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THE IMPACT OF RECONSTITUTION STRATEGY ON
OPERATIONAL PLANNING

By

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

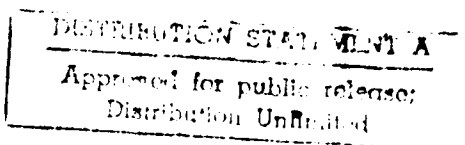
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THE IMPACT OF RECONSTITUTION STRATEGY ON OPERATIONAL PLANNING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most planning and certainly all strategic and operational planning is based on both known and unknown factors. Known factors include strategic objectives and current capabilities as well as limitations. Unknowns fall into two categories, unclear and presumed. Upon analysis, many known factors also shift into the unclear or presumed realm.¹

One pillar in the foundation of United States National Security Strategy is reconstitution which is based on unclear information as to who the next enemy might be and presumes or assumes the U.S. will be capable of rising to future threats to our vital interests. The purpose of this paper is to examine assumptions stated or implied in the strategy that have a bearing on planning at the operational level. To do that, a brief definition of reconstitution is provided followed by an examination of assumptions about the three bases, technological, industrial and manpower, needed for successful execution of the strategy. Finally, those assumptions most conducive to consideration by operational planners are identified.

Future as used in this paper means the period after 1996. Until that time, the residual capability of current unit deactivations and decommissionings will be sufficient to reconstitute to something approaching 1990 levels within the two years warning time envisioned by the strategy. Evidence to support this assumption is

the Korean conflict which was fought for the most part with left over World War II weapons. There was also an experienced manpower base, some of which was reactivated.

CHAPTER II

RECONSTITUTION DEFINED

At this point the meaning of the term Reconstitution is obscure. The defense establishment has been long used to defining the expansion of U.S. military capabilities in terms of varying degrees of mobilization capability or in terms of equally varying degrees of readiness and sustainability of active and reserve forces. Reconstitution, as an addition to the lexicon needs fitting into the more traditional terminology. The dictionary definition of the new term implies that we will rebuild back to the level attained before downsizing the force started. A further argument for this definition is the purpose of reconstitution as a counter to a reemergent emergent Soviet or other equivalent threat. If the force available at the height of our last military expansion was sufficient to deter the largest force the Soviets could field, then a future force of the same approximate size should be sufficient. No one has as yet said it will be, or alternatively that a larger or smaller force is what we will be aiming for. This is because the force to be reconstituted is probably too scenario dependent to predict. However, the meaning of reconstitution can be more sharply focused through the use of some traditional terms.

Mobilization is defined as "the rapid assembly, production or deployment of a superior force of military arms."² Mobilization can be full or partial. It can also be in response to an immediate crisis or it can be a more gradual response designed to serve a strategic deterrence purpose. Mobilization for crisis response,

currently called regeneration, would fill out any shortages in the active duty Base Force by activating reserve units and individuals.³ Reconstitution also envisions the generation of "wholly new" forces⁴ above and beyond the Base Force through the traditional combination of the country's technological, industrial and manpower bases. An added dimension is the two year or longer advanced warning anticipated for an emergent threat to fully manifest itself. The response will be U.S. rearmament that parallels threat efforts and deters by denying strategic advantage. Graduated Mobilization Response incorporates the selective use of the nation's three bases over a period of time to produce additional military capability.⁵ Reconstitution then, can be defined as both partial mobilization or regeneration in response to contingencies and as a Graduated Mobilization Response to gradually emerging strategic threat.

Using the new term instead of traditional ones is more politically feasible. The word mobilization conjures up images of the nation in arms along with all the sacrifices implied for the populace. Reconstitution is a less emotional word. It sounds more rational, more precise, less massive and less warlike.

CHAPTER III

RECONSTITUTION ASSUMPTIONS

Key Assumptions

Before any planning assumptions can be made about the technology, industrial and manpower bases, there are three critical assumptions regarding the reconstitution strategy that are the foundation of all that follow. The first assumption concerns time available to implement graduated mobilization response. It must be sufficient. That means warning of an emergent threat will have to be sufficiently unambiguous soon enough to allow the graduated, selective process of adding military capability to be funded and procured and then the new forces trained and fielded. Another assumption is that the U.S. will take advantage of whatever warning time is provided. The ability to do that will depend on the domestic political environment and the perception of how much the U.S. is actually threatened. The third key assumption is that the Department of Defense is willing to sacrifice either or both readiness and sustainability of current (1996 and beyond) active forces to provide resources for reconstitution capability. It will be expensive to continue to fund research and development of the latest technology. An additional expense will be incurred to keep the militarily significant segments of the industrial base ready to respond. The willingness to devote the resources necessary may involve a trade off of current contingency capability in the face of declining budgets in order to preserve future capability.

