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The US Army War College
QUARTERLY

PARAMETERS



Vol. 53 No. 3 Autumn Demi-Issue 2023

Contemporary Strategy & Landpower

In Focus

*A Historical Perspective on Today's
Recruiting Crisis*

Brian McAllister Linn

*A Call to Action: Lessons from
Ukraine for the Future Force*

Katie Crombe and John A. Nagl

SRAD Director's Corner

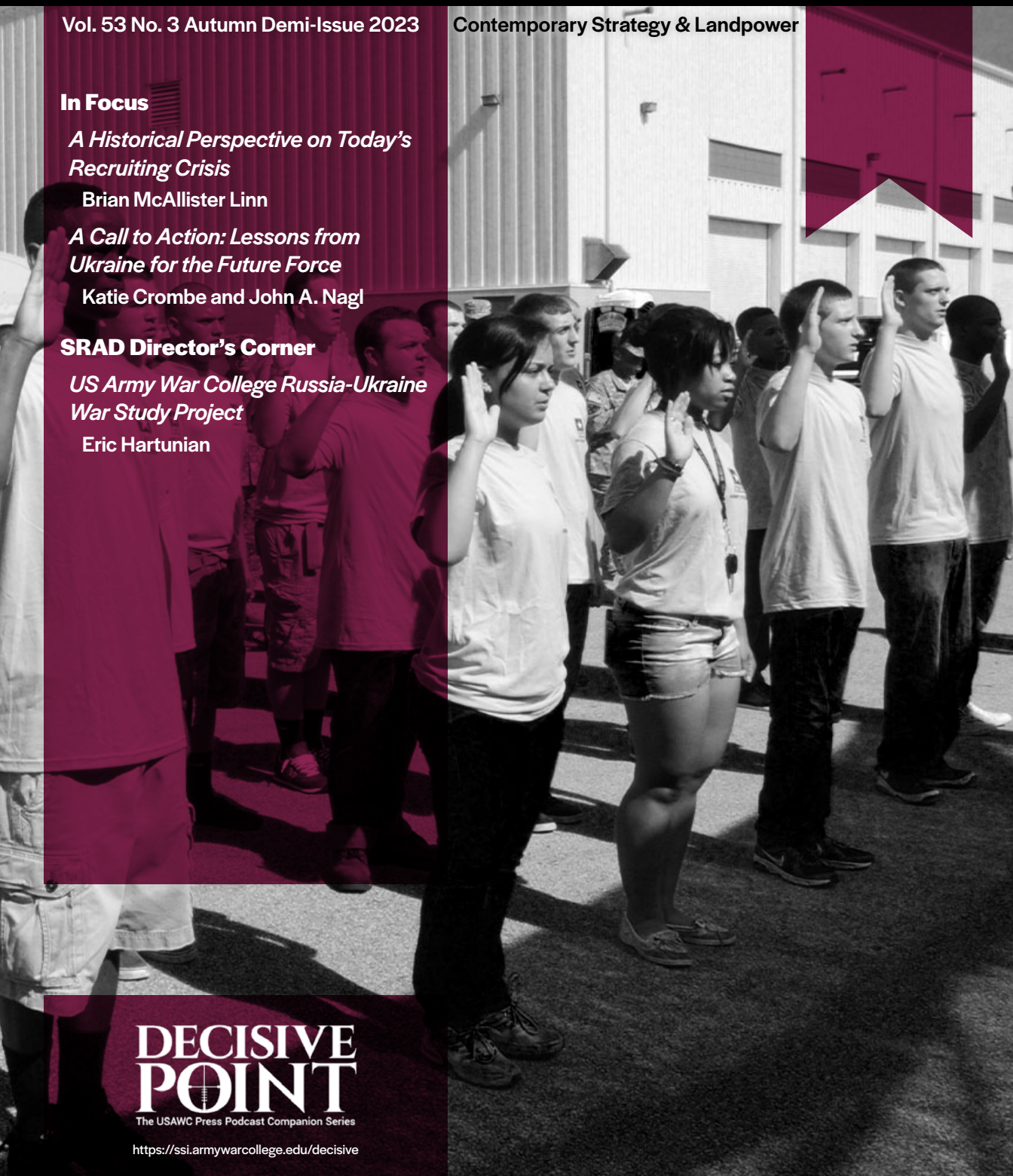
*US Army War College Russia-Ukraine
War Study Project*

Eric Hartunian

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The US Army War College
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From the Acting Editor in Chief

Welcome to the Autumn 2023 demi-issue of *Parameters*. Released approximately one month before the full issue of the journal, the demi-issue addresses unfolding current events and topics critical to our readership, previews upcoming content for the forthcoming full issue, and tackles the big questions being asked today in the fields of military strategy and defense policy. This demi-issue includes two *In Focus* special commentaries—one on the US Army’s historical recruiting challenges and one on the Russia-Ukraine War as today’s strategic inflection point for modernizing the US Army—and the *SRAD Director’s Corner* on the US Army War College Russia-Ukraine War Study Project.

In our first *In Focus* special commentary, “A Historical Perspective on Today’s Recruiting Crisis,” Brian McAllister Linn analyzes the US Army’s successive recruiting crises spanning 150 years, identifies their consistent patterns and efforts to resolve them, and generates provocative arguments for why these crises continue to occur and why the US Army needs to revise its talent management approach.

The second *In Focus* special commentary, “A Call to Action: Lessons from Ukraine for the Future Force,” by Katie Crombe and John A. Nagl argues that the US Army has reached a strategic inflection point and must embrace the Russia-Ukraine War as an opportunity to reorient the force into a forward-thinking and formidable Army that can succeed in multidomain, large-scale combat operations.

In the *SRAD Director’s Corner*, “The US Army War College Russia-Ukraine War Study Project,” Eric Hartunian discusses the expansive project undertaken in 2022 to analyze the operational events and activities of the Russia-Ukraine War to understand the war’s strategic implications for the US Army and its role in the NATO Alliance. It is hoped the study will identify whether the war has revealed a shift in the character of war and how US and allied defense policies should adjust to this change. ~CCC

A Historical Perspective on Today's Recruiting Crisis

Brian McAllister Linn
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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the US Army's successive recruiting crises, identifying their consistent patterns and the efforts to resolve them, and makes three provocative arguments. First, there is a long-standing institutional tension between recruiting personnel for the combat arms and technical and administrative specialists. Second, many of today's talent management problems were first identified in a 1907 General Staff report and reiterated in subsequent studies. Third, the Army has pursued innovative recruitment strategies, but much of their success depended on factors outside the service's control. The essay concludes with four history-based recruiting lessons and an affirmation that the 2019 *Army People Strategy* recognizes the need for the Army to revise its talent management approach.

