

# The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

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Manuscript 3225

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# Change and Innovation in the Institutional Army from 1860–2020

John A. Bonin and James D. Scudieri

**ABSTRACT:** This article showcases the understudied institutional Army, the generating force, as a critical prerequisite for overall strategic success. Competition, crisis, and conflict require more than the manned, trained, and equipped units that deploy. This article analyzes six case studies of institutional Army reforms over 160 years to examine adaptation in peace and war. The conclusions provide historical insights to inform current practices and fulfill the Army's articulated 2022 Institutional Strategy.

**Keywords:** institutional Army, generating force, Department of the Army staff, Army Futures Command, adaptation, innovation

**F**or nearly 250 years, the US Army has adapted as a living organization composed of operating units and institutional organizations that generate combat power.<sup>1</sup> Institutional strategy, the mechanism by which senior Army leaders guide the department over the long term, establishes policy and prioritization for resourcing and gives coherence to the Department of the Army's purpose—to provide trained and ready forces for employment.<sup>2</sup>

The Army has undergone many institutional changes throughout its long history to ensure readiness and meet contemporary demands. Despite providing the generating force for the operational portion of the Army, the institutional Army remains understudied. This article traces six major reforms of the Army's institutional structure between 1860 and 2020 that were necessary to generate improvement to its combat forces. Although the development of Army Futures Command is still playing out, we observe several commonalities between the cases that should inform its further development. Success depended on top-down drivers of adaptation, including the synergy developed among multiple key senior leaders and their successors. By delving into each case, this article reveals the keys

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1. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *The Army*, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2019), 1-5; and HQDA, *Institutional Strategy: Army Strategy Note* (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2022), 9.

2. HQDA, *Institutional Strategy*, 1.

to successful institutional reform and the pitfalls and setbacks that impede progress.

## The Cavalry Bureau in the American Civil War

On April 12, 1861, when Southern secessionists fired on federal troops in Fort Sumter, South Carolina, the US Regular Army consisted of 16,000 widely dispersed personnel, with fewer than 4,000 east of the Mississippi River.<sup>3</sup> This small force led by old men, many of whose sympathies lay with the South, proved untrained and unorganized for large-scale combat operations. It consisted of 10 infantry, 4 artillery, 5 mounted regiments, 9 staff departments, and 3 geographic department commands, each with a general officer, all serving under 75-year-old Commanding General Winfield Scott.<sup>4</sup> Amongst the many problems faced by the Union Army, the supply and organization of its cavalry forces proved one of the most significant obstacles to success. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton created the Cavalry Bureau to confront the many institutional issues that prevented the Union from successfully manning its cavalry.

During the next two years, Confederate Major General Jeb Stuart gained and maintained cavalry superiority over Union forces in the East. Additionally, Union cavalry initially faced significant problems in all aspects of its expansion.<sup>5</sup> Major General David McMurtree Gregg commented after the war:

These regiments had been hastily formed . . . [with] many improper [officer] appointments . . . [and the] result was the failure of many of the regiments to make any progress in preparing themselves for the duties of cavalry in the field. . . . The condition of the horses . . . when received were (sic) totally unfit for cavalry service, having been taken . . . from dishonest contractors.<sup>6</sup>

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3. Clayton R. Newell and Charles R. Shrader, *Of Duty Well and Faithfully Done: A History of the Regular Army in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 3, 10. For a recent account of the pre-war US Army, see Clayton R. Newell, *The Regular Army Before the Civil War, 1845–1860* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2014).

4. Newell and Shrader, *Of Duty*, 3, 50.

5. See John A. Bonin, “Challenged Competency: Union Cavalry before, during, and after the U.S. Civil War,” in *Drawdown: The American Way of Postwar*, ed. Jason W. Warren (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 114–20; and Stephen Z. Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War*, vol. 1, *From Fort Sumter to Gettysburg* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 209–33.

6. David McMurtree Gregg, “The Union Cavalry at Gettysburg,” in *Annals of the War, Written by Leading Participants, North and South* (Philadelphia: Times Publishing Co., 1879), 372.

The availability of horses in the Army of the Potomac reached a crisis in October 1862. After General George R. McClellan ineffectively responded to a raid, he complained to the War Department about a lack of cavalry horses.<sup>7</sup> Quartermaster General of the Army Montgomery C. Meigs provided Stanton statistics indicating he had been supplying McClellan with more than 1,500 horses per week and alleged abuse by ill-disciplined troops was the reason for excessive wastage.<sup>8</sup>

A major factor in the improvement of the Union cavalry began on July 28, 1863. With General Order 236, Stanton established the Cavalry Bureau due to frustration with the “enormous expense attending to the maintenance of the cavalry arm” and the failure of the existing staff bureaus, such as Ordnance and Quartermaster. Stanton envisioned the Cavalry Bureau as an innovative organization that would “have charge of the organization and equipment of the cavalry forces of the Army, and the provision for the mounts and remounts of the same.”<sup>9</sup> In January 1864, after the first two heads of the bureau proved incapable, Stanton requested Lieutenant Colonel James H. Wilson from Major General Ulysses S. Grant’s staff.

Promoted directly to brigadier general, and in his new capacity, Wilson met with Stanton on January 24, 1864. Stanton told Wilson, “I want you to reorganize the business, drive the rascals out and put the cavalry service on an effective footing.”<sup>10</sup> Wilson overhauled the Quartermaster Department’s corrupt system of horse procurement, imprisoned businessmen for the war’s duration for failing to honor contracts, and adopted the breech-loaded Spencer seven-shot magazine carbine as the standard arm for the entire cavalry service, adding much-enhanced firepower and tactical flexibility. In addition, he supplied remounts and new equipment to veteran units rather than establishing fresh regiments. By April 7, 1864, with Stanton’s support, Wilson succeeded in completely reforming the Cavalry branch, and Grant wanted Wilson to lead a cavalry division in the Army of the Potomac. At Wilson’s suggestion, the Cavalry Bureau came directly under Major General Henry W. Halleck as the Army Chief of Staff.<sup>11</sup> The Cavalry Bureau subsequently enabled the mounting and arming of more than 200 regiments to a high professional standard. By 1865, the Union cavalry

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7. George B. McClellan, *Report on the Organization and Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac: To Which is Added an Account of the Campaign in West Virginia, with Plans of Battle-Fields* (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1863), 123.

8. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 19, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), 422–24.

9. *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 3, vol. 3, 580.

10. As quoted in Edward G. Longacre, *Grant’s Cavalryman: The Life and Wars of General James H. Wilson* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 98.

11. Longacre, *Grant’s Cavalryman*, 95–106; and James H. Wilson, *Under the Old Flag*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1912), 331.

had transformed into an efficient and effective mobile combat arm capable of decisive results in Major General Philip Sheridan's and Brigadier General Wilson's campaigns that same year.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, also by 1865, Stanton had become disenchanted with the bureau's ability to perform miracles, and the War Department disestablished the Cavalry Bureau.<sup>13</sup> The traditional bureaus resumed peacetime business as usual.

### **Peacetime Habits and Wartime Change: The US Army, circa 1898–1920**

As the nineteenth century ended, the bureau system still dominated the institutional Army. The bureau system consisted of 10 specialized, functional staff sections operating as virtually autonomous entities, eight of which exercised command authority. Staff cooperation was lacking. Bureau chiefs served long tenures and wielded considerable congressional influence, as civilian secretaries of war and military commanding generals came and went.<sup>14</sup> The Spanish-American War in 1898 raised elementary and very public questions on the efficacy of the bureaus, however entrenched. Widely publicized staging and deployment problems, compounded by poor support of combat operations in Cuba and the Philippines, challenged the institutional Army's ability to sustain force projection, a necessary capability for the United States as an emerging global power.<sup>15</sup>

The latest shortcomings prompted reform for an Army that faced growing global responsibilities. Elihu Root, appointed secretary of war on August 1, 1899, brought his business acumen, legal experience, reformist energies, and his best-known initiative—the Army War College—to bear on the institutional Army. A board of three officers first convened in February 1900 to draft regulations to establish the institution, and the Army War College began in February 1901 as an ad-hoc board, the first step in an evolutionary development process, which included functioning

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12. Bonin, "Challenged Competency," 109–36.

13. Stephen Z. Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War*, vol. 2, *The War in the East, from Gettysburg to Appomattox, 1863–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 131.

14. James E. Hewes Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration 1900–1963*, Special Studies, US Army Center of Military History (CMH) Pub 40-1 (Washington, DC: CMH, 1983), 1–5.

15. J. P. Clark, *Preparing for War: The Emergence of the Modern U.S. Army, 1815–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 163–89; Daniel R. Beaver, *Modernizing the American War Department: Change and Continuity in a Turbulent Era, 1885–1920* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 27–30; Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 9–10; and Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 296–305, 313–14.

as an embryonic general staff.<sup>16</sup> The Army War College, developed in conjunction with a wider analysis of Army professional education at multiple levels, developed the United States Military Academy, Fort Leavenworth's General Service and Staff College, and various branch and technical schools.<sup>17</sup>

Root was also the first secretary to cut back the preeminence of the bureau system, whereby bureau chiefs dealt directly with the secretary's office. This change was neither abrupt nor final. He proceeded gradually amidst numerous interest groups, utilizing personal consultation, informed connections, and reformist allies.<sup>18</sup> Root had determined the Army did not require a commanding general selected by seniority but a chief as the senior military adviser to the secretary and a general staff as a planning and coordinating agency.<sup>19</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt backed Root and solicited congressional support to approve the establishing bill for a general staff.<sup>20</sup>

In its approval of the National Reorganization Act in February 1901, Congress expanded the regular Army and staff system detailed from line officers and ended permanent staff appointment—to the detriment of the bureaus. In March 1902, Root told Congress the War Department required firm executive control to succeed in wartime. Congress approved the establishment of the Army General Staff Corps, effective August 15, 1903, with 45 officers, three of whom were general officers, including the Chief of Staff. The new Chief of Staff imitated Western military practice and addressed constitutional and political sensitivities regarding the previous title of commanding general. The general staff was responsible for military policy and national defense plans while limited to four-year assignments. The Militia Act of 1903, also known as the Dick Act, after Representative Charles W. F. Dick, soon followed, tackling the

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16. Special Orders No. 42, February 19, 1900, Army Headquarters (HQ), Adjutant General's Office (AGO), temporary box 13, William Harding Collection, US Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC), Carlisle, PA; General Orders No. 64, July 1, 1902, temp. box 13, Army HQ, AGO, Harding Collection, USAHEC, Carlisle, PA; Coffman, *Regulars*, 182; Rory McGovern, *George W. Goethals and the Army: Change and Continuity in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019), 73–77; and Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 6–11.

17. General Orders No. 155, November 27, 1901, Army HQ, AGO, temp. box 13, Harding Collection, USAHEC, Carlisle, PA; General Orders 115, June 27, 1904, War Department, AGO, temp. box 13, Harding Collection, USAHEC, Carlisle, PA; Clark, *Preparing for War*, 200–215; and Coffman, *Regulars*, 176–85.

18. McGovern, *Goethals*, 71–73; Clark, *Preparing for War*, 189; Beaver, *Modernizing the War Department*, 31–32, 62; and Coffman, *Regulars*, 186.

19. McGovern, *Goethals*, 71–75; Clark, *Preparing for War*, 189–91, 193–95; Weigley, *History*, 314–16; and Beaver, *Modernizing the War Department*, 33–34.