Technology Assumptions

Assuming the U.S. will retain the technological lead it has enjoyed for the last 50 years or so should, theoretically, be very easy. In fact for the near term, the qualitative advantage of U.S. weapons systems is unquestionable. Later in this decade as well as in the next is the speculative period. Several assumptions about future technology will drive reconstitution capability for this period.

Assumption 1 - "Winners" Will Be Picked

This means that we will perform that Research and Development, which when translated into weapon systems, will provide us the qualitative advantage. Doing that may require basic research, but more often applied research will be what is needed. The Defense Department has in the past done R&D both "in and out of house." In house efforts are performed by any one of a number of laboratories, usually belonging to one of the services. These are mostly applied research activities. Basic research is performed for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) by private firms and universities. DARPA's focus of effort has been developments that will be exploitable in the two to ten year timeframe.⁶ Two factors affecting this assumption are the exploitation of research, that is, doing both research and development, and also resources available in the out years. DARPA has a good track record for research, however, that does not necessarily translate into military capability unless development follows and is in turn followed by an industrial base capable of producing the new

technology.⁷ Availability of funding was addressed as a key assumption in the last section that will require some difficult tradeoffs. However, in spite of DOD willingness to make those tough decisions, there is always the political aspect of the problem, capable of forcing completely different decisions. For example, a Wall Street Journal article last fall discussed a proposal by a former Defense Department acquisitions chief to save 23 billion dollars by closing down some of the 700 laboratories belonging to the government.⁸ Proposals of this type, if adopted, would raise the issue of which labs to retain, those devoted to military research or those doing no less vital research with purely civilian applications.

Assumption 2 - U.S. Will Have Access To Technology Developed by Allies

The U.S. depends on allies with common interests for promoting stability and sharing the burden, where necessary, of deterrence. Our allies are the most technologically advanced nations in the world. Logically then, it follows that we will benefit from the research and development done by allies. Two factors complicate this assumption. The first is that while we do have technologically advanced friends, they have their own interests. Good examples are France or Israel. Both heavy exploiters of technology for military purposes and both among the world's largest arms salesmen. Both have good reason for keeping their latest developments, if not restricted to themselves, then proprietary at least. It does not benefit France very much to develop an improved Exocet missile for

use on their latest version ground attack aircraft, then give or even sell the technology to the U.S. so we can incorporate it into a similar system to compete with France on the world arms market. The second complicating factor is the so far less than satisfactory results from technology sharing with the Japanese in FSX development which is over budget and behind schedule. Aerospace development has been a U.S. comparative advantage and the problems with FSX so far indicate the need to continue to develop those technologies in which the U.S. excels at home.

Assumption 3 - Military and Civilian Sector R&D Remains Mutually Reinforcing

The U.S. lead in civilian aircraft and computer technologies, is to name just two examples, the result of "spin offs" from federally funded space R&D during the 1960s.⁹ By the same token, our lead in packaging technology came from R&D funded by the private sector. Military requirements have been met by both federal and civilian R&D since the industrial age began in America. Lately, however, there is some evidence that R&D with potential military application may not have the priority for resources it once enjoyed. There are a couple reasons for this. The first is that while the U.S. is still an industrial nation, that sector accounts for a smaller segment of our economy. There is also questioning from some quarters as to the costs vs. benefits of technological advancement. "Growth limits" on R&D have been proposed whereby assessments of new advances would be made to determine the possibility for any detrimental side effects on the

environment or natural resources resulting from R&D.¹⁰ There are also new priorities for R&D funding, the demand for an AIDS vaccine as one example, that have no military value.

Assumption 4 - Technological Advances Will Be Evolutionary, Not Revolutionary

With constrained budgets for the foreseeable future, the U.S. will be performing evolutionary upgrades to equipment now in service whenever possible to save the cost of new systems. This approach will work with mature technology, nuclear warheads for example, where only marginal improvements are possible.¹¹ However, whether it will allow us to retain a deterrent capability in areas where problems remain is a question. For example, technological breakthrough by a potential adversary in submarine detection that makes the oceans "transparent" would neutralize our most effective ballistic missile basing system.