Keywords: recruitment, US Army history, personnel policy, talent management, *Army People Strategy*

Last year, the US Army missed its enlistment goals by 25 percent, prompting concerns that the service might shrink to 445,000 by the end of this year. The shortfalls are particularly serious in combat arms, most notably armor and infantry. Retired Lieutenant General David W. Barno, no alarmist, warned, "The all-volunteer force may finally have reached its breaking point."¹ The causes and consequences of this "recruiting crisis" have prompted vigorous and often vitriolic debate. Some pundits have accused the Army of excessive "wokeness" and others of excessive masculinity. But Army leadership recognizes that the recruitment crisis will not be resolved by partisan accusations or bumper-sticker solutions. It also accepts that dropping standards, a solution too often attempted in the past, is unacceptable if the service is to retain its qualitative

1. David Barno and Nora Benshael, "Addressing the U.S. Military Recruiting Crisis," War on the Rocks (website), March 10, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/03/addressing-the-u-s-military-recruiting-crisis/>. For a sample of cultural explanations, see Lolita C. Baldor, "Army Sees Safety, Not 'Wokeness,' as Top Recruiting Obstacle," AP News (website), February 12, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-politics-military-and-defense-race-ethnicity-6548adcb0fee590f3427771d1e1eeea7>; David McCormick and James Cunningham, "The Military Recruitment Crisis Is a Symptom of Cultural Rot," *Wall Street Journal* (website), April 14, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-military-recruitment-crisis-is-a-symptom-of-cultural-rot-american-exceptionalism-patriotism-health-c0f69bda>; and Thomas Spoehr, "The Rise of Wokeness in the Military," *Imprimis* 51, nos. 6-7 (June-July 2022), <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/the-rise-of-wokeness-in-the-military/>. Except for specific citations, this essay is based on my recent book, *Real Soldiering: The US Army in the Aftermath of War, 1815-1980* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2023).

superiority. The 2019 *Army People Strategy* makes this point in clear and unambiguous terms: “Human capabilities such as resiliency, critical thinking, comfort with ambiguity, and the ability to accept prudent risk and adjust rapidly all define our profession.”²

Today, as always, the Army’s recruitment strategy must balance the often conflicting demands imposed by the immediate necessity of filling the most pressing vacancies, identifying those individuals with the potential for a military career, and predicting the service’s future personnel needs. It also has to resolve the perennial dilemma—going back over 200 years—that once the Army has met its immediate needs, the majority of volunteers (and draftees) try to avoid assignment to the combat arms. Finding the correct solutions to these challenges is no easy matter. To give just one example, an Army preparing for high-intensity ground operations in the Indo-Pacific in 2030 needs different talents than it would to police the borders and train allies. A final and fundamental question remains: can the Army’s self-identification with the combat infantry soldier coexist with its current role as one component of a doctrine—multidomain operations—that relies on military personnel who can apply the full spectrum of American technological supremacy?

From a historical perspective, today’s recruitment crisis has four commonalities dating back to the Army’s founding. First and foremost, recruitment problems are the norm, not the exception. Nostalgic references to a golden age where Americans were fit, patriotic, and motivated have been a staple of Army lore for well over a century, but they hardly reflect historical reality. For over 200 years, the peacetime service has suffered perennial recruiting crises, particularly in its “line” or combat branches. The circumstances contributing to positive enlistment levels—such as high unemployment and low wages in labor, enthusiasm for military life, and increased military pay and benefits—have been rare. Second, it is important not to confuse quantity with quality. Then and now, a 25 percent shortfall does not represent a shortage of applicants but a shortage of those with the potential to be effective soldiers. Even in the nineteenth century, when the service was often the employer of last resort and drew its rank-and-file from immigrants, unskilled laborers, and the urban poor, recruiters still rejected roughly three-quarters of the applicants. Third, in the past, a recruitment crisis represented both a source and symptom of the Army’s other personnel problems. Failing to acquire a sufficient number of talented enlistees often meant “skeleton” combat units and insufficient retention of quality enlisted personnel (as well as excessive resignation rates among junior officers).

2. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *The Army People Strategy* (Washington, DC: HQDA, October 2019), 2, https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/the_army_people_strategy_2019_10_11_signed_final.pdf.

Finally, there has always been inherent tension between recruiting soldiers for immediate readiness—usually in the combat arms—and recruiting and retaining soldiers with essential technical-administrative skills to sustain the force. In the past, Army recruitment has often had to secure the former by promising access to preparation for the latter.

The institutional memory of the nineteenth-century Old Army is one of dusty, tough, long-service cavalry troopers engaged in perpetual campaigning against hostiles. On paper, the service prioritized the combat arms, with over 21,000 of the 25,000 authorized enlisted personnel in either the infantry, artillery, or cavalry. In reality, these numbers were more aspirational than real: one 1897 survey estimated the Army ranks totaled barely 20,000 soldiers.³ Nor did they represent the nation's finest. As one long-time recruitment officer confessed, "it is a fact, not to be disguised or refuted, that want drives nine-tenth of our recruits into the army."⁴ As it does today, the Army struggled with the public perception that, as William Tecumseh Sherman explained to Helmuth von Moltke, whereas in Germany soldiering was a patriotic duty, in the United States the public's expectation was that the government "must hire and pay soldiers just as it does in public works and improvements."⁵ Indeed, as far as both politicians and citizens were concerned, enlisted personnel were better employed in public works than in training for war.

Almost from the Army's inception, a two-tier reward system characterized its enlisted ranks. Like all bureaucracies, the service rewarded those members with the skills necessary to sustain it: administrative and technical specialists in what were designated the "staff" bureaus, such as finance, ordnance, adjutant general, and so forth. Within the combat, or "line," units, the Army's existential mission was continental defense. Thus, the most skilled and valued workforce was more likely to be found not on the frontier but in the coastal fortifications manning the artillery. Even in the West, the incessant demands of post maintenance required each company to find carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, farriers, and so forth within its ranks. Exempt from many drill and guard duties, they spent the majority of their time in uniform plying their trades. Indeed, a persistent problem was tradesmen-soldiers refusing promotion because noncommissioned officer rank would reduce their pay and privileges.

3. Raoul Dupuy, "A Study of the Cavalry of the United States of America," *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association* 12, no. 49 (March 1899): 68–92. On military personnel, see Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

4. Charles B. Hall, "Recruits and Recruiting," *United Service* 2 (July 1889): 26–27.

5. William Tecumseh Sherman, marginalia in Francis Vinton Greene, "The Important Improvements in the Art of War during the Past Twenty Years and Their Probable Effect on Future Military Operations," *Journal of the Military Service Institution* 4, no. 13 (1883): 2–4, Francis Vinton Greene Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York, NY.

The post-Spanish American War reforms initiated by Secretary of War Elihu Root (1899–1904) have long been credited as decisive steps toward an Army prepared for modern war against a rival great power. In reality, they played a major role in one of the Army's worst recruiting crises in its long history. Root dramatically increased the Army's size, but he even more dramatically increased its responsibilities. While annually deploying roughly a quarter of its troops overseas, it now had to build and maintain the new harbor defenses, provide advisers to the National Guard, and sustain a massive schooling system. In a decade of high wages and low unemployment, the Army could not attract a sufficient number of qualified recruits. Just two years after Root left office, his successor bluntly informed Congress, "this Army that we now have is nothing but a skeleton army."⁶ The following year, the combat arms could muster only 43,000 of their authorized strength of 63,000.

The perpetual recruitment crisis prompted the Acting Secretary of War to direct a General Staff officer, Johnson Hagood, to conduct the first systematic study of Army recruitment and retention. Published as a pamphlet in 1907, his findings still resonate over a century later. Dismissing romantic views of past patriotism, Hagood concluded:

In the first place, the American soldier in time of peace is very much like every other type of American citizen . . . he becomes a soldier and remains a soldier for what he can get out of it. Just as soon as he decides that he can get more out of civil life than he can out of the Army, then he is going to refuse to enlist or to reenlist.⁷

His findings emphasized the Army's difficulty with attracting and retaining personnel with the occupational skills most valued in the civilian marketplace. Perhaps more troubling, he illustrated the glaring disparities between the nonspecialist military and civilian wages: one janitor now made six times what he did as a private. Hagood's report revealed how the recruiting crisis had hollowed out the Army's ranks. On the first page was a photograph of an infantry company with an authorized strength of 65 that could muster only nine men for a mandated route march.⁸

6. *Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs of the United States Senate on the Army Appropriation Bill for the Fiscal Year 1906-7*, 59th cong. (1906), 39.

