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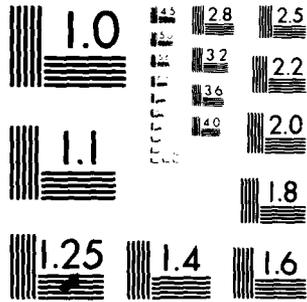
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**STRATEGY AND FORCES**

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**STRATEGIC ISSUES RESEARCH MEMORANDUM**

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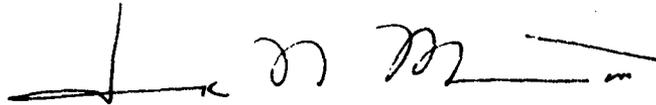
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## FOREWORD

Looking at the decade of the 1980's, the author of this memorandum discusses the need to have a strategy and force structure adequate to meet the challenges to be encountered in both the near term and out years. The author focuses first on flexibility, examining why it is needed, as well as on some implications which could arise as a more flexible force is attained. Attention is then given to outlining some dilemmas which will arise as a force which can both accomplish its mission in Central Europe and handle various contingencies takes shape. Options which should be considered by force builders are also discussed.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



JACK N. MERRITT  
Major General, USA  
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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS R. STONE was assigned to the Strategic Studies Institute upon graduation from the US Army War College in 1979. Prior to his arrival at Carlisle Barracks, he served as Senior Staff Officer, Army Training Study, Fort Belvoir. Previously, he commanded a direct support field artillery battalion in Korea where his responsibilities included the provision of fire support to the UN elements at Panmunjom. Lieutenant Colonel Stone is a graduate of the US Military Academy and holds a master's degree and doctorate in history, both from Rice University.

## SUMMARY

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US interests will be threatened often in the decade to come. Defeating these varied threats will require forces which are flexible in design, deployability, and employment and which are led by commanders who are flexible in thought. This memorandum deals with the need for flexible forces (forces which can respond across a spectrum of threats). Also examined are certain dilemmas faced by those who would structure a flexible force. The dilemmas considered are: NATO—non-NATO tension; coalition versus individual action; nuclear versus conventional forces; and modernization versus readiness. Finally, consideration is given to several choices which should be considered by the force builder. These are: heavy versus light forces; possible use of prepositioned equipment in areas other than Central Europe; and revised allocation of defense funds to improve strategic deployability.

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## STRATEGY AND FORCES

As General Edward C. Meyer, Army Chief of Staff, wrote in his recent White Paper, American strategic requirements for the 1980's focus on preparation "...for the 'three days of war:' to *deter* the day before war; to *fight* the day of war; and to *terminate* conflict in such a manner that on the day after war, the United States and its allies enjoy an acceptable level of security."<sup>1</sup> To meet these requirements national resources—political, economic, psychological and military—must be developed and readied for use on short notice. This paper will deal with the requirement to have a military strategy and force structure which will provide for national defense in the near term, while preparing for needs which must be met in the out years.

Though it is important to consider anticipated political, social, and economic changes as we look to 1990, the military thinker should focus particular attention on possible military changes. Adjustments in relationships between nations, possible centers of friction, and contemplated scenes of actual conflict are especially worthy of consideration. In all cases, particularly those in which an armed conflict is projected, the entire course of the confrontation, to include possible national objectives as well as means of conflict termination, should be analyzed.

Threats to our interests will occur in a variety of magnitudes and in various locations around the globe. To meet these challenges, American forces must be flexible in design, deployability and employment. Flexibility of thought, not only among the strategists and planners, but in the leadership as well, will have to be a prominent characteristic. Restructuring the armed forces so that the challenges of the future can be met will take time, effort and significant resources. Inertia caused by the tremendous investment made in current forces, the size of the force structure, the need for soldiers trained in new ways, long lead times involved in the design, development and production of new equipment, as well as resource limitations which constrain the purchase of new equipment, tend to restrict the speed at which the force structure can be brought into congruence with requirements based on a revised strategy.<sup>2</sup> At best, marginal changes can be made. This need to operate on the margin raises many force structuring issues to include the division of limited resources between modernization and readiness.

Military initiatives to steadily revise the force structure toward a long-term goal, such as that of attaining a flexible force, can be delayed, detoured, or completely frustrated if those managing the initiatives are not sensitive to the realities of the American political system. A major change in force structure may take a decade to accomplish. During this period, leadership, both military and civilian, will no doubt change several times with each incumbent eager to make his mark. Chiefs of Staff seldom serve more than a few years. Congressmen are elected for two years, senators for six, and the president for four. While many politicians serve a number of years and thus provide continuity on Capitol Hill, three presidential elections will be held during the decade of the 1980's, when so much force modernization is to be taking place. No president since Eisenhower has served two complete terms; and there could be several presidents during this decade. Each president would have his own ideas concerning national security and each would have his own relationship with the Congress and with the senior military leadership.