20. Theodore Roosevelt, "Message of the President," Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Office of the Historian, Department of State, December 2, 1902, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1902/message-of-the-president>.

acerbic debates over federal-level integration of the Regular Army and National Guard with a reserve system to address Army roles in a wider world of rising great-power competition.<sup>21</sup>

In 1910, the year he became Chief, Major General Leonard Wood reorganized the general staff to consist of three divisions. One was the Army War College now merged with general staff planners.<sup>22</sup> Earlier, in 1904, Root secured Navy endorsement in an Army and Navy Board for joint planning.<sup>23</sup>

Change did not happen quickly or quietly. President William Howard Taft's administration in 1909–13, Root, and Major General Franklin Bell's tenure as Army Chief of Staff in 1906–10 blended nineteenth-century conventions with Progressive management styles and techniques. As Army Chief of Staff, Wood duelled with Fred C. Ainsworth, whose merged role as military secretariat and adjutant general provided tremendous influence to blunt reformist energies.<sup>24</sup>

The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 and military shortcomings during the 1916 Mexican Expedition (also known as the Punitive Expedition or Pancho Villa Expedition) prompted a congressional intervention. The National Defense Act of 1916, the most comprehensive military legislation in the nation's history, authorized a Regular Army, a Volunteer Army, a National Guard, an Officer Corps and an Enlisted Reserve Corps.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the legislation crippled the general staff, eliminating its administrative authority and restricting its function to war planning without War College assistance. Increased to 55 personnel, only half of the general staff officers could serve in the capital at one time. Conversely, each bureau became a statutory agency with a commanding officer as Chief. Even the president required congressional approval

21. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 193; and Coffman, *Regulars*, 191–92.

22. *Zone of the Interior: Organization and Activities of the War Department*, The United States Land Forces in the World War Series, vol. 3, pt. 1 (reprint, Washington, DC: CMH, 1988), 14, 24–28; William R. Roberts, “Reform and Revitalization, 1890–1903,” in *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present*, Contributions in Military Studies 51 (series), ed. Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 207–14; and Michael McCarthy, “United States Army: General Staff,” in *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Cipriano Venson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 702.

23. Weigley, *History*, 320; and *The U.S. Army in the World War I Era*, CMH Pub 77-2, The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War I Series, ed. Brian F. Neumann (Washington, DC: CMH, 2017), 7–13.

24. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 240–41; Beaver, *Modernizing the War Department*, 33–36; and Coffman, *Regulars*, 186–87.

25. For an overview, see *U.S. Army in the World War I Era*, 13–18. David R. Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War*, Armies of the Great War Series (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 29–30.

to accomplish change.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, “the bureau chiefs regarded the National Defense Act as their ‘Magna Carta.’”<sup>27</sup>

America’s formal entrance into World War I on April 7, 1917, as an Associated Power confronted the Army with a daunting challenge—how to conduct mobilization for a major industrial war. Army historians were most interested in troop deployments to France, while the reformation and establishment of upper-echelon structures to create strategic plans and organize and sustain the massive divisions and theater units to support them remain far less studied.

First, the Army’s senior leaders endured considerable turnover in the war years. President Woodrow Wilson appointed Newton D. Baker as secretary of war in March 1916. Baker lacked experience in Washington and knowledge of military affairs and, as a pacifist, opposed American entrance into the war. No fewer than three Army Chiefs served from September 1917 to the Armistice of November 1918. Generals Hugh L. Scott and Tasker H. Bliss spent much of their time outside Washington on overseas missions, lacked influence in the capital, and faced mandatory retirement age. Neither drove change in 1917, but Scott’s last annual report in September 1917 laid the theoretical foundation of a strong general staff and an Army Chief of Staff through whom the secretary commanded.<sup>28</sup>

Second, the American declaration of war came without readiness and preparedness, exacerbated by extant institutions and inexperienced leaders. Baker’s first year had rather tentative, not sweeping, reform. The 10 bureaus remained as powerful as ever.<sup>29</sup>

Third, strategic planners recommended against sending America’s few trained soldiers to France immediately to retain the cadre for expansion. Political imperatives dictated otherwise; the 1st Infantry Division departed for France in May 1917. Trained staff officers from the War Department

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26. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 253–55; Beaver, *Modernizing the War Department*, 68–69; Woodward, *American Army*, 31–33; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 19–21; Timothy K. Nenninger, “Army Enters Twentieth Century, 1904–17,” in *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts, Contributions in Military Studies 51 (series) (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 226;; and McCarthy, “General Staff,” *First World War Encyclopedia*, 702.

27. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 21.

28. Edward M. Coffman, *The Hilt of the Sword: The Career of Peyton C. March* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 40–42, 50–51; *Zone of the Interior*, 14, 27; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 21–26; and McCarthy, “General Staff,” *First World War Encyclopedia*, 702–3.

29. Five of the 10, Quartermaster General, Surgeon General, and Chiefs of Ordnance, Engineers and Signal, were known as the supply bureaus. See also, “Chart 1, Organization of the War Department, Apr. 6, 1917,” *Zone of the Interior*, 14, 16–17.



also departed, creating a serious brain drain of desperately needed experience.<sup>30</sup> The general staff prevailed in focusing on France as the main strategic effort.<sup>31</sup>

Fourth, the implications for an unprecedented projected wartime expansion to nearly four million were daunting.<sup>32</sup> The inflexible, stove-piped bureaus contributed to the problems. Ensuing tensions challenged the survival of the secretary, but he retained Wilson's trust. A general staff reorganization created five divisions, embodied in General Order 14 on February 5, 1918. The reactivation of George Washington Goethals, famed agent of the Panama Canal completion, as acting quartermaster general brought the will to impose centralization and efficiency.<sup>33</sup>

Baker then brought Peyton C. March back to Washington the same month. He served as Chief beyond the war's end. March's administrative abilities had been honed during the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War. His duty on the first general staff included acting as an observer of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and serving in the Adjutant General's Office. He established the technical branches of the Air Corps, the Tank Corps, the Motor Transport Corps, and the Chemical Warfare Service. He shortened cadet officer education at the United States Military Academy to one year and removed many distinctions between the Regular Army, the National Guard, and the National Army. He institutionalized these changes in General Order 80 on August 26, 1918, which also definitively disempowered the bureaus. He also initiated congressional updates and regular press conferences.<sup>34</sup>

Baker as secretary, March as Army Chief of Staff, and financier Bernard Baruch as chairman of the War Industries Board from January 1918 exemplified progressive-minded meritocracy and an example of a winning civilian-military team. March had commanded the American Expeditionary Force artillery for seven months and was acting Army Chief of Staff for six weeks. He became permanent Chief of Staff of the Army in May 1918.

30. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 26–27.

31. McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 703–4.

32. *U.S. Army in the World War I Era*, 6; and McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 704.

33. McGovern, *Goethals*, 164–65; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 37–38; and McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 704–5. See also, "Chart 7 – Organization of the General Staff, Feb. 1918," *Zone of the Interior*, 34, and "Chart 1 – The War Department, Late 1917," *From Root to McNamara*, facing 24–25; and Phyllis Zimmerman, "Goethals, George Washington," *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Cipriano Venson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 259–60.

34. Beaver, *Modernizing the War Department*, 102–3; Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 79; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 38–40; McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia* 702, 705; Mark R. Grandstaff, "March, Peyton Conway," *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Cipriano Venson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 369–71; and Holger H. Herwig and Neil M. Heyman, "March, Peyton C.," *Biographical Dictionary of World War I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 240–41.

March wielded the newfound powers of Chief supported by Baker without hesitation. He won few friends with his brusqueness, but he combined selfless dedication with professional ruthlessness to accomplish the change required to achieve victory in France. Success required the subordination of the bureaus.<sup>35</sup>

First, March supported expanded authorities for Goethals as acting quartermaster general. He then placed supply functions under the assistant chief of staff—now Goethals. March combined Purchase and Supply with Storage and Traffic into the Purchase, Storage, and Traffic Division with Goethals as director. Goethals became the critical senior subordinate able to bring Baker's vision and March's determination for institutional effectiveness to fruition.<sup>36</sup>

Continued congressional legislation, such as the Department Reorganization Act, also known as the Overman Act, facilitated the prosecution of the war effort and greatly reinforced March's initiatives and Baker's support.<sup>37</sup> For example, an act of May 18, 1917, removed restrictions on the size of the general staff, which was woefully small upon declaration of war, with only 19 officers in the capital.<sup>38</sup> The general staff went through no fewer than four wartime restructures, increasing to 99 in May 1917 and to 944 by November 1918.<sup>39</sup>

One area of contention defied reasonable solution: the lack of effective relationships between the Chief and general staff in Washington and General John J. Pershing and general headquarters, American Expeditionary Force (AEF).<sup>40</sup> In 1917, the president and the secretary gave Pershing broad authority as an overseas commander, resurrecting a de facto commanding general position. Subsequently, in 1918, both generals and their staffs could not conquer deep-seated, mutual suspicions. The Chief's suggestion to implement an officer exchange came to naught.<sup>41</sup> Particularly stormy was

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35. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 258; Beaver, *Modernizing the War Department*, 79–80, 119–23; and Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 64, 68–70, 78–79, 119–23, 147–48.

36. McGovern, *Goethals*, 166–84; and Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 62–63.

37. McGovern, *Goethals*, 182–84; Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 128, 135. For snapshots in September 1918 and 1919, see charts 3 and 4, respectively, in *Zone of the Interior*, 21, 23. For the importance of the Overman Act, see Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 41, 44, 48.

38. The British Imperial General Staff had started the war in 1914 with 232; the French and Germans had begun with 600–700. McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 703.

39. Dates were January 11, February, May, and August 1918. See charts 6, 7, 9, and 11, respectively, in *Zone of the Interior*, 29, 33–34, 38, 41, 52.

40. On the earlier relationships between the "line and staff," see John A. Hixson, "The United States Army General Staff Corps, 1910–1917: Its Relationship to the Field Forces" (master's thesis, Rice University, 1971).

41. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 260–61; McGovern, *Goethals*, 156–58; Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 58–61, 81–82; Woodward, *American Army*, 185–89; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 22–24; and McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 705–6.

March's "Goethals Proposal" to send Goethal to France to fix port operations. Moreover, he would be independent of the American Expeditionary Forces, with headquarters on par with Pershing's. The latter's recommendation instead overhauled his Services of Supply to fix the issue.<sup>42</sup>

American victory in World War I rested upon civilian and military strategic leaders who understood the preeminent need for and then led the radical, rapid change of the Army's highest-level organization, structure, and processes. They accomplished the pressing reforms of the institutional Army—with congressional support—which enabled the triumph of the American Expeditionary Forces in the field. American victory with the Armistice in November 1918 brought familiar demobilization, despite ongoing operations in Russia, the occupation of Germany, and reduced funding. March and the general staff's organization of the post-war Army's higher structure received little recognition. Their plan would have broken the power of the bureaus forever. Congress demurred, distrustful of a powerful military staff answerable only to the secretary and the Chief. The National Defense Act of June 4, 1920, did make the general staff the main body to create military policy, including mobilization and equipment of the future force, but restored the power of the bureaus.<sup>43</sup> The 1920s highlight a case of pressing wartime innovation with success undone by President Warren G. Harding's peacetime "return to normalcy."

The intrinsic strength of the bureaus (despite their inability to deliver under World War I conditions) remains a discouraging case study of organizational intransigence. These bureaus, however, were not merely entrenched bureaucracies. Their leaders and staff represented irreconcilable ideological and philosophical visions of how the Army should be run.

## General Marshall and an Army Headquarters for World War II

Unfortunately, the Army's command and staff situation at the onset of World War II necessitated a further reorganization of the US Army for global war. Based on the National Defense Act of 1920 and revised piecemeal over the next 21 years, in 1941, some 61 separate officials theoretically had direct access to the Chief of Staff of the Army. These officials included the special staff, and based on the 1921 Harbord Board, eight officers from a revised general staff. Direct access also included 25 combat-arm and technical branch chiefs and a host of corps and departmental commands.

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42. McGovern, *Goethals*, 188–92; Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 106–8; Woodward, *American Army*, 189; and Zimmerman, "Goethals," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 260.

43. Coffman, *Regulars*, 227–28; Coffman, *Hilt of the Sword*, 173–204; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 50–56; and McCarthy, "General Staff," *First World War Encyclopedia*, 706.