7. Johnson Hagood, *Circular Relative to Pay of Officers and Enlisted Men of the Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1907), 8.

8. Hagood, *Circular*, 99.

In response to the manpower crisis, the Army made several innovations. It doubled the number of recruiters, increased advertising and publicity, and created the General Recruiting Service to consolidate enlistment, basic training, and assignment. Bolstered by the evidence presented in Hagood and others' studies, and taking advantage of sustained media support, the Army convinced Congress to raise pay across the ranks. Much to the frustration of those in the combat arms, the new pay scale greatly favored technical skills. A master gunner in the coastal artillery was paid the equivalent of a regimental sergeant major in the infantry, and a master electrician was paid well over twice as much. Indeed, coastal artillery was so valuable it was allocated a number of comparatively well-paid specialist ratings denied to other, less technical combat branches. Not surprisingly, the most technically inclined and ambitious career soldiers concentrated there, ensuring that other branches had to train their requirement of semiskilled craftsmen themselves to keep their posts and units going. Helped by the century's first financial meltdown—the Panic of 1907—the Army managed to recruit up to its requirements by 1909. But as economic prosperity returned, the Army once again struggled to meet its enlisted recruiting goals, a struggle compounded by 25 percent annual turnover, a 60 percent decline in reenlistments, and a desertion rate over 20 percent.⁹

The decade after World War I brought persistent recruiting problems. Overruling senior leadership's advice, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Congress declared the peacetime Army would become the school of the nation. The service was compelled to accept the enlistment of illiterates and short-service recruits, even as recruitment propaganda promised young men ample reliable pay, comfortable quarters, schooling, and a trade that would guarantee them civilian employment. The initial results were encouraging: over 70,000 men enlisted between March and June 1919. But the following year, despite a massive advertising campaign and strong public support from politicians, business, and labor, the Army enlisted fewer than 24,000 men and continued to lose personnel faster than it could replace them. Compounding the Army's difficulties, Congress slashed funding for schooling and drastically cut personnel. Those who had enlisted and were not selected for the promised technical schools felt betrayed. That most were housed in squalid barracks, poorly fed, harshly treated, and relegated to poorly paid menial labor only increased their demoralization. As the economy boomed in the Roaring Twenties, the Army found it harder and harder to acquire and retain sufficient talent. Until the onset

9. Harrison Summers Kerrick, "Our Military Resources vs. Our Military Power—National Assurance vs. National Insurance," *Journal of the Military Service Institution* 54, no. 189 (May-June 1914): 293–316; and "A Study of Desertion," 1920, US Army Heritage and Educational Center (USAHEC), Carlisle, PA.

of the Great Depression in 1929, the service averaged a 40 percent annual turnover in the ranks, requiring it to secure 47,000 enlistments annually to maintain its 115,000 enlisted authorization.¹⁰

The Army's perennial recruitment problems in the 1920s were compounded by increasing demands for technical specialization in its troops. Although both Army doctrine and leaders emphasized the importance of the infantry-artillery warfighting team that had triumphed on the Western Front, the service's talent management policies told a very different story. As in previous peacetime eras, to attract and retain high-quality technical specialists, the Army promised vocational training, promotion to higher rank, and entitlements. Both external and internal pressure to prioritize aviation unbalanced the service's reward structure. By the end of the decade, the Air Corps' enlisted ranks numbered 12,034 to the infantry's 41,259. But the new combat branch boasted 195 master sergeants to the infantry's 150, 1,029 staff sergeants to the infantry's 318, 225 technical sergeants to the infantry's 57, and 146 first-class and 289 second-class specialists to the infantry's 25 and 35.¹¹

The first years after the end of World War II brought one of the worst recruiting crises in Army history. Barely half a year after Japan's surrender, the service secretary warned,

Our new Army, as distinguished from the pre-war force, must be an Army of trained technicians competent to handle complicated mechanical equipment. To recruit such an army we must compete on more equal terms with business and industry. If we are unable to do so, we will be forced to take leftovers. . . . Already many of our recruits are below the standard that should be set, we dare not reject them for fear that better men will not be forthcoming.¹²

In 1949, 8th Army Headquarters reported a shocking 98 percent of its replacements had tested below the acceptable Army standard for intelligence. With a line worker in an auto factory making over twice a private's pay and much of the citizenry all too aware of the dangers of combat

10. Harry G. Dowdall, "Modern Recruiting—A Problem," *Infantry Journal* 36 (June 1930): 616–25; E. N. Woodbury, "Morale: Improving the Standard of the Enlisted Many," February 28, 1931, USAHEC; and Robert K. Griffith Jr., *Men Wanted for the U.S. Army: America's Experience with an All-Volunteer Army Between the World Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).

11. *Report of the Secretary of War, 1930* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 312–13.

12. Robert P. Patterson to President, Sub: Increase in Pay for the Armed Forces, February 18, 1946, in Strategy and the Army Files, Folder 2, Box 1, Record Group 319, National Archives 2, College Park, MD.

service, the service's recruiting campaign emphasized occupational training, employment security, steady pay, benefits, and early retirement—not fighting. Enlistees—very few of them veterans—subscribed to the Army's message. One 1948 survey found that, as in the 1907 study, the great majority enlisted for personal improvement, not for any desire for a military life.¹³

Despite the Army's wish to return to an all-volunteer force—albeit one with far greater education and technical skills—the years immediately following World War II produced so few quality volunteers it was repeatedly forced to ask that Selective Service be extended. Peacetime conscription guaranteed the Army annual access to a cross section of young American males, from the barely functional to the college graduate. They entered a service busily transforming itself for the challenges of atomic war, a mission that required far greater levels of education and occupational skill than its predecessor. Between the immediate postwar and 1963, the number of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) grew from barely 50 to over 400, much of the expansion due to requirements for specialists in rapidly evolving fields such as missiles, computers, electronics, and so forth.

Fortunately for the Army, conscription ensured that many—if not enough—enlistees entered the service with the education or occupational background to fulfill its need for specialists. Unfortunately, conscription did not solve other perennial problems. Personnel churn guaranteed perpetual instability: every three years, the Army replaced virtually all its privates and corporals. As before, the Army had to funnel a high proportion of its most educated and technically skilled soldiers into elite units. In the 1950s, perhaps the most elite was Army Air Defense Command (ARADCOM), responsible for the missile bases guarding American cities. Army Air Defense Command administered its own recruitment program, enticing the best and brightest with promises of education, high-tech training, and comfortable stateside billets. The rest of the Army rediscovered that the more demanding a soldier's technical specialty, and the more time the Army had invested in his training, the less likely he was to extend his service. The service did retain 80 percent of its career sergeants—many less educated than the privates in their companies—and attracted a large number of semiskilled food processors and truck drivers. But it could not retain over

13. *Attitudes of New Recruits in the Army*, Report 50-314Ra, US Army, Information and Education Division, Troop Attitude Research Branch, January 15, 1948, Box 1006, Entry 93, Record Group 330, National Archives, College Park, MD.

a tenth of its specialists in electronics and sometimes ran a 90 percent deficit in top administrative personnel.¹⁴

As the Army withdrew from Vietnam, it endured what may have been its worst manpower crisis. Bowing to antiwar sentiment, in the summer of 1970, President Richard Nixon drastically cut Selective Service call-ups. The effect was immediate. The Army required 7,000 men per month for the combat arms and was lucky to get 400 volunteers; draftees provided the rest. By fall, the 82nd Airborne, the Army's sole remaining rapid response force, had to line out one of its three brigades to provide troops for Vietnam. The following year, the draft ended, and Congress suddenly decided to reduce enlisted strength by 50,000, accelerating personnel turmoil. Not only did the Army suffer a 25 percent cut in less than two years, but with the end of the draft, it also lost its primary enlistment incentive. The results were immediate: between February and March 1971, the number of volunteers dropped by 65 percent. One visitor to 7th Army discovered that the typical armored company could operate only 10 of its 17 tanks, and on any given day only a dozen of its 100 soldiers were available for training.¹⁵ Any assessment of the early success of the all-volunteer Army must take into consideration the prolonged crisis of the previous years.