Though the nature of much of the force modernization which will take place in the 1980's has already been determined, political factors can have a decided influence over resource allocation. A definite sense of direction will have to be maintained if the military

attempt to achieve the long-term goal—a more flexible Army—is to succeed.

As I explore the subject of Strategy and Forces, I will look first at flexibility, by exploring not only why flexibility is needed, but also some implications that arise as we move toward a more flexible force, a force containing components which can respond across the spectrum of threats to US security. Next, attention will be paid to dilemmas faced by those who try to structure a flexible force and finally some options which should be considered by the force builder will be offered for consideration.

## FLEXIBILITY

American commitments to NATO will remain of utmost importance throughout the coming decade. Regardless of the likelihood of a war in Europe, NATO security is a vital national security interest of the United States. Soviet domination of Europe would not only have a major social, political, and economic impact on the United States, but it would also focus attention on the Middle East. As the Soviets tried to rebuild a war-torn, now Communist-dominated defeated Western Europe, they would need access to Middle Eastern oil. Should the United States attempt to oust the Soviets by invasion of the continent, American interest in Middle Eastern oil would increase as large quantities of petroleum would be needed for use during the invasion, subsequent operations, and the reconstruction of a liberated Western Europe.

The European members of NATO can do much to buttress their own defenses; however our strong and unwavering support of NATO is critical to their willingness to meet the force improvements which are being made in the East. But where some continental European nations can focus on preparing for a first battle on a familiar field, American planners can neither predict the opponent nor the field of battle. Opposition to US interests could come from a number of potential enemies. These challenges could range from an attack in Korea, to an attempt to interfere with American, European or Japanese access to vital imports, to attempts by the Soviet Union or her proxies to expand influence in Africa, the Western Hemisphere, or the Middle East. Our forces must be able to react to crises with a range of responses such that a prospective enemy is faced with uncertainty when he contemplates making an aggressive move.

In his "Objectives, Strategy, Force Structure: Thoughts for Planners," Robert S. Thompson describes three methods for the use of armed force to achieve an objective. These are: actual use of force, threat of use, and anticipation of use.<sup>3</sup> The development of ready, highly visible forces, capable of being transported to and sustained in trouble spots around the world will enable the United States to take advantage of each of the three methods. Should American leaders feel that a threat is necessary, for example, the force to back up that threat would be in being. Realizing that such a highly flexible force is ready, a prospective opponent would have to anticipate that the force would be used and this mere anticipation would, no doubt, affect his actions. American troops trained and equipped to meet any of a variety of contingencies will do much to deter and, if deterrence fails, defeat an enemy move.

The advantage of developing flexible forces has not gone unnoticed by the Soviet Union. General Meyer commented on what he terms a "significant growth of Soviet power projection capabilities."<sup>4</sup> Though improved, Soviet power projection capability will continue to be constrained during the 1980's. Currently the Soviets can send small detachments throughout the Third World; however, the Russian capability to support these forces and sustain them if opposed is limited. These forces are lightly armed, but capable of defeating many of the opponents they are likely to meet in an area such as Africa South of the Sahara. Soviet sealift is being improved. Large amphibious assault ships are joining the fleet and an underway replenishment capability is being developed. In addition, two vertical/short take off and landing (VSTOL) aircraft carriers are already at sea<sup>5</sup> and there are unconfirmed reports that the Soviets are building a large carrier capable of handling high performance aircraft.

These improvements have concerned US defense planners. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown remarked "The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan suggests that the USSR, emboldened by the growth of its raw military power, may be tempted to use that power for new expansion, aimed in particular at dominating the oil-rich region of the Persian Gulf."<sup>6</sup> Deterring and, if necessary, countering Soviet expansionist moves will be a high priority for American forces throughout the decade. Flexible forces will be needed to accomplish this task.

## DILEMMAS IN STRUCTURING A FLEXIBLE FORCE

Those who are building a flexible American force are facing a number of dilemmas, a few of which will be touched upon here. These are: NATO—non-NATO tension, coalition versus individual action, nuclear versus conventional forces, and modernization versus readiness.

