning for major war, it will have to assume that its forces—together with those of directly threatened allies—will provide the preponderance of future capability. In specific cases, Washington can always hope for more help. But for planning purposes, it is best not count on it.

The nature and scale of any stabilization missions could encompass an enormous range of possibilities.

Conclusion

The U.S. Army should size and shape its future capabilities based on a new paradigm—being able to wage and promptly win, with potentially quite limited allied help, a single major regional conflict while simultaneously participating in what could be two prolonged multinational stabilization or peacekeeping missions. It should move from its earlier "2 MRC" force sizing paradigm (perhaps better understood as a "1.5 MRC" or "1.7 MRC" model under existing Obama administration guidance) to a "1 + 2" model, for "1 War plus 2 Missions."

The resulting size of the active-duty U.S. Army would still total about 425,000–450,000 soldiers.

Of course, a bumper-sticker slogan like "1 + 2" dramatically oversimplifies the nature of detailed force planning. The one big war might not occur in Korea, even if that would currently seem the most logical possible scenario that could involve large numbers of U.S. troops. Perhaps even more uncertainty would surround the nature and scale of any stabilization missions. They could encompass an enormous range of possibilities. So any force-sizing construct giving a prominent role to such scenarios must be inherently imprecise. Indeed, that is an additional reason why I think the number of such presumed simultaneous missions needs to be at least two, rather than one, to allow some degree of conservatism against risk, as a force planner must. It is also of course a powerful argument in favor of adequately resourcing the nation's Army Reserve and National Guard.

We are currently running a real risk of cutting our forces too much.

The resulting size of the active-duty U.S. Army would total about 425,000–450,000 soldiers, not unlike the size envisioned by the Obama administration in the 2013 Strategic Choices and Management Review and 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review deliberations—that is, if it can avoid sequestration-scale cuts in the years ahead, since the latter might push the Army downward to 380,000 active-duty troops or even less. The exact figures can be disputed; calculations of this type are inherently imprecise. But a capacity comparable to that described above cannot realistically be achieved at levels below 400,000 active-duty troopers, as would likely follow from sequestration or the budgetary equivalent. Since some proposals for the future Army do indeed drop below that figure, as noted, U.S. force planners and political leaders need to think hard and carefully about their future visions for the nation's

ground forces. We are running a real risk of cutting our forces too much to ensure the nation's security in light of plausible threats witnessed in the world today.

Notes

1. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013* (Oxfordshire, England: 2013).
2. Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," January 2012, www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf.
3. John A. Nagl and Travis Sharp, "Operational for What?: The Future of the Guard and Reserves," *Joint Force Quarterly* 59 (4th Quarter, 2010), pp. 21–29; and Paul McHale, "Unreserved Support," *The American Interest* (September/October 2010), pp. 44–49.
4. Army active-duty brigade combat teams (BCTs) might number about 38, with the National Guard adding 24 more, by the old Army math. Focusing on the new, larger BCTs, the corresponding numbers would be 28 in the active force (instead of 33) and 18 in the National Guard. Combat aviation units might decline to eleven and seven brigades in the active and National Guard forces, respectively.
5. The Marines would give up two major units, resulting in ten infantry and three artillery regiments in their active forces, while keeping their three divisions and three associated Marine Expeditionary Forces.
6. Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., *Defiant Failed State: The North Korean Threat to International Security* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2010), pp. 45–7 and 186–88.
7. See for example, International Institute for Strategic Studies, *North Korean Security Challenges: A Net Assessment* (London, 2011), pp. 47–64.
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12. R. D. Hooker and Pedro Velica, "Iron Resolve," *RUSI Journal* 157, no. 6, December 1, 2012, pp. 86–104; see also, on the more general subject of "punish and contain" strategies, Stuart E. Johnson, Irv Blickstein, David C. Gompert, Charles Nemfakos, Harry J. Thie, Michael J. McNerney, Duncan Long, Brian McInnis, and Amy Potter, *A Strategy-Based Framework for Accommodating Reductions in the Defense Budget* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2012), pp. 19–20.
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14. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013* (Oxfordshire, England: 2013).

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16. As one example, see Choe Sang-Hun, "Island's Naval Base Stirs Opposition in South Korea," *New York Times*, August 19, 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/08/19/world/asia/19base.html?_r=1&emc=eta1.
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