Beginning in mid-1971, the Army's junior enlisted force transitioned from one drawn primarily from conscripts to one relying on volunteers. A combination of unprecedented factors—personnel cuts, pay raises, massive recruiting budgets, better housing, innovative local enlistment campaigns, enlistment options, educational benefits, high youth unemployment, and above all, the withdrawal from Vietnam—generated immediate positive results. The primary beneficiary was the combat arms. Encouraged by high bonuses and promises of less “chickenshit” regulations, the number of combat arms enlistments jumped from barely 3,000 in 1970 to almost 29,000 a year later.¹⁶

Unfortunately, this early success concealed a variety of fundamental misassumptions about the all-volunteer force that would soon contribute to yet another recruiting crisis. Perhaps the most egregious mistake was the economists' argument that soldiers, like other workers, sought to maximize their value on the job market. If the armed forces provided

14. On the post-World War II Army, see Brian McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army: Cold War GI's and the Atomic Battlefield* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). On technical specialties, see Harold Wool, *The Military Specialist: Skilled Manpower and the Armed Forces* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 33–38.

15. Lloyd Norman, “Turbulence and Army Readiness,” *Army* 21, no. 7 (July 1971): 10–14; and Robert K. Griffith Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968–1974* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1997).

16. L. James Binder, “Front and Center: Who Is Joining Who? Snipe at Those Slogan-Makers, but They Know the Territory,” *Army* 22, no. 4 (April 1972): 6.

funding and benefits comparable to or better than the civilian sector's, a sufficient number of skilled or trainable young people would enlist and make the service a career. However rational this approach appeared to academics, it created the demoralizing perspective both inside and outside the armed forces that the nation placed no value on patriotism, service, esprit de corps, or other intangibles. The Army's recruitment slogans, including the notorious "Today's Army Wants to Join You," only confirmed this perception.¹⁷

By the end of 1973, the fallacies of both economic arguments and of the idea that initial recruiting success could be maintained were obvious. Despite high bonuses and fringe benefits, the number of high school graduate enlistees fell far below the target goal, with the combat arms experiencing a 38 percent shortfall. The promised pay and benefits did not keep up with rampaging inflation, nor could the service construct decent housing for career personnel. The service endured a number of recruiting scandals that, in one instance, forced it to discharge 16 percent of its enlistees. Disciplinary and racial tensions traumatized the ranks: some young men volunteered because they believed they could secure cheaper drugs in Europe. When in 1974 Congress insisted that over half of new enlistees be high school graduates and no more than 18 percent from the lowest testing range, the service not only missed its recruiting goal by 20,000 but also had to grant almost 50,000 early discharges. Two years later, Congress cut educational benefits, thus removing a prime incentive for enlistment, and the service continued to suffer recruiting shortages. Under enormous pressure to produce results, recruiters continued to accept far too many who were dropouts, physically unfit, or socially maladjusted.

The Army's cascading personnel problems led Chief of Staff Frederick C. Weyand to commission an extensive study of first enlistment recruitment and retention. Completed in early 1976, its fundamental conclusion replicated Hagood's of 70 years earlier: "[young people] join the Army for their own purposes—job training, or self-development, or whatever—and not out of enthusiasm for the Army itself. They tend to see the Army as a temporary price they have to pay to accomplish these purposes."¹⁸ Following the logic of those economists who had first proposed abolishing the draft, young people avoided enlisting in the combat arms because it provided the least benefits in terms of both immediate and future occupational skills. By the later part of the decade, the Army was compelled to transfer soldiers into its fighting formations involuntarily.

17. *Department of the Army Historical Report FY 72*, 58, 76. On the post-Vietnam Army, see Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009) and Beth Bailey, *An Army Afire: How the US Army Confronted Its Racial Crisis in the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023).

18. "Attitudes and Motivations of First Termers toward Reenlistment," January 1976, Box 11A, Frederick C. Weyand Papers, USAHEC.

In 1976, it announced a mandatory reclassification of 14,000 noncommissioned officers into combat arms MOSs. In fiscal year 1980, one out of every three reenlistees in the combat arms had been transferred from their original MOS.¹⁹

By the end of the decade, the future of the all-volunteer force was so dubious that Army Chief of Staff Edward C. “Shy” Meyer warned the nation was fielding a “hollow” force.²⁰ In 1979, the Army had its worst recruiting crisis since the end of World War II. It missed its quota by more than 10 percent, despite lowering the minimum for testing scores, educational requirements, physical fitness, and moral standards and extending eligibility to 17-year-olds. By 1980, barely 41 percent of enlisted personnel had a high school diploma. Compounding these problems, two scandals broke. The first was that the Army’s primary talent assessment standard—the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery—was so inaccurate (or *misnormed*) as to be useless. The Army, like all the armed forces, had accepted thousands of unqualified personnel. The second revelation was widespread abuse in Recruiting Command: one investigation of a random sample of recruits found that almost 40 percent had illegally enlisted.

Set against these enormous recruiting problems of the 1970s, the Army’s revival in the 1980s is an inspirational redemption tale exemplified by the highly successful “Be All You Can Be” commercial. But three cautions should be noted. First, the Army’s success was still due to the same inducements in education, training, living conditions, and so forth promised the original recruits of the all-volunteer force—and then withdrawn. Second, outside pressures—enormous and ultimately unsustainable defense budgets, economic recession, and high youth unemployment—drove young Americans into uniform as much as rediscovered patriotism. Three, much of the perceived success of the 1980s revival was based not on a standard today’s officers would be comfortable with but only in comparison to how bad things had been in the 1970s.

Today, it is tempting to look back with nostalgia to what, in memory, was the highly trained, highly motivated, combat-ready Desert Storm Army. But as early as 1993, Chief of Staff Gordon R. Sullivan warned the service was having a harder time acquiring and retaining talent. By the end of the decade, the Army was missing its recruitment and retention goals, run ragged

19. “The Bulletin Board: Army Will Retrain 14,000 NCOs to Fill Combat Unit Slots,” *Army* 26 (January 1976): 10. For additional information on re-enlistees being moved from their original MOSs, see *Commanders Call*, Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA Pam) 360-870 (September-October 1982).

20. On the “hollow army” debate, see Frank L. Jones, *A “Hollow Army” Reappraised: President Carter, Defense Budgets, and the Politics of Military Readiness* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012).

by constant deployments, getting by with deteriorating materiel, and profoundly questioning its purpose. As today, most of these generally welcome factors—economic prosperity, high employment, and a lack of perceived national security threats—were outside the service’s control, but some, including a series of sexual harassment scandals, were the service’s responsibility.