Assumption 5 - Research Will Be Followed Up By Engineering Development

Basic research generally constitutes a very small percentage of the total life cycle cost of a weapon system.¹² The process of engineering new technology for practical use is much more expensive. It is also vital because new technology in its "raw" form is often useless. As was mentioned in the first assumption of this section, DARPA does a good job of basic research. However, because of the length of the acquisition process, of which engineering development, testing and re-engineering consumes a sizeable part, it takes a long time for the latest technology to be fielded. The

idea of doing research not followed by engineering development versus the DOD desire to do so, has become a political issue in Congress. The narrowly defeated Exon Amendment to the Fiscal Year 1993 Defense Authorization bill in the Senate has support from the Chairman of the House Armed Service Committee and will undoubtedly surface again in Congressional debate. This amendment would eliminate 8.8 billion dollars worth of weapons research and production.¹³ That will certainly keep costs down, but could impact U.S. ability to quickly field new systems if reconstitution becomes necessary in the interim between generations.

Industrial Base Assumptions

The U.S. Defense Industrial Base is a multi-tiered conglomerate comprised of both government and private sector facilities.¹⁴ In order to execute the orderly rearmament envisioned by the strategy, the industrial base will have to be energized in advance of any significant manpower expansion. Even if large numbers of principal end items are placed in "mothballs" as the build down continues, reactivating and upgrading will require some use of industrial facilities. New equipment in large numbers may also be required for adding capability beyond what can be equipped with mothballed equipment.

Assumption 1 - Civilian Sector Will Be Convertible or Expandable

Convertibility means taking facilities engaged in private sector manufacturing and retooling them for military production. Expandability means private sector production continues with capacity being added for military requirements. Since the strategy

anticipates a gradual buildup, expansion will be the preferred method in order to avoid dislocations in the economy. However, a blend of methods could of necessity be used. A potential problem with this assumption is the length of time historically required from conversion or expansion to achievement of suitable rates of production. Industrial mobilization for WWII showed that, depending on the material being produced, time to full production was between one and a half and three and a half years.¹⁵ If that lead time is applicable in the future, reconstitution to meet a projected "window of vulnerability" two years after detection of a large threat may run behind schedule.

Another risk in this assumption is erosion of the defense industrial base to the point where it requires complete, time consuming, rebuilding or conversion. This situation occurred in the interim between the Korean and Vietnam reconstitutions, particularly in ship building, heavy weapons, aircraft and ammunition.¹⁶ When orders dropped in the mid 1950s, producers were forced to convert to civilian sector production to survive. Converting them back for Vietnam caused inflation in the economy due to competition between the government and the private sector for production. Production lead time was also longer than expected.¹⁷ Lately, concerns about erosion revolve more around loss of subcontractors than major contractors.¹⁸ However, by the year 2000, smaller procurement budgets for major end items will undoubtedly result in a diminishing prime contractor base. In segments where industrial base capability atrophies greatly or

disappears completely, planning partial mobilization for near term regeneration requirements, by surging that segment of the base is, of course, impossible. The textile manufacturing base is a good, recent example. During Desert Shield and Desert Storm, desert camouflage utilities and boots were in short supply, so short that many deployed troops never received them. This was in spite of Defense Logistics Agency efforts to surge what is left of the clothing manufacturing base in the U.S. Recent evidence that some clothing manufacturers are producing more domestically will not have much impact on future clothing problems.¹⁹

Assumption 2 - Systems Acquisition Cycle Can Be Shortened

Three factors influence this assumption. First is systems acquisition policy and, procedures in use. In spite of efforts during the past decade to simplify these policies, there is no evidence that the acquisition cycle has been significantly shortened as a result. A major system acquisition still takes 12 to 15 years. The second factor is the potential expanded use of "off the shelf" purchasing of civilian sector equipment, which has been proven to work for pick up trucks, but which is difficult to apply to fighter aircraft. A third factor in shortening the acquisition cycle is the use of commercial standards for weapon system components instead of military specifications. Again, this method works very well for noncritical items like uniform sizes. It does not work for nuclear submarine pressure valves.