The Chief of Staff of the Army also served simultaneously as commanding general of the general headquarters, responsible for supervising and training all the Army's ground forces and the four Atlantic bases. Other major duties included frequent contacts for coordination with the US Navy through the Joint Board, with other cabinet departments, the White House, and Congress.<sup>44</sup>

After the Pearl Harbor attack, the Army's planned expansion to more than 8 million men, multiple theater commands, direct command of the Army's air arm, and the need for a single manager of the technical bureaus necessitated a rapid and major reorganization of the institutional Army. Two days after the attack, Marshall noted, "The War Department is a poor command post."<sup>45</sup>

He demanded "a drastically complete change, wiping out Civil War Institutions."<sup>46</sup> Both the Army Air Force and a general staff committee had been considering such a reorganization since August 1941.

In January, Major General Joseph T. McNarney, an Army Air Force officer from the War Plans Division, rapidly took charge of the project and presented the final version of recommendations to the Army Chief of Staff on January 31, 1942. This reorganization called for freeing the general staff from all activities except strategic direction and control of operations, determination of overall materiel requirements, and the development of basic policies affecting the Zone of the Interior; the staff created three major commands to supervise the Zone of the Interior. On February 11, McNarney received instructions to form an executive committee to implement the plan. Approved by the secretary of war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order on February 28, 1942, that directed the first sweeping War Department reorganization since 1903, effective March 9, 1942.<sup>47</sup>

The three major commands in the institutional Army Zone of the Interior (the continental United States) were responsible for arming, training, and equipping the Army, each reporting directly to Marshall as Chief of

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44. Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, The United States Army in World War II: The War Department (Washington, DC: US Army Historical Division, 1950), 81, and charts 1-4, p. 65; and Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, The United States Army in World War II: The War Department (Washington, DC: US Army Historical Division, 1950), 23.

45. Notes on Conferences in OCS, II, 441, War Department Chief of Staff of the Army reds., as quoted in Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 89.

46. George C. Marshall, as quoted in Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 289.

47. Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 70-74, 90-93; Weigley, *History*, 440-44. See also Jean R. Moenk, *A History of Command and Control of the Army Forces in the United States, 1919-1972* (Fort Monroe, VA: Headquarters, US Continental Command, 1972), 13-23.

Staff. One of these commands, Army Air Forces, had its own Air Staff and a separate commander, General Henry Harley Arnold, who also served as member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Army Ground Forces, commanded by Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, replaced the previous general headquarters and inherited all its training and supervisory responsibilities over ground combat troops in the United States. The reorganization abolished the “fiefdoms” of the previous chiefs of combat arms, initiated in 1920, and their function to develop tactical doctrine passed to Army Ground Forces. All support and logistical functions of the US Army passed to the newly created Services of Supply, later the Army Service Forces, under Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell. The offices of the supporting arms and services, including the Engineers and the Signal Corps, would continue to exist as subordinate to the chief of the Army Service Forces. To these three coordinating commands (Army Ground Forces, Army Air Force, and Army Service Forces), the Army general staff delegated operating duties concerning administration, supply, and training within the United States. The Army Chief of Staff could now focus solely on the responsibility for planning and providing strategic direction for Army forces in the theaters of war for the duration of World War II.<sup>48</sup>

The March 9, 1942, reorganization of the Army also created the Operations Division out of the War Plans Division of the general staff. This new organization allowed Marshall, as the Army Chief of Staff over the “Washington Command Post,” to monitor the conduct of internal Army activities by theater armies in multiple theaters of operation. It would also be the Operations Division, led initially by Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower, that would provide US Army staff participation in both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Combined Chiefs of Staff for the remainder of the war. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, which replaced the ineffective advisory Joint Board, provided a mechanism where Army, Navy, and Army Air Force senior leaders could reach acceptable agreements on nearly all significant US strategic and operational matters. This consensus mechanism would prove critical as the US Chiefs of Staff also served as the US delegation to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, with jurisdiction over the development of Allied grand strategy.<sup>49</sup>

World War II demonstrated how rapidly the Army could—and can—change its institutions. Over 20 years of peace had corroded the flexibility

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48. Weigley, *History*, 442–44. See also Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 289–98; and Ed Cray, *General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 278–79.

49. Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 98–103, 107, 135.

of the Army's institutions into numerous separate branch and technical service stovepipes. Several new organizations, such as the Army Air Force and the Armored Force, fought older branches and technical services for increased resources. Emerging overseas requirements, each facing undetermined threats, stretched the span of complexity of the Army Chief of Staff and a peacetime general staff. By late October 1944, the Army's major overseas theater commands were supervising more than five million soldiers.<sup>50</sup> Marshall's March 1942 reorganization of the Army proved elegantly simple in conception and extremely adaptable during the strain of large-scale global war. Marshall asserted he could not have conducted the war without having radically reorganized the Department to provide centralized, streamlined, and unified control. In effect, he was the real center of military authority within the War Department, buttressed by the support Roosevelt and Stimson provided.<sup>51</sup>

### Secretary Robert S. McNamara and US Army Combat Developments Command

Following 1946, the Army's successful wartime logistical, research, and development activities were once again spread amongst newly resurrected technical services. In 1952, however, the California Institute of Technology recommended the Army establish a combat development activity in response to deficiencies identified during combat in Korea. The Army's initial combat development program had been established first in Army Field Forces, the lineal successor to World War II's Army Ground Forces, and after 1955 was assigned to its replacement, Continental Army Command, with the goal of providing optimum combat effectiveness.<sup>52</sup>

As secretary of defense in the early 1960s, Robert S. McNamara wanted to centralize the Department of Defense further based on Cold War threats and the expansion of the US military. In addition to establishing the Defense Intelligence Agency in August 1961, he directed Cyrus R. Vance Jr. to study the advantages of common supply activities. Based on this study, McNamara

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50. Cline, Appendix B: U.S. Army Commanders in Major Theater Commands, December 1941–September 1945, *Washington Command Post*, 373–81. These commands included European Theater of Operations, US Army; Mediterranean Theater of Operations, US Army; Persian Gulf Command; US Army Forces, China, Burma, and India; US Army Forces in the Far East; US Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas; Caribbean Defense Command; and the Alaskan Defense Command.

51. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 128–29.