Beyond the discouraging statistics predicting an imminent recruitment crisis, some senior leaders subscribed to the belief that the post–Cold War Army was getting too “soft.” It needed to recruit those seeking membership in a warrior band rather than transitory employees acquiring skills to sell in the marketplace. As today, the cultural emphasis on “warriorism” was contradicted by the service’s increasing interest in a future war scenario of full-spectrum dominance only possible with access to talent capable of mastering the latest electronic, communication, information, and other high-tech systems.²¹

This very brief survey of previous Army recruitment crises indicates several lessons worthy of consideration by those concerned about today’s personnel problems. First and foremost, the current recruitment crisis is nothing new. Indeed, it would be fair to say that since the beginning of the twentieth century, the peacetime volunteer Army has been in a crisis more often than not. Tempting as it is to blame “wokeness,” slacker mentality, Generation Z, or some other nebulous reason, the basic fact remains—as Hagood pointed out almost 120 years ago—that average recruits are very much like average Americans. They join the service for individual reasons, most based on expectations of personal benefit. Whether they are happy or unhappy, engaged or passing time, one-timers or career depends on the Army. As Hagood’s report implicitly recognized, and as later reports have confirmed, there is a great difference between job satisfaction—which an individual believes may be achieved in applying their trade—and job engagement, in which an individual believes their occupational skills can only be appreciated within a particular organization. For the Army, which lacks the flexibility and pay scales to compete with civilian employers in job satisfaction, it is crucial to emphasize job engagement.

A second conclusion is that while the service may portray its members as warriors, in practice it has recognized the necessity of accessing and retaining skilled labor. Almost from the Army’s beginning, these twin demands have created a de facto two-tier talent management system, with higher ranks, privileges, and pay for technical and administrative specialists. Until the Army can resolve the inherent contradiction of a recruitment campaign with

21. On the 1990s force, see David Fitzgerald, *Uncertain Warriors: The United States Army between the Cold War and the War on Terror* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

the slogan “Warriors Wanted” while offering \$5,000 enlistment bonuses to potential cavalry scouts and \$40,000 bonuses to satellite communications systems operators, this two-tier system will continue to exist.²² If the Army can resolve its cultural emphasis on what warriors should look like with historical realities, it can acknowledge that not all—or even the majority—of active personnel need to fit an ideal physical standard. Could Audie Murphy have passed the 2019 Army Combat Fitness Test? As a corollary, if the Army truly wants combat soldiers, their pay and benefits need to be close approximations to those of its specialists. Any young American worth wearing the uniform can understand the message sent by grossly disproportional bonuses.

A third conclusion is that both a recruiting crisis and its resolution are often determined by factors outside the Army’s means of control: the state of the economy, youth employment, public attitudes, recruitment budgets, pay and benefits, deployments, and so on. This reality does not mean that the Army should not seek to improve those factors that it does control. Historic enlisted gripes that date back two centuries—abusive or incompetent leadership, misassignment, renegeing on promised training or leave, make-work projects, and using soldiers as laborers—all contribute not only to poor retention but also to occurrences where, once released, soldiers will discourage other potential enlistees. But it does mean that the Army leadership should be cautious about blaming individuals and organizations for problems that have not been resolved for over 200 years.

A final conclusion is more optimistic. While still giving primacy to the Army’s mission as the world’s premier combat force, the *Army People Strategy* acknowledges that the service must shift its personnel policies from a system designed to fit a generic MOS to the correct “box” to one that effectively manages individual talents. The *Army People Strategy* highlights the diversity of threats, ranging from ground combat to cyber, and prioritizes “knowledge workers” who “add value and increase productivity through creative thinking and innovation.”²³ It appreciates that in today’s market economy, it is the Army’s task to provide not just job satisfaction—which is readily transferable to another workplace—but personal fulfillment found only in uniform. If successfully implemented—and not co-opted by those seeking to build a mythical warrior—this new approach may succeed in transforming recruits who enlist for personal benefit into soldiers who become “all they can be” in the Army.

22. US Army, “Bonuses,” Army (website), n.d., accessed July 18, 2017, <https://www.goarmy.com/benefits/money/bonuses-earning-extra-money.html>.

23. HQDA, *Army People Strategy*, 3.

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A Call to Action: Lessons from Ukraine for the Future Force

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ABSTRACT: Fifty years ago, the US Army faced a strategic inflection point after a failed counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam. In response to lessons learned from the Yom Kippur War, the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command was created to reorient thinking and doctrine around the conventional Soviet threat. Today's Army must embrace the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as an opportunity to reorient the force into one as forward-thinking and formidable as the Army that won Operation Desert Storm. This article suggests changes the Army should make to enable success in multidomain large-scale combat operations at today's strategic inflection point.

Keywords: strategic inflection point, Ukraine, multidomain operations (MDO), mission command, large-scale combat operations (LSCO)

Andrew S. Grove, president and CEO of the Intel Corporation, coined the phrase *strategic inflection* point in 1988 to describe a fundamental change in the well-being of an organization.¹ He visually depicted the inflection point as the exact moment when the nature of the organization changes in a subtle but profound and lasting fashion, leading to a path of growth or decline. At this juncture, adept and creative leaders recognize and accept this choice, advancing their organizations to meet the moment. Rigid, hesitant, or risk-averse leaders fail to accept this departure, leading to irrelevance and, ultimately, organizational failure.

Fifty years ago, in 1973, the United States Army faced a strategic inflection point. The US intervention in Vietnam left the Army demoralized, and American leadership watched as the Soviet-equipped Egyptian Armed Forces nearly defeated the US-equipped Israeli Defense Forces in the Yom Kippur War. In response, the Chief of Staff of the United States Army established the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to reorient thinking and doctrine around

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1. Andrew S. Grove, *Only the Paranoid Survive: How to Exploit the Crisis Points That Challenge Every Company* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996), 32.

the conventional Soviet threat. Chief of Staff of the United States Army (CSA) Creighton William Abrams Jr. selected General William E. DePuy, a revolutionary intellectual and combat leader, to spearhead the effort. DePuy's new organization was charged with studying the Yom Kippur War to develop concepts, drive procurement and materiel changes, and prepare the Army to fight a modern war.² Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, Abrams, and DePuy recognized that the Army was at a critical juncture and that only a monumental shift could prepare the force for the changing character of war. It would be 50 years before the next great inflection point suggesting the need for doctrine and materiel changes emerged.

Fifty years later, the Army faces a new strategic inflection point, a choice to alter the fundamental way the US Army prepares for the next fight. As the Defense establishment emerges from 20 years of counterinsurgency operations and begins to embrace a future of large-scale combat operations, the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict brings the changing character of warfare into sharp relief—a future of warfare marked by advanced autonomous weapons systems, artificial intelligence, and a casualty rate the United States has not experienced since World War II.

An American Army still grappling with the lessons from Afghanistan must embrace the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as an opportunity to drive progress toward the creation of a force and strategic direction as forward-thinking and formidable as the one TRADOC built for the United States ahead of Operation Desert Storm.³ In fall 2022, a team of faculty and students at the US Army War College assembled around this call to action. The team believed the Russia-Ukraine War unfolding in front of them was a wake-up call for the Army across the traditional warfighting functions that also required a culture change across the Army's education, training, and doctrine enterprise to embrace new lessons learned and to drive change across all echelons of the Army.

Education, Training, and the Roots of TRADOC

In his early experience in Normandy, DePuy saw his division lose 100 percent of its enlisted men and 150 percent of its officers in six weeks, providing him with a profound lesson on the ramifications of poor leadership and insufficient training. He spent the rest of his career focused on leader development, specifically on balancing the need for both training

2. Henry G. Gole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

3. John A. Nagl, "Why America's Army Can't Win America's Wars," *Parameters* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 2022): 7–19, <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol52/iss3/3/>.

and education. DePuy saw the necessity of linking the *what* and *how* (training) with the *why* and *whether* (education) in a performance-oriented training environment.