Assumption 3 - Allied Industrial Bases Will Be Available

Another way to state this assumption is that it is in our allies' interests to manufacture military equipment for U.S. use. Our current allies, especially Japan, Germany and South Korea, have robust electronics, shipbuilding and heavy equipment manufacturing sectors. Great Britain, our staunchest ally, sold the Marine Corps chemical suits to make up for a shortage of on-hand inventory needed for Desert Shield/Storm. However, the British would not have done the same to support a U.S. invasion of Grenada. This assumption, like the one on technology sharing is very scenario dependent.

Assumption 4 - Legislation And Planning Is Adequate

The reconstitution process can be managed in one of two ways. In response to a crisis where insufficient warning time is available to allow a graduated buildup, emergency measures would be used. Given warning time, the normal DOD planning, programming and budgeting procedures expedited as necessary would suffice. The latter method was used by the Reagan Administration during the defense buildup of the 1980s. The former method has been codified in legislation and executive branch policies beginning with the post World War I era. Based on the experiences with industrial mobilization planning and execution before and during World War II, the Strategic and Critical Materials Stockpiling Act, National Security Act and Defense Production Act were enacted to provide economic and industrial support for the Armed Forces in time of war and mobilization preparation during peacetime.²⁰ Within the executive branch, various boards, offices and agencies evolved to

administer the process, the titles and relative power of which depended on the management philosophy of the administration in power. During the past four decades there has also been a broader definition developed of what constitutes a national emergency. In addition to war, natural disasters and civil disturbances are included. Executive branch consolidation of responsibility for all emergency policy resulted in creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 1979. Under FEMA, interagency working groups share responsibility for planning. For example, defense industrial base planning is shared by the DOD, the Commerce Department and FEMA.²¹ Defense Planners have criticized this collegial approach and FEMA's overly broad span of responsibility as being nonresponsive. As exercise Proud Spirit, a 1980 wargame showed, there are shortcomings in planning mobilization not to mention the inability of the industrial base to respond.²²

Mobilization planning has been accomplished for the last 70 years based on legislation passed to facilitate the process. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Congress took back some of the power vested in the executive branch by earlier legislation to invoke emergency procedures. The National Emergencies Act of 1976 required the President to inform Congress when emergency procedures were used and gave Congress veto power over their use.²³ This limitation has the potential to impact execution of the reconstitution strategy, especially regeneration. Though cumbersome and usually underfunded, a legally codified planning structure for expansion or conversion of the industrial base does exist.

Manpower Assumptions

The success of future reconstitution depends fundamentally on the supply of qualify men and women. It also depends on their willingness to serve, arising from a patriotic response to an emerging threat or the perceived attractiveness of the military as an employer. A partial mobilization type of reconstitution can probably rely on one or both of the above. A graduated mobilization response which builds force structure to 1990 levels or higher may run afoul of demographic trends in 1996 and beyond. Reconstitution during this period may therefore, require a return to conscription. Another challenge will be where to put the reconstituted force.

Assumption 1 - A Viable Selective Service System Will Continue

Except for the Reagan era defense buildup of the early 1980s which found fertile recruiting ground due to the economic recession, no rearmament program in this century has been accomplished without a draft. For a large scale reconstitution to succeed during this decade and the next, a return to the draft may be necessary. The 18-24 year old population, who will fill the ranks of a new force, will continue to decline.²⁴ Complicating this situation for force planners is the continuing requirement for a civilian sector work force. Lower pay and often less desirable working conditions characteristic of military service will make competition for quality people with the civilian sector a losing proposition. To reconstitute under these circumstances, the Selective Service System will have to be used. The Selective

Service System is currently maintained in active standby status. Registration is required under the law, however, from the time of passage in 1973 of the Military Selective Service Act until 1980, Congress provided no funds to ensure registration.²⁵ For this assumption to remain valid, continued funding for registration administration is required.

Assumption 2 - Facilities Will Be Available For Training

As part of the current force reduction program, military bases are being deactivated. These bases provide living and training facilities in excess of projected Base Force requirements. The assumption is that remaining active bases will provide sufficient facilities for a reconstituted force. A scenario that tends to support this assumption would be one in which large scale forward basing of units overseas was resumed, thereby freeing up space at bases in this country for reconstitution forces. A scenario involving CONUS basing of the entire force after reconstitution or prior to overseas deployment would see a situation similar to that faced by the Army just prior to World War II. The Army was forced to reduce accessions in 1940 and 1941 awaiting base construction.²⁶ This problem impacted negatively, the number of trained divisions available for overseas deployment after Pearl Harbor.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR OPERATIONAL PLANNERS

The belief at the start of every disarmament undertaken by the U.S. during this century has been that refinement of the legislative and planning structure would prevent the problems encountered during the previous reconstitution from reoccurring. Each of the subsequent four rearmament periods has, in every case, proven to be different than the last for a multitude of reasons, thus, invalidating some of the previous assumptions.