52. Weigley, *History*, 550. See also Moenk, *Command and Control*, 32–36; and Hassan M. Kamara, *Army Combat Developments Command: A Way to Modernize Better and Faster than the Competition*, The Land Warfare Papers No. 119 (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, Institute of Land Warfare, July 1918), 2–3.

established the Defense Supply Agency on January 1, 1962, with 60 percent of its staff coming from the Army.<sup>53</sup>

He also directed the “Study of the Functions, Organization, and Procedures of the Department of the Army, OSD Project 80 (Army).” The results of this study, also known as the Hoelscher Report, called for the replacement of the Army’s traditional technical services.<sup>54</sup> As a reorganized Continental Army Command assumed control over all individual and unit training, the Army erected two other major functional commands on July 1, 1962—the Army Materiel Command and the Combat Developments Command. The Army Materiel Command assumed the various equipping functions of the technical services with five subordinate field commands developing and procuring specialized equipment. Test and Evaluation Command became responsible for final acceptance and for maintaining uniform standards, while the Supply and Maintenance Command received, stored, and shipped weapons and equipment.<sup>55</sup>

Under Lieutenant General John P. Daley, Combat Developments Command planned the evolution of the Army and its tactics, organization, and doctrine. Initial subordinate headquarters included the Combat Arms Group, concerned with the main combat arms of the Army; the Combat Service and Support Group, concerned with the logistical support of the force; and three specialized staff sections.<sup>56</sup> Most controversially, Combat Developments Command took proponency for most, but not all, Army field manuals, with the Continental Army Command retaining 169 of 472. In addition, the Combat Developments Command received transfer of 451 spaces from the Continental Army Command to form combat development agencies co-located at each Continental Army Command school.<sup>57</sup>

The 1962–63 reorganization of the US Army provided a better institutional focus on the expanding conflict in Southeast Asia. While Army Materiel Command took the lead in procurement and sustainment, Combat Developments Command provided the Army capabilities for testing and evaluation. McNamara’s analysts believed traditional Army elements were resisting the potential of helicopters and the improvement of Army tactical

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53. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 306–15.

54. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 316–43; Moenk, *Command and Control*, 43; and Jean R. Moenk, *Operation STEADFAST Historical Summary: A History of the Reorganization of the US Continental Army Command* (Fort McPherson, GA: Historical Office, US Army Forces Command, 1973), 1.

55. Weigley, *History*, 550. The five were Missile Command, Munitions Command, Weapons Command, Mobility Command, and Electronics Command.

56. For a comprehensive list, see Department of the Army, *The United States Army Combat Developments Command, First Year: June 1962–July 1963* (Fort Belvoir, VA: Headquarters, United States Army Combat Developments Command, August 1963), 7–11.

57. Moenk, *Command and Control*, 43–45.

mobility.<sup>58</sup> In April 1962, McNamara directed the secretary of the Army to “re-examine the Army’s aviation requirements” with a “bold new look at land warfare . . . conducted in an atmosphere divorced from traditional viewpoints and past policies.”<sup>59</sup> The resulting US Army Tactical Mobility Board, led by Lieutenant General Hamilton H. Howze, XVIII Corps commander and former first director of Army Aviation, conducted over 40 tests and experiments from May to August 1962. By November 1962, the Combat Developments Command received the Howze Board results and directed its subordinate combat development groups at Fort Leavenworth and Fort Lee to proceed aggressively with the development of the 88 detailed tables of organization and equipment and the 18 doctrinal manuals needed to implement air mobility in the US Army.<sup>60</sup>

In 1963, McNamara approved a 15,000-soldier increase in the Army specifically to form a test unit for air mobility. In 1963–64, the Combat Developments Command formed Project Test, Evaluation, Air Mobility to experiment and evaluate air mobility and Kinnard and his newly established 11th Air Assault Division (Test).<sup>61</sup> Kinnard received guidance from Army Chief of Staff Earle G. Wheeler “to determine how far and how fast the Army can go and should go in embracing air mobility.”<sup>62</sup> Kinnard, the World War II operations officer (G-3) of the 101st Airborne Division, attracted creative officers and instituted an idea center where all unit members could contribute. The successful evaluation of the 11th Air Assault by the Combat Developments Command in 1964 led directly to its reorganization as the 1st Cavalry Division and subsequent deployment to Vietnam in August 1965 using test doctrine developed by the Combat Developments Command. The Combat Developments Command remained instrumental during Vietnam in rapidly fielding and testing new equipment, such as night-vision devices, the AH-1G Cobra, and the TOW Cobra, while the Army Materiel Command struggled with the more sophisticated AH-56 Cheyenne, which the Army ultimately cancelled in 1972.<sup>63</sup> The Combat Developments Command facilitated the conceptualization and initiation of all the historic “Big Five” programs: the M1 tank, the M2 Bradley, the UH-60 Blackhawk,

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58. John A. Bonin, “Army Aviation Becomes an Essential Arm: From the Howze Board to the Modular Force, 1962–2004” (PhD diss., Temple University, 2006), 51–52.

59. Robert S. McNamara to Elvis J. Stahr, memorandum, April 19, 1962, in Enclosure 1, Directives, U.S. Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board, Fort Bragg, NC, August 20, 1962, “Final Report,” US Army Military History Institute (USAMHI), as quoted in Bonin, “Army Aviation,” 53.

60. Bonin, “Army Aviation,” 54–71.

61. Bonin, “Army Aviation,” 72–87.

62. Harry W. O. Kinnard Jr., interview by Jacob B. Couch Jr., USAMHI Project 83-6, 1983, 76; and Harry W. O. Kinnard, Jr., “Airmobility Revisited, Part I,” *U.S. Army Aviation Digest* 26 (June 1980): 3, as quoted in Bonin, “Army Aviation,” 78.

63. Bonin, “Army Aviation,” 79–95, 103–4, 126, 184, and 190–93.



the AH-64 Apache, and the Patriot.<sup>64</sup> These systems enabled the 1980s AirLand Battle doctrine, which triumphed in the First Gulf War.