Importantly, DePuy also reoriented doctrine after the Yom Kippur War toward fighting manuals that specifically taught both combat and support soldiers how the Army would fight on a modern battlefield at every level, from weapons teams to division headquarters.⁴ The goal of the manuals was to orient soldiers and officers on practical ways to optimize the US Army's weapons systems and minimize vulnerabilities to the enemy's systems. He wanted to bring combat development out of the ambiguous and distant future into real-time training that anticipated imminent threats.⁵ Finally, DePuy believed that careful selection and training of soldiers—including training leaders and units together—mattered in the drive for combat readiness. DePuy's legacy lives on in two commands today. The United States Army Futures Command has responsibility for transformation and innovation priorities and should certainly pay close attention to the war in Ukraine, but DePuy's brainchild, TRADOC, can lead the Army back to the basics of education, training, and doctrine development at the pace it was founded—a pace that drove ruthless prioritization and reassessment.

Why Now?

American military leadership recognizes the titanic shift in geopolitics, with General Mark A. Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, calling Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine the "greatest threat to peace and security of Europe and perhaps the world" in his 42 years of uniformed service.⁶ The conflict in Europe and the arrival of artificial intelligence and autonomous and hypersonic weapons systems point to fundamental changes in the character of war and the way military forces fight.⁷ As it did after the Yom Kippur War, the US Army must examine the Russia-Ukraine War to derive lessons learned for doctrine, organization, training, materiel, professional military education, and Army leader development—and it must integrate all those lessons into organizing,

4. Romie L. Brownlee and William J. Mullen III, *Changing An Army: An Oral History of General William E. DePuy*, USA Retired Center for Military History Publication (CMH Pub) 70-23 (Carlisle, PA: United States Military History Institute, 1988), 182–85, 188–89, https://history.army.mil/html/books/070/70-23/CMH_Pub_70-23.pdf.

5. Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army*, 189.

6. Jim Garamone, "Potential for Great Power Conflict 'Increasing,' Milley Says," DOD News, U.S. Department of Defense (website), April 5, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2989958/potential-for-great-power-conflict-increasing-milley-says/>.

7. John Grady and Sam LaGrone, "CJCS Milley: Character of War in Midst of Fundamental Change," USNI News (website), December 4, 2020, <https://news.usni.org/2020/12/04/cjcs-milley-character-of-war-in-midst-of-fundamental-change>.

training, and equipping a force that can win future conflicts anywhere on the spectrum. At the request of TRADOC, a small team of faculty and students at the Army War College began an examination this year, leading to a handful of takeaways that merit further study in the areas of command and control, mission command, casualty replacement and reconstitution, artificial intelligence, intelligence and deception, and multidomain operations. While the War College team produced article-length analyses of each of these areas that we hope to publish soon, this article will hit the wavetops of each area in turn.

Command and Control

Twenty years of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in the Middle East, largely enabled by air, signals, and electromagnetic dominance, generated chains of command reliant on perfect, uncontested communication lines and an extraordinary and accurate common operating picture of the battlefield broadcast in real time to co-located staff in large Joint Operations Centers. The Russia-Ukraine War makes it clear that the electromagnetic signature emitted from the command posts of the past 20 years cannot survive against the pace and precision of an adversary who possesses sensor-based technologies, electronic warfare, and unmanned aerial systems or has access to satellite imagery; this includes nearly every state or nonstate actor the United States might find itself fighting in the near future. The Army must focus on developing command-and-control systems and mobile command posts that enable continuous movement, allow distributed collaboration, and synchronize across all warfighting functions to minimize electronic signature. Ukrainian battalion command posts reportedly consist of seven soldiers who dig in and jump twice daily; while that standard will be hard for the US Army to achieve, it points in a very different direction than the one we have been following for two decades of hardened command posts.⁸

Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast

Perhaps more important than fielding new command-and-control systems is the culture shift required to embrace distributed command and control, more commonly known as *mission command*. When Milley served as Chief of Staff of the Army, he explained mission command through a concept of “disciplined disobedience” in which subordinates are empowered to accomplish a mission to achieve the commander’s intended purpose—

8. US Army general officer discussion with Ukrainian battalion commander, early 2003, relayed to the authors.

even if they must disobey a specific order or task to do so. Without perfect communication, a subordinate officer or soldier must be trusted to make the right judgment call during battle, unencumbered by the need to seek approval for small adjustments.⁹

Mission command is not doctrine to be written, tested, and shelved. It must be lived, trained, rehearsed, and embraced as an integral part of daily operations and training in garrison and combat at every echelon. The advent of artificial intelligence affords the US military the opportunity to reimagine mission command and test it with virtual simulation environments. We cannot expect a brigade that micromanages garrison tasks to execute combat operations successfully at the attrition rate incurred in modern large-scale combat operations. Disciplined disobedience requires initiative both to provide and to understand the commander's intent, end states, constraints, and restraints. Leaders and followers must be brilliant at the basics but must also be able to embrace change and think critically. Trust is the essential ingredient in mission command, but changing the Army's organizational culture to encourage senior leaders to empower and support subordinates is an enormously difficult task that will require focused attention from senior Army leaders.¹⁰

Casualties, Replacements, and Reconstitutions

The Russia-Ukraine War is exposing significant vulnerabilities in the Army's strategic personnel depth and ability to withstand and replace casualties.¹¹ Army theater medical planners may anticipate a sustained rate of roughly 3,600 casualties per day, ranging from those killed in action to those wounded in action or suffering disease or other non-battle injuries.¹² With a 25 percent predicted replacement rate, the personnel system will require 800 new personnel each day. For context, the United States sustained about 50,000 casualties in two decades of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. In large-scale combat operations, the United States could experience that same number of casualties in two weeks.¹³

9. C. Todd Lopez, "Future War Requires 'Disciplined Disobedience,' Army Chief Says," Army (website), May 5, 2017, https://www.army.mil/article/187293/future_warfare_requires_disciplined_disobedience_army_chief_says.

10. Jamon K. Junius, "Mission Command in the Ukraine War" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023).

11. Brian Dukes, "Senior Leader Resilience and Replacement" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023); and Dennis Sarmiento, "Medical Implication of the Ukrainian War" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023).

12. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *Sustainment Operations*, Field Manual (FM) 4-0 (Washington DC: HQDA, July 2019), 4-4.

13. Department of Defense (DoD), *Casualty Status* (Washington, DC: DoD, May 22, 2023), <https://www.defense.gov/casualty.pdf>.

In addition to the disciplined disobedience required to execute effective mission command, the US Army is facing a dire combination of a recruiting shortfall and a shrinking Individual Ready Reserve. This recruiting shortfall, nearly 50 percent in the combat arms career management fields, is a longitudinal problem. Every infantry and armor soldier we do not recruit today is a strategic mobilization asset we will not have in 2031.¹⁴ The Individual Ready Reserve, which stood at 700,000 in 1973 and 450,000 in 1994, now stands at 76,000.¹⁵ These numbers cannot fill the existing gaps in the active force, let alone any casualty replacement or expansion during a large-scale combat operation. The implication is that the 1970s concept of an all-volunteer force has outlived its shelf life and does not align with the current operating environment. The technological revolution described below suggests this force has reached obsolescence. Large-scale combat operations troop requirements may well require a reconceptualization of the 1970s and 1980s volunteer force and a move toward partial conscription.¹⁶

Changing Character of War

Dramatically increased casualty rates, with resulting implications for force structure and manning requirements, are just one of the many dramatic changes in the character of war. The ubiquitous use of unmanned aerial vehicles, unmanned surface vehicles, satellite imagery, sensor-based technologies, smartphones, commercial data links, and open-source intelligence is fundamentally changing the way armies will fight on the land domain in much the same way that unmanned aerial vehicles have changed the way air forces conduct operations in this century.¹⁷ These systems, coupled with emerging artificial intelligence platforms, dramatically accelerate the pace of modern war. Tools and tactics that were viewed as niche capabilities in previous conflicts are becoming primary weapons systems that require education and training to understand, exploit, and counter. Nonstate actors and less capable nation-states can now acquire and capitalize on technologies that bring David's powers closer to Goliath's.

