

AUSA POSITION PAPER

WHY DO WE NEED AN ARMY?



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ARMY WAR COLLEGE

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WHY DO WE NEED AN ARMY?

At no other time in our history has there been such widespread confusion about the size, role, costs and effectiveness of our Armed Forces. With so many conflicting pressures, it is little wonder that we tend to lose sight of some of the fundamentals of a realistic defense force, an understanding of which can help us to more intelligent decisions across the whole spectrum of defense requirements.

During this period of active negotiations and a renewed search for a new international order, it is particularly appropriate to examine the basics of our military structure. We have to assure ourselves as a nation that the military posture of the U.S. really does provide the capability to support United States national policy in all situations against all reasonable threats. We need to be sure that our military program provides for forces and measures that provide a credible, integrated, and realistic deterrent to war and, if necessary, to wage war in such a manner as to achieve our national objectives.

Since World War II, we have used our military force in being as the backbone of our national policy of containment and deterrence. Now, with at least a temporary lessening of tensions among the big powers, the military establishment has been under both internal and external pressure to spell out the details of effective and realistic deterrence, both because of the awesome responsibilities it has been assigned and because of growing budget restrictions.

The bulk of the public controversy concerns our strategic armaments and most particularly our strategic strength in relation to the Soviets. The maintenance of nuclear parity is an essential keystone to our defense structure.

It is against this backdrop that we address the question: "Why do we need an Army?"

The principal basis of Army legitimacy, philosophy and doctrine is expressed in Title 10, United States Code, Section 3062. It defines the Army's role this way, "It is the intent of Congress to provide an Army that is capable, in conjunction with other armed forces, of preserving the peace and security . . . of the United States; . . . supporting national policies; . . . implementing the national objectives; . . . and overcoming any nations responsible for aggressive acts that imperil the peace and security of the United States.

"(The Army) shall be organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations on land . . . (and) . . . (it) is responsible for the preparation of land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war except as otherwise assigned and, in accordance with . . . integrated mobilization plans, for the expansion of the peacetime components of the Army to meet the needs of war." These fundamentals remain sound and provide an adequate basis for meeting the challenge of today's complex and changing world.

A very basic principle of warfare is that wars are fought for the control of land areas and the people who inhabit them. Although land, sea and air forces are complimentary, Army forces possess capabilities which set them apart. The Army can direct and support full-time and comprehensive control over the land, over its resources, and over its people. In peacetime, this power is the basis of the stability, law, and order essential to a free society. In wartime it is the ultimate decisive act of occupying and securing of those land areas necessary to the achievement of our national objectives. This is particularly true in the limited war situation where there is an overriding requirement on the ground for forces that can occupy and continuously control the people in the contested area. Only Army forces can execute and support a requirement of this type for any period of time.

In its deterrent role, the military is as important to the political intention that it conveys as it is to the sheer destructive power it can wield. In the era of nuclear stalemate, the role of the Army has taken on even greater importance. It emerges as the really significant balance of employable power and has profound effect on the military relations between powers. The force in being is so important because our old pre-nuclear concept of total war of the forties is viewed more and more as an unrealistic alternative.

Operating behind our shield of nuclear sufficiency, Army forces thus provide the basic credible deterrence against and only acceptable response to non-nuclear military adventurism.

It is obvious from the record of recent years that the availability of nuclear weapons and a preponderance of strategic delivery means have scarcely slowed the historical march of conflict.

Since 1945, there have been more than 130 armed conflicts in the world, a number of which have either involved the major powers or have had the strong potential for doing so. This would tend to bear out the observation by Will and Ariel Durant in their book, "The Lessons of History," that "War is one of the constants of history and has not diminished with civilization or democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history, only 268 have seen no war." The United States has been directly involved in more than eighteen separate confrontations including Berlin, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic and others -- all of which contained the ingredients for serious involvement even in our nuclear environment. Coincidentally, almost all of these have had as their ultimate and credible solution the ability of ground forces to move in, occupy the territory and accomplish the objectives.

When we consider our growing reliance on strategic materials and trade from abroad and our security partnerships currently involving directly some 46 nations,

the essentiality of a strong, visible United States defense force is abundantly clear. General Abrams, the Army's Chief of Staff, emphasized this point in recent testimony before Congress when he said, "I do not know, nor do I propose to forecast, when and where some contingency will arise calling for the use of Army forces. I only know that such a contingency probably will arise and it is our business to be prepared for it. We are faced with uncertainty and, in the face of uncertainty, we need an Army. There is even today no more positive declaration of national interest and national will than placing trained and disciplined military force on the ground.

"There is little doubt that real opportunities exist today to reach more lasting and less dangerous security arrangements which rely less on military confrontation and more on negotiation and cooperation. Diplomacy and military strength are not competing approaches in our pursuit of peace -- they are part and parcel of a common approach to achieve detente. The condition for successful diplomatic solutions to major world problems in today's international atmosphere will be enhanced if military alternatives become unacceptable to other nations because of our military strength."

In today's world, American foreign and military policy will be increasingly constrained by the weapons technology and arms control agreements. An effective Army "force in being" will grow in importance to our goal of deterrence.

There are areas of actual and potential disturbance which endanger the climate of order and stability so important to the peaceful adjustment of the delicate agreements and negotiations still under way. It is a major role of the Army to provide the capability for carrying out the land power tasks of the United States policy so that turbulence is reduced, stability is preserved, and peace is achieved under the rule of law and without destruction of the institutions of society. This

is the broad objective beyond any war. Its achievement requires the clearly understood capability of Army land power not only to fight and defeat an enemy but also its ability to control land area and people after the fighting has ended.

Strong, mobile, modern Army forces project the most credible deterrence to non-nuclear aggression available to mankind. It is our view that such forces have never been more urgently needed. It is a matter of serious concern that the size of our Army forces have been reduced so far that their ability to meet their legitimate requirements have been impaired.

Not only do we need an Army -- we need a strong one and we need it now. Recent history suggests that such an Army constitutes the best investment for peace that we can make.