## General Creighton William Abrams Jr. 1973 Reorganization

Before the end of the Vietnam War, the Army once again considered reorganization. Seen by the Department of Defense as an era for the transition from combat to peacetime, for the reduction of Army manpower, and for directed fiscal economy, beginning in 1969, the Army studied its institutional structure, especially the span of complexity of the Continental Army Command.<sup>65</sup> With troop drawdowns in Vietnam, the Continental Army Command soon commanded no fewer than 85 various entities and had 446,000 assigned active-duty personnel while being responsible for all ROTC and reserve component training. The Department of Defense and the Army staff also believed improving automation, reducing layers, and streamlining management functions through increased centralization would generate new efficiencies. The Army staff also anticipated that maintenance and training of the combat-ready forces based in the Continental United States would become as significant as improved individual training.<sup>66</sup>

Lieutenant General William E. DePuy, assistant vice chief of staff, had assessed an Army in shambles after its long years in Vietnam. It also faced being halved and the end of the draft. DePuy believed the Army needed a major reorganization to re-professionalize. His biographer highlights DePuy's goal of three big outcomes: "a revolution in training, bringing combat developments back from the futuristic to the nearer term, and taking doctrine from the abstract to a how to fight series of notebooks."<sup>67</sup> DePuy thus drove highly integrated doctrinal development and a requisite training regimen.

General Creighton William Abrams Jr. knew full well the fatal consequences of poor training. The concept he approved split the Continental Army Command into the US Army Forces Command and the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) while disestablishing the Combat Developments Command. Two new agencies, the Operational Test and Evaluation Agency and the Concepts Analysis Agency, would come

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64. Fred Gellert, "Big 5" (PowerPoint presentation, US Army War College, February 20, 2018).

65. Conrad C. Crane et al., *Changing the Institutional Army: 1962–2018* (Historical Services Division Study, Carlisle, PA: USAHEC, n.d.), 12–16.

66. Moenk, *Command and Control*, 53–55; and Moenk, *Operation STEADFAST*, 1–35.

67. Henry G. Gole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparing an Army for Modern War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 240.

from the Combat Developments Command and report to the Army staff through the assistant chief of staff for force development.<sup>68</sup>

The last commander of the Combat Developments Command, Lieutenant General John Norton, expressed his concerns about the reorganization. First, he did not believe proper analysis of any alternatives had taken place. Second, he did not believe fragmenting the Army's combat developments activities between the Army staff and the new Training and Doctrine Command would be best, noting the organization would be responsible for most of the combat developments function currently assigned to the Combat Developments Command as well as for the entire Army school system, individual training, direction of ROTC, and possibly the US Army Recruiting Command. This great diversity of missions and heavy workload would prevent the Training and Doctrine Command from significantly improving the Army's combat developments efforts since training issues would submerge the other missions. Norton even requested consideration for the name "Combat Developments and Training Command" rather than Training and Doctrine Command.<sup>69</sup>

The Army staff responded by establishing a small deputy chief of staff for Combat Developments office in TRADOC headquarters and three functional centers to integrate doctrine and developments as middle managers for the TRADOC commanding general—these centers would be the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, the Logistics Center at Fort Lee (now Fort Gregg-Adams), and the Administration Center at Fort Benjamin Harrison.<sup>70</sup>

On July 1, 1973, the Army officially split the Continental Army Command into the Forces Command and the Training and Doctrine Command. The Combat Developments Command had already been absorbed into the Continental Army Command on February 1, 1973.<sup>71</sup> DePuy, the first TRADOC commander, used the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War as the impetus to refocus the Army's attention on a Soviet threat in Europe. He later said the war was:

. . . the most fortunate thing for us because it dramatized the difference between the wars we might fight in the future and the wars we had fought in the past. And it drew our attention . . . in the US Army. . .

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68. Gole, *General William E. DePuy*, 222–35; and Moenk, *Operation STEADFAST*, 35.

69. Moenk, *Operation STEADFAST*, 74, 135.

70. Moenk, *Operation STEADFAST*, 213, 225–27.

71. For FORSCOM and TRADOC overviews, see Crane et al., "Changing the Institutional Army," 17–19 and 20–23, respectively.

that we missed one generation of modernization during the Vietnam War, and the Russians were one to two generations of equipment ahead of us.<sup>72</sup>

Later, in 1975, the Army also restructured Army Materiel Command into the Materiel Development and Readiness Command to place a new emphasis on research and development to acquire new weapons, an area considerably neglected while the Army was preoccupied with fighting in Vietnam.<sup>73</sup>

### Army Futures Command

The Army assessed its post-Gulf War 1990s force-modernization efforts as insufficiently bold. The post-9/11 era brought two protracted counterinsurgencies that became the center stage of doctrinal and materiel developments. After a half century, the institutional Army achieved a major organizational change in 2018 with the establishment of the Army Futures Command (AFC). The creation of another four-star Army Headquarters alone was controversial.<sup>74</sup> The road to Army Futures Command was rough.

The post-Gulf War Army was not stagnant. Senior Army leaders, however, determined that only incremental improvements in familiar contexts were achieved. The intent behind creating the Army After Next in 1994 was to forge ahead faster and further, 15 years and beyond. Army After Next leveraged a sophisticated simulation to test both concepts and technology. This experimentation for “light battle forces” examined compressed time frames to accomplish lethality.<sup>75</sup>

The Army was also far from dormant in terms of its institutional structure analysis. The Training and Doctrine Command had been working on current and future concepts in its Futures Center since 2003,

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72. William E. DePuy, “Final Interview,” interview by Brooks Kleber, May 23, 1977, in DePuy Family Papers, as quoted in Gole, *General William E. DePuy*, 240.

73. Weigley, *History*, 576. For a broad survey covering 1962–2002, see Crane et al., *Changing the Institutional Army*, 4–12.

74. For additional information, see Matthew Cox, “The Army Now Has the Most 4-Star Generals on Duty since World War II,” *Military.com* (website), August 28, 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/08/28/army-now-has-most-4-star-generals-duty-world-war-ii.html>.