Beyond the military changes, transnational corporations in the commercial sector are playing an operationally significant role in the artificial intelligence and information battlespace. These private companies are exponentially

14. Stephen K. Trynosky, "Paper TigIRR: The Army's Diminished Strategic Personnel Reserve in an Era of Great Power Competition" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023), 22.

15. Trynosky, "Paper TigIRR," 20.

16. Kent Park, "Was Fifty Years Long Enough? The All-Volunteer Force in an Era of Large-Scale Combat Operations" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, June 2023).

17. Jay Bradley, "Fires in the Ukraine War" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023).

increasing the effectiveness of intelligence processing, exploitation and dissemination, dynamic targeting, and fires. A public-private partnership founded on transparency is essential when preparing for and while engaging in conflict. This partnership should be formed in garrison, and training exercises with private companies should be incorporated into wargames, planning, exercises, and experimentation to ensure that soldiers are familiar with the systems that may prove vital in future combat—and so that the private companies can gain a better understanding of what capabilities the military needs.¹⁸

Embrace Deception and Greater Use of Unclassified Intelligence

The incorporation of open-source and declassified intelligence into the information space immediately proved effective at the outset of the Ukrainian conflict, shifting domestic, international, and adversary reactions upon release. This technique will play an outsized role in future conflicts and, when advantageous, open-source intelligence should be integrated into intelligence fusion to ensure expedited dissemination to the public—always while ensuring the benefit of releasing the intelligence is worth the possible risk to sources and methods inherent to any declassification efforts. While many examples of the application of open-source information to the war in Ukraine cannot be discussed in this article, one that can is crowdsourcing possible war crimes to enable attribution and eventual prosecution of the perpetrators.¹⁹

Beyond open-source intelligence incorporation, Army professional military education and training must include basic instruction on deception operations, given the unparalleled transparency observed during operations in Ukraine. The Armed Forces of Ukraine are exceptionally skilled at deception across the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, an effect that requires synergy and trust to integrate capabilities across domains.²⁰

Multidomain Operations

The US Army continues to make significant headway in the development of multidomain operations (MDO), with its third MDO task force having

18. Schuyler Moore and Mickey Reeve, “U.S. Central Command Holds a Press Briefing on Their Employment of Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Systems” (transcript), U.S. Department of Defense (website), December 7, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3239281/us-central-command-holds-a-press-briefing-on-their-employment-of-artificial-int/>.

19. Deb Amos, “Open Source Intelligence Methods Are Being Used to Investigate War Crimes in Ukraine,” *PBS Newshour* (website), June 12, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/12/1104460678/open-source-intelligence-methods-are-being-used-to-investigate-war-crimes-in-ukr>.

20. Clay Huffman, “Intelligence in the Ukraine War” (strategic research paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023).

achieved full operational capability in May 2023. These theater-specific task forces incorporate long-range precision effects including cyber, electronic warfare, intelligence, and long-range fires to counter hybrid threats from Russia and China.²¹ Although the MDO task forces are modernizing rapidly, the remainder of the Army must also understand and incorporate the tenets of multidomain operations that will characterize future wars. The communication and visualization requirements for an all-knowing, all-seeing MDO task force are significant and largely immobile, meaning the smaller maneuver units must understand the capabilities of an MDO task force without necessarily having unencumbered access to it. The smaller units must anticipate gaps in enemy defenses and exploit emergent advantages.²² Anticipation, exploitation, and mission command do not happen organically; all require education, training, and doctrine.

After examining multidomain operations during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the study team asserts that the Army should reassess the roles and responsibilities of headquarters at echelon to account for multidomain operations and other emerging organizational structures like the Penetration Division.²³ The Army must expand linkages between joint exercises, division-level warfighters, and combat training rotations to teach synchronization of convergence and combined arms within the context of multidomain operations.²⁴ DePuy's "how to fight" manuals of the past reinvented as chat platforms fueled by generative AI knowledge bases and layered on top of National Training Center rotations, division and corps warfighter exercises, and small-unit training would serve as the ultimate convergence activity.

So What?

Grove believed that a strategic inflection point rarely announces itself but rather presents as a choice to bring clarity to chaos and take a new path, one that allows the organization to meet the moment rather than follow a comfortable but dead-end road. Today's Army is reminiscent of the Army of 1973, rife with experience, knowledge, and opportunities to change.

21. Charles McEnany, "Multi-Domain Task Forces: A Glimpse at the Army of 2035," Association of the United States Army (website), March 2, 2022, <https://www.ausa.org/publications/multi-domain-task-forces-glimpse-army-2035>.

22. Jesse L. Skates, "Multi-Domain Operations at Division and Below," *Military Review* (January-February 2021), 68-75, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/January-February-2021/Skates-Multi-Domain-Ops/>.

23. Nathan A. Jennings, "Considering the Penetration Division: Implications for Multi-Domain Operations," Land Warfare Paper 145 (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, 2022), <https://www.ausa.org/publications/considering-penetration-division-implications-multi-domain-operations>.

24. Steve Chadwick, "MDO and the Ukrainian War" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023).

TRADOC was established to transform the Army into the best-trained, -equipped, -led, and -organized land power in the world. DePuy's experiences in World War II and Vietnam and his study of the Yom Kippur War shaped his belief that transforming the Army into a land power capable of defeating a modern enemy required an Army-wide conceptual and doctrinal overhaul. He believed that officers must be intellectually capable and placed a premium on those who could solve problems with speed and quickly institutionalize change across the organization.

The Army of 2023 faces a similar inflection point, an opportunity to reassess the professional military education soldiers and officers are receiving across the TRADOC Centers of Excellence, their training experiences at the national training centers, and the daily training and education they receive throughout their careers. The AirLand Battle concept derived from the Yom Kippur War may now morph into artificial intelligence land battle informed by the Russia-Ukraine War and a future of largely unmanned or remotely manned ground combat vehicles. The Army must look at the scaffolding of everything from the basic courses to war colleges and orient lessons on what is being learned today, incorporating real-time, wartime action into the classroom and simulated battlefields. Although modernization is often focused on the material aspect of progress, the heavy lifting occurs when integrating new material with doctrine, organization, training, leadership, personnel, and facilities. To remain relevant to the pace of the rapidly changing character of war, TRADOC must lead this initiative now, adapting education and training in real time. Although crisis acts as a useful crucible for innovation, the US Army must ensure it captures these rapid changes in a manner that can be immediately written into doctrine, implemented in training, and woven into the daily lives of soldiers in garrison and combat.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine are buying lessons with blood that not only preserve their freedom but can also help the US Army deter and, if necessary, fight and win future wars at a lower cost of life and treasure.²⁵ It would dishonor those soldiers' sacrifices and the memory of General DePuy not to pay full attention.

25. Volodymyr Grabchak and Myra Naqvi, "Ukrainian History and Perspective" (Strategic Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 2023).