Force builders must keep in mind the objective from which both strategy and force structure are to be derived. The United States must be able to project power outside of Europe so that threats to American vital interests can be met and, if necessary, defeated. Meanwhile, the potentially decisive area, Central Europe, cannot be made unduly liable to danger. This need to provide for force projection, while at the same time keeping NATO strong, can be termed potential NATO—non-NATO tension

A strong American commitment to NATO has been deemed to be essential to the protection of a US national interest. What is under discussion, therefore, is not whether support should be given to NATO, but how much support is enough. What portion of troops, equipment, supplies, and sustainment capability should be earmarked for Europe, what should be available for use elsewhere and what, if any, should be retained as a strategic reserve?

Those tasked with answering these questions should consider not only the need to deter the Warsaw Pact in the potentially decisive theater and thus maintain a stable central front, but they should also strive toward the allocation of forces for non-NATO contingencies such that these elements can rapidly defeat an enemy before any conflict they enter can escalate to a major involvement.

Army leaders and planners must truly think "flexibility" if the end is to be achieved. Intellectual ties to thinking primarily about the defense of Europe are hard to sever. Fighting in Germany and France, with divisions organized into corps is not only a type of fighting with which American officers are familiar, but it is also a type which has resulted in clearly defined American victories. It seems to be much more interesting to reread the pages which describe the triumphs of Pershing and Eisenhower, than it is to study the difficulties encountered by Ridgway and Westmoreland. The exploits of tank battalion Commander Abrams appear more inviting than do the actions of Abrams as COMUSMACV. But the two world wars are history. Lightness and mobility are required if

success is to be achieved on the far flung fields which may be the sites of battle during the next decade.

Questions that should be raised include: How much sustainment capability must be provided for those forces selected to handle non-NATO contingencies? What would the effect be in NATO if forces stationed in the United States designated for NATO were committed elsewhere?

Attempts will be made to enhance the readiness of US troops committed to both the NATO and non-NATO contingencies. New weapons are coming into the inventory, tactics are being improved, and commanders are being given time to better train their troops. Even with these improvements, however, the NATO - non-NATO tension will continue throughout the decade.

Often when faced with alliance problems such as conflicts of interest, requests for aid, need for concessions, and actual interference between parties, strategists long for the simplicity of "going it alone." Throughout the ages, alliances and coalitions have been beset with problems. In the greatest wartime alliance of all time, the allied effort in the Second World War, the allies, even those who shared a common language, had serious differences.

Alliances can aid the United States in protecting its worldwide interests and discharging its global responsibilities. Through the years, we have come to rely on help rendered by our alliance partners. As the Secretary of Defense wrote in his FY 1981 Posture Statement:

Ever since 1969, we have defined nonnuclear adequacy as the capability to deal simultaneously with one major and one minor contingency in conjunction with our allies. In order to achieve the necessary capability, we have depended primarily on our allies to man the forward defense lines in peacetime. This, in turn, has permitted us to organize a centrally located reinforcement capability of ground and tactical air forces, naval forces for sea control and power projection, and a backup capability of National Guard and Reserve forces.'

Our national policy, therefore, is one of alliances and indeed the NATO and Korean alliances are in place and are functioning reasonably well. Though American forces are being modernized and capability is being increased in areas such as deployment, readiness, mobility, and sustainability, we must look for greater allied assistance. Securing such assistance poses monumental problems but efforts must continue.

NATO, focused as it is on Europe, would not be of assistance in support of US or allied objectives beyond the continent, but individual member nations, with interests outside Europe, might be called upon for help. For example, the Indian Ocean is a potential trouble spot located far from the traditional centers of American power. Though in the days since the taking of the hostages in Iran the American naval presence in the area has been significantly increased, other nations could perhaps share the load on a more permanent basis. Dov S. Zakheim, of the Congressional Budget Office, speculates that as French, British, Dutch, and Australian naval units normally operate in the Indian Ocean area from time to time, it might be possible to effect a multinational arrangement and thus allow some American units to be employed elsewhere. A similar US-British grouping might be maintained in the Persian Gulf, even after the current crisis passes.<sup>8</sup>

Other stress points around the world could be increasingly tended by America's allies. Throughout the decade of the 1980's innovative thinkers, both here and abroad, should search out areas of possible cooperation so the allies could work together to calm international turbulence and maintain the peace.

Another dilemma which faces the force builders is the allocation of resources between theater nuclear and conventional forces. The answer is not clear-cut for we cannot rationally go to either a pure nuclear or pure conventional force, but rather we must be able to employ any of a range of options. Theater nuclear forces are especially important in Europe where they play a critical role as part of the deterrent Triad of conventional, strategic nuclear, and theater nuclear forces.