While all of the assumptions at the strategic level regarding reconstitution will certainly impact U.S. military capability to conduct operations, not all can be dealt with by planners at the operational level. Aside from the general notion that reconstitution really means doing more with less, the timeframe involved with reconstituting along with all the political aspects of the process makes several of the assumptions discussed earlier too nebulous for inclusion in operational plans. However, several other of the assumptions discussed can and should be considered by operational planners.

First in importance among the key assumptions is that the DOD will fund for reconstitution capability, trading off, if not readiness, then some degree of sustainability. There are several ways to do this. One way would be to reduce war reserve material requirements for the Base Force from the current 60 day level to something less. This would mean that resupply of forces engaged in contingency operations would be drawn from stocks held for all

active forces. Reconstitution capability could also be resourced at the expense of readiness by not funding all reserve component initial issue material requirements. Regardless of the method used, trading off readiness and sustainability for reconstitution capability, raises the level of risk both at the strategic and operational levels. Mitigating this risk at the operational level will require planners to do more detailed logistic planning than is now the case. The goal should be a further reduction in "logistics snowball" potential.²⁷ Identification of the truly critical items of supply, down to the piece part level will, when consolidated at the JCS or Defense Agency level, allow only those items unique to a theater or operational environment to be funded and stocked at some level that assures some degree of readiness and sustainability. Current use by CINCs of Days of Supply and Integrated Priority Lists (IPLs) does not get down to the level of detail necessary to identify those truly critical items. The military services to whom the equipment belongs and who have a wealth of resident knowledge on what will be critical to the proper functioning of equipment in different environments can help operational planners here.

The technology assumption that should be considered by operational planners is that the U.S. will have access to technology developed by allies. Operational planning is concerned with the current capability of potential adversaries as well as allies. Of immediate concern is the technology developed by allies that is in the hands of adversaries. This is the likeliest case since our

allies are the most technologically advanced in the world and our potential adversaries obtain their technology for the most part through purchase. In cases where the assumption proves incorrect and our allies have not provided access, the importance of intelligence from strategic and operational level sources is obvious. Not as obvious but potentially as rewarding to the operational level would be a requirement for access to allied technology passed up the chain through the national command authority for action by the diplomatic corps of the State Department.

The critical industrial base assumption is that the civilian sector will be convertible or expandable. The critical element is the amount of time required to convert or expand. Historical data available from past reconstitutions provides some indication. As was noted earlier, even simple and not necessarily critical items like camouflage uniforms appropriate to the theater of operations can take up to a year. For contingencies then, operational planners will have to rely more on operational art and less on the U.S. tradition of overwhelming superiority in logistic support. The recent experience in Southwest Asia is not much help in this area since no other operational theaters were competing for available resources and the build down had not really started in earnest. What will be of value to operational level planners is future war games, like Proud Spirit, that are designed to test operational level ability to deal with resource allocation instead of the historical super abundance.

The manpower base assumption that is critical at the operational level is that adequate facilities will be available for training and staging. Current exercises that include the use of reserves do not, because of brevity, adequately test the capacity of active or inactive facilities in CONUS to receive, house, mess and otherwise support greatly increased populations. The recent experience with mobilization of reserves is no help here because most reserves called up were immediately deployed overseas. Operational level planners for CONUS based CINCs should plan for and test the capability to reopen closed facilities and expand the use of active ones in support of those OPLANS requiring the largest reserve round out, augmentation and reinforcement.

CONCLUSION

While deliberating the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols bill, the Senate Armed Services Committee received a staff report that was critical of, among other things, military operational plans that "assumed away the hardest problems."²⁸ While the current reconstitution "pillar" in the National Military Strategy appears to be overassuming at the strategic level, the challenge for operational planners is clear. That challenge is to understand the assumptions made about reconstitution, particularly those having a bearing on crisis reconstitution or regeneration of the Base Force. Understanding those assumptions will allow planners to seek ways to reduce the risks reconstitution introduces into the deterrence equation in order to buy time for the strategy to succeed in rearming the United States when the time comes.

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