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US Army War College Russia-Ukraine War Study Project

Eric Hartunian

ABSTRACT: The Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College is analyzing the operational events and activities of the Russia-Ukraine War to understand the war's strategic implications for the US Army and its role within the NATO Alliance. Analysis will further inform theater and national US strategy and may benefit Army doctrine and concepts vis-à-vis the Russian threat. It will also examine how US and allied defense policies should adjust to the current character of war. Lessons learned from Ukraine are relevant to the evolving challenge in the Pacific in the near term and are opportunities for the United States to progress in terms of integrated deterrence and the provision of assistance with and through partners.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine War, NATO, Indo-Pacific, integrated deterrence, logistics, US Army, operations, strategy

There is no shortage of quality reporting and research on the now year-and-a-half-old war in Ukraine. The focus of these reports spans the range of political and military topics and the spectrum of tactical to strategic—everything from traditional deterrence and nuclear weapons use to weaponized drones and artificial intelligence and commercial space technology. So, do we really need another study on the Russia-Ukraine War? Of course we do.

The Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College embarked on an expansive Russia-Ukraine War study project in 2022 that will analyze operational events and activities—using appropriate evidence and information—to understand strategic implications for the US Army and its role within the NATO Alliance. Analysis will further inform theater and national US strategy and may benefit Army doctrine and concepts vis-à-vis the Russian threat. Importantly, the team's analysis will move beyond using “Russian ineptitude” to rationalize operational outcomes, instead examining whether the character of war itself has changed and whether or how US and allied defense policies should adjust.

Integrated deterrence is being put to the test in this conflict, and in many ways, Ukraine serves as a laboratory for the Army to see this concept

play out and to understand the Army's role in the integrated deterrence landscape. Clearly, deterrence activities preinvasion were insufficient to prevent the war. The critical part allies play in integrated deterrence, however, validates the Army's role in delivering capabilities to them in ways that enable success. Part of this ongoing study will look at how the Army strengthens integrated deterrence in Ukraine with intelligence sharing, training, and lethal capabilities and how these activities can translate to the Indo-Pacific theater.

As NATO member states contribute to Ukraine in various ways—with weapons and munitions, training, intelligence sharing, and so forth—some real shortcomings are being exposed, particularly in the weapons and ammunition space. While the United States and member states are cutting deep into their stockpiles, they must strike a balance with maintaining their defensive capabilities.¹ This problem has critical implications for the defense industrial base and the need to maintain sufficient quantities of munitions, particularly with the massive reliance on artillery by both sides.² Congress is already taking action to strengthen mechanisms to bolster production, but supply-chain issues increase difficulty on that front, and production timelines can take months, if not years.³

This is not a new problem—the war in Ukraine is only validating what researchers have been discussing for some time in relation to a Taiwan scenario.⁴ As Congress passes authorizations to increase the industrial base's capacity for materiel production, we still have questions about the ability to sustain prolonged large-scale combat operations in distant theaters. In addition to production challenges, the tremendous logistical challenges of shipping across the ocean in potentially nonpermissive environments create more issues. Despite a robust and long-standing network of European allies to assist in that endeavor, contested logistics remains a challenge and strategic vulnerability.⁵ This situation is further exacerbated in the Indo-Pacific.

1. Sanya Mansoor, "Why the West Is Getting Nervous about Ammunition Shortages for Ukraine," *TIME* (website), March 16, 2023, <https://time.com/6263802/ukraine-west-ammunition-shortages/>.

2. Cynthia Cook, "Reviving the Arsenal of Democracy: Steps for Surging Defense Industrial Capacity," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (website), March 14, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/reviving-arsenal-democracy-steps-surging-defense-industrial-capacity>.

3. Loren Thompson, "Ukraine, Taiwan Challenges Spur Efforts to Strengthen Munitions Industrial Base," *Forbes* (website), May 12, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2023/05/12/ukraine-taiwan-challenges-spur-efforts-to-strengthen-munitions-industrial-base/?sh=50057c49226b>; and David Saw, "Demand and Supply – The Complexities of Artillery and Ammunition Supply in the War in Ukraine," *European Security and Defence* (website), January 30, 2023, <https://euro-sd.com/2023/01/articles/29154/demand-and-supply-the-complexities-of-artillery-and-ammunition-supply-in-the-war-in-ukraine/>.

4. Seth G. Jones, "The U.S. Defense Industrial Base Is Not Prepared for a Possible Conflict with China," CSIS (website), n.d., <https://features.csis.org/preparing-the-US-industrial-base-to-deter-conflict-with-china/>.

5. Anna Dowd, Dominik P. Jankowski, and Cynthia Cook, "European Warfighting Resilience and NATO Race of Logistics Ensuring That Europe Has the Fuel It Needs to Fight the Next War," CSIS (website), June 28, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-warfighting-resilience-and-nato-race-logistics-ensuring-europe-has-fuel-it-needs>.

The West's continued supply of increasingly advanced and capable weapons systems is threading a strategic needle of sorts—attempting to increase Ukraine's capability and lethality all while seeking to avoid Russia's murky red lines and avoid unproductive escalation. This endeavor has been successful so far, but the balance between avoiding escalation and implementing incrementalism with capabilities raises questions about strategic risk and conflict termination. In addition to weapons and munitions supplies, training and interoperability are of particular importance to the Army. The West's weapons-system contributions to the Ukrainians bring respective training and maintenance requirements. The speed at which the Army can deliver on both is critical to enabling the success of our partners. There are some imperfect similarities here with US military hardware sales to Taiwan as well, albeit outside the context of an armed conflict.

With a focus on Ukraine and Taiwan, it is important to continue to keep in mind the strategic implications relevant to the Army. The lessons learned from Ukraine are relevant to the evolving challenge in the Pacific in the near term and are also opportunities for the United States to take evolutionary leaps in the way the military constructs integrated deterrence and provides assistance with and through partners.

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Colonel Eric Hartunian, PhD, is the director of the Strategic Research and Analysis Department in the Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College.

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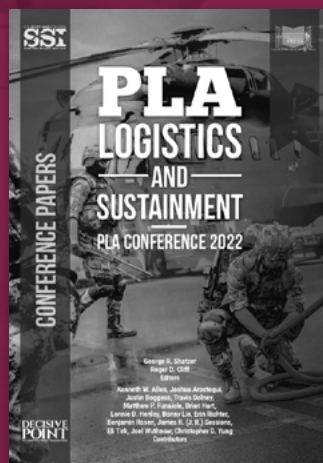
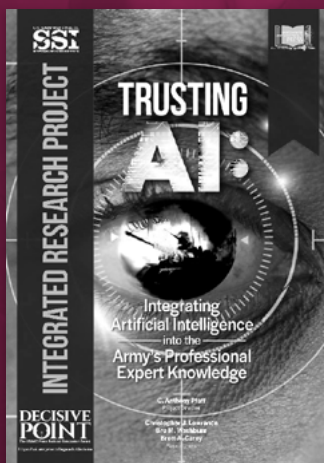
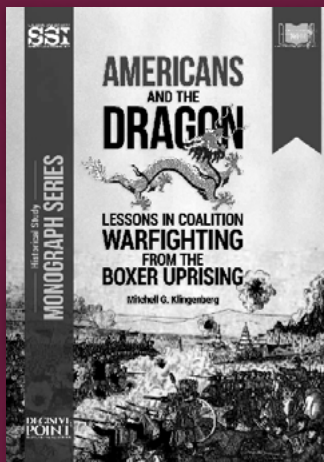
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