Once again, the question is how much is enough? Resources allocated to theater nuclear forces cannot be used for conventional forces or strategic lift. Due to recent Soviet modernization through the introduction of the MIRVed, mobile SS-20 missile and the BACKFIRE bomber, the NATO Triad force structure has been put at risk. As former Secretary Brown has written, "With these new and more accurate weapons, the Soviets might make the mistaken judgment that they could threaten our allies without fear of retaliatory attacks on their territory, especially if they did not threaten to attack US forces or territory."<sup>9</sup>

To maintain NATO capability, development is proceeding on two mobile land-based missiles—the PERSHING II and the

Ground-Launched Cruise Missile. These weapons will possess a range such that they can threaten the Soviet Union and thus hopefully enhance deterrence. Current planning calls for a total of 572 long-range theater nuclear force weapons to be deployed—108 PERSHING II launchers and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles. Though there is no plan now to match each Russian system with a NATO system, if the Soviet buildup continues as the decade passes, pressure could grow for the devotion of more resources to the construction of additional NATO weapon systems.<sup>10</sup>

Weapons systems, this time conventional, form the crux of one of the toughest dilemmas which must be faced by both military and legislative decisionmakers: the allocation of resources between force modernization and force readiness. Due to a slowness in modernization which can be traced back to the Vietnam war period, much Army equipment is currently undergoing modernization. During this decade, years of research, development, and testing will pay off as new equipment is fielded at a rate greater than has ever before been accomplished. Though this modernization brings with it the advantages provided by new technology, the cost in dollars is high. As the Army budget is constrained, an acquisition plan complete with priorities, will be employed. Strict adherence to priorities is essential if adequate resources are to be protected to support increased readiness. The key will be the enhancement of force capability. Though force capability enhancement is difficult to measure, it does provide a yardstick against which programs can be compared. Where it can be demonstrated through experience and analysis that more capability can be bought through modernization than through putting the comparable amount of resources into readiness programs, modernized equipment will be purchased. Where the converse is true, the resources will go to readiness and no matter how attractive the program, modernization will have to be delayed.

Allocation of resources to readiness is not as politically appealing as spending for new weapons systems. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized this problem in his Posture Statement for FY 1981 when he wrote:

One way in which Congress can be of particular assistance in supporting increased readiness is through greater sensitivity to the cumulative impact caused by successive years of over squeezed Operations and Maintenance

(O&M) accounts. The Services, OSD, and OMB all share with Congress the responsibility for the size of our backlog. Constituencies are rare and dispersed for such mundane but critical elements of support as spare parts, repairs of equipment and antiquated facilities, exercises, flying and steaming hours, and many others.<sup>11</sup>

General Jones went on to advocate continued modernization, but not at the expense of current capability.

As we move through the decade, it will take careful application of sound reasoned logic, both at the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, to make the best resource allocation. Dollars will be needed for both modernization and readiness.

Dilemmas as mentioned above and others must be faced by those who try to structure a flexible force. Common to all is the problem of resource constraints. There simply are not enough dollars, people or time to do everything desired. Difficult choices will have to be made at every turn. Throughout, the final objective of building and exhibiting the capability to meet threats to our vital interests, wherever such threats occur, must be kept carefully in mind.

#### OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE FORCE BUILDER

Many options are available to the force builder as he tries, within resource and other constraints, to accomplish his task. Those to be touched on here are heavy versus light forces; use of prepositioned equipment in areas other than central Europe; and revised allocation of defense funds to improve strategic deployability.

Before moving to a brief discussion of various options, it would be well to examine an aspect which should be taken into account throughout all force building exercises—that of the psychological impact which the force structure being developed will have on our friends and prospective enemies. While deterrence, a psychological condition, has been highly influential on US strategic planning, the possible psychological impact of force options should also be carefully considered. Real effectiveness is important, but perceived effectiveness is critical as well. If a prospective enemy perceives a force to be effective, if it appears effective, if the image of power is projected in such a manner that his key decisionmakers view the force as something to be reckoned with, then psychological impact will have been felt.<sup>12</sup> If on the other hand, in a well meaning effort

to secure more resources, our leaders paint too bleak a picture, if they convey an image of weakness either in resolve or in warmaking capability, potential enemies may perceive that the time is right to move, either peripherally or directly, against American vital interests.

To meet and defeat the potential threat, work is currently being done on determining a sound and affordable mix of forces. Flexibility of choice is not great in this area. Much equipment for heavy forces has already been prepositioned in Europe. As there is no real option related to the forces which will fall in upon this equipment, the choice devolves upon the remaining forces. Increased attention is being paid to the use of light divisions in Europe where they might be employed in difficult terrain or urban areas. Both light and heavy divisions may be needed if we are to be prepared to respond to contingencies, as the 1980's will present us with many and widely-scattered threats to US interests. Force packages, to include a support structure, for non-NATO rapid deployment use must be designed to meet a wide range of needs in such a manner that once on the scene a speedy resolution of the problem can be achieved. Available resources are strictly limited and will remain so throughout the decade, thus wise and careful planning will be required to ensure that contingencies, anticipated and unforeseen, can be met.

Flexibility can also be affected by prepositioning material in areas other than central Europe. Work is already being done in this area with the loading of USMC equipment, supplies, and ammunition on ships which would be placed in potential crisis areas. Former Secretary of Defense Brown has written that criteria for the selection of areas to use for the prepositioning of materiel include: "...theaters where the probability of conflict is significant, attacks with little warning a danger, and the consequences of conflict most severe...."<sup>13</sup>

Several areas of the world fit the Secretary's definition, yet those who study the problem must carefully consider the effect that further use of prepositioned equipment will have on the flexibility which is essential if contingencies are to be met. Equipment prepositioned aboard ship may be some days steaming time away from a crisis, but at least the equipment can be moved. Materiel placed ashore is more vulnerable and in addition, unless the crisis occurs near the equipment location, moving the needed items in

time of crisis will be difficult at best. Strategic lift, scarce as it is, will have to be diverted to the stockage sites. Necessary landing and overflight rights will have to be obtained and reception capability assured. Even if all of these obstacles can be overcome, the configuration of the set could be inadequate to handle a crisis in an area different from that for which it was designed.

There is also the danger that prepositioning equipment in another country could force us into involvement in local conflicts. How would we react, for example, if a revolt broke out and the rebel forces with which we would not want to be allied, seemed to be winning? Would we support the government? Would our prepositioned equipment be confiscated and pressed into the local fight? What would our reactions be if the leader of the ilk of Idi Amin were to come to power? These factors and others will have to be carefully studied as the option of making future use of prepositioned equipment is explored.

The final set of options to be considered in this paper is that involving revised allocation of defense funds to provide for improved strategic deployability. As resources are finite, should this option be adopted resources might be taken from the Army. This would cause difficult tradeoffs to be made. Ships and large planes are long lead time items and a number of years could pass before this Army sacrifice would begin to be evident in actual improvements in strategic lift.

Enhanced strategic deployability is currently but one of a number of key programs which must be considered by each service. One approach to solving the problem might be the creation of a mobility service which could be composed of air, sea, and ground elements to include civil assets in time of war or national emergency, and which would have its own budget.

This brief look at options available to the force builder in the areas of types of forces, use of prepositioned materiel in areas other than central Europe, and strategic lift is not intended to be exhaustive. It does illustrate, however, the types of decisions—hard choices—which must be made as the force builder tries to structure a flexible force which can both accomplish its mission in central Europe and handle various contingencies.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have explored both dilemmas to be faced by those who try to structure a flexible force, a force which can successfully execute a strategy of flexibility, and options to be considered. Resources are few, the threat is great, and our problems seem at times insurmountable. If we are to meet the strategic requirements described by General Meyer, such that we are prepared to deter and if necessary fight and successfully terminate wars, we must look for opportunities amidst the dangers.<sup>14</sup> As we prepare, we can continue to approach our desired end through close attention to all dimensions of the task and careful structuring of forces which are not only as effective as we can make them, but are also perceived to be effective by leaders throughout the world.

## ENDNOTES

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4. Meyer, *White Paper*, p. 1.
5. The Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *United States Military Posture for FY 1981, A Supplement to the Chairman's Overview*. Washington: Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1980, p. 27.
6. Harold Brown quoted in "Pentagon Leaders Pay Tribute to Women Graduates," *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1980, p. A28.
7. Harold Brown, *Department of Defense Annual Report Fiscal Year 1981*. Washington: US Department of Defense, 1980, p. 7.
8. Dov S. Zakheim, "Towards a Western Approach to the Indian Ocean," *Survival*, Vol. XXII, January-February 1980, pp. 10-13. Zakheim discusses in some detail how such an Indian Ocean force might be formed.
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12. Edward N. Luttwak, "Perceptions of Military Force and Defense Policy," *Survival*, Vol. XIX, January-February 1977, pp. 2-6; Thompson, "Objectives, Strategy, Force Structure," pp. 16-18.
13. Brown, *Annual Report*, p. 7.
14. Meyer, *White Paper*, pp. 1, 17.

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