75. John Matsumura et al., “The Army After Next: Exploring New Concepts and Technologies for the Light Battle Force” (documented briefing, Santa Monica, CA, RAND Corporation, 1999), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/documented\\_briefings/DB258.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/documented_briefings/DB258.html).

which became the Army Capabilities and Integration Center after 2006.<sup>76</sup> The Army Materiel Command established the Research, Development and Engineering Command in 2004 with the mission to field technologies.<sup>77</sup> These organizations, established to link concepts, doctrine, and new technology, confronted several high-visibility failures.

Unfortunately, several twenty-first-century force modernization initiatives for new combat systems became center stage, catastrophic acquisition failures. The Crusader 155mm self-propelled howitzer (intended to replace the M109A6 Paladin) was canceled in 2002, and the RAH-66 Comanche attack helicopter (intended to replace the AH-64 Apache series) was canceled in 2004.<sup>78</sup> The most sweeping failure was the Future Combat System, a system of systems to equip a brigade that pushed the envelope with novel technologies. As the centerpiece of Army Modernization, the program was massively expensive and ultimately canceled in 2009.<sup>79</sup>

Absorption in two decades of frustrating counterinsurgency operations arguably focused the Army and Joint Force on current operations and distracted from the evolving threats of China, Russia, and other adversaries. More challenging still are the potentially revolutionary changes in the characteristics of warfare and ensuing questions on the use of military power and Landpower specifically.

In March 2017, Army Chief of Staff Mark Milley asked Lieutenant General Edward C. Cardon, commanding general of the Office of Business Transformation and former commanding general of the US Army Cyber Command, how to restructure the institutional Army.<sup>80</sup> Members of Congress and senior Army leaders deemed the Army's modernization enterprise too slow, incapable of generating overmatch with advanced technologies, and lacking in unity of command for modernization. The Army had "disparate organizations and dysfunctional processes" that resulted in "25 percent of Development, Test, and Evaluation funds [spent] on cancelled programs."

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76. Michael Vernon Voss, "ARCIC Transitions from TRADOC to AFC," U.S. Army (website), December 10, 2018, [https://www.army.mil/article/214823/arcic\\_transitions\\_from\\_tradoc\\_to\\_afc](https://www.army.mil/article/214823/arcic_transitions_from_tradoc_to_afc); and Conrad C. Crane, Michael E. Lynch, and Shane P. Reilly, "A History of the Army's Future: 1998–2018 (v. 2.0)" (Historical Services Division study, Carlisle, PA, USAHEC, US Army War College, n.d.), 17–18.

77. "Fact Sheet: RDECOM History," US Army Research, Development and Engineering Command, April 2015, <https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/419775.pdf>.

78. "Crusader 155mm," Army Technology (website), February 15, 2001, <https://www.army-technology.com/projects/crusader/>; and "RAH-66 Comanche – Reconnaissance/Attack Helicopter," Army Technology (website), November 7, 2000, <https://www.army-technology.com/projects/comanche/>.

79. Christopher G. Pernin, et al., *Lessons from the Army's Future Combat Systems Program* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2012), iii, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2012/RAND\\_MG1206.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2012/RAND_MG1206.pdf). RAND\_MG1206.pdf.

80. Edward C. Cardon, e-mail message to author (Bonin), March 23, 2017.

Even approved programs struggled to get through the acquisition system, with 25 years as “the average time required to fully field a capability to every unit.”<sup>81</sup>

In October 2017, the Army created eight cross-functional teams reporting directly to senior Army leaders to enable the Secretary of the Army to identify and manage investment and divestment priorities by assessing them against the Army’s key modernization priorities.<sup>82</sup> On November 7, 2017, the Army Modernization Task Force under Cardon began a directed design for a new Army command focused on the future.<sup>83</sup> Working out of the Taylor Building in Crystal City (Arlington, Virginia), the Army Modernization Task Force assembled select personnel from the entire Army and received a short timeline. After selecting tentative courses of action (COAs) in January, the secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff directed a course of action analysis (war game) to “execute a rigorous and transparent analytic event with key representatives of the modernization enterprise to assess specified COAs to enable COA refinement” between January 29 and February 3, 2018, at the Center for Army Analysis on Fort Belvoir, Virginia.<sup>84</sup> The participants included more than 140 individuals from the Army Secretariat, the Army staff, and other Army commands.

The war game to craft a futuristic-focused command included eight “monitors” tasked with “a very unique role as part referee, coach, and contributor . . . to stimulate discussion, based on [their] experience and unique perspectives, with leading questions, if needed, to address each of the course of action evaluation criteria.”<sup>85</sup> Three courses of action were evaluated: a minimalist AFC headquarters plus only the cross-functional teams; a larger materiel-focused Army Futures Command with the cross-functional teams plus elements of the Army Materiel Command and Army acquisition; and a more holistic futures command including concept and materiel development with the Army Capabilities Integration Center and the Capability Development Integration Directorates from the Training

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81. Army Modernization Task Force (AMTF) ROC Drill II (read ahead, March 14, 2018), slide 2.

82. Ryan D. McCarthy, “Statement of Ryan McCarthy Nominated to Be Under Secretary of the Army before the Senate Armed Services Committee,” December 7, 2017, [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/McCarthy\\_07-12-17.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/McCarthy_07-12-17.pdf).

83. Ryan D. McCarthy to Principal Officials of Headquarters, Department of the Army, Commander, memorandum, “Army Directive 2017-33 (*Enabling the Army Modernization Task Force*),” Army.mil (website), November 7, 2017, [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/web/ARN6391\\_AD2017-33\\_Web\\_Final.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN6391_AD2017-33_Web_Final.pdf).

84. William Hix, e-mail message to author (Bonin), January 22, 2018.

85. Hix, e-mail message.

and Doctrine Command.<sup>86</sup> The wargame results still required higher-level decisions from the secretary of the Army.

In March 2018, senior civilian and uniformed Army leaders convened. The secretary of the Army approved the larger, more holistic Army Futures Command with the Army Capabilities Integration Center and the Capability Development Integration Directorates from the Training and Doctrine Command and the Research, Development and Engineering Command from the Army Materiel Command as well as acquisition elements. While the secretary of the Army and Army Chief of Staff elicited public comments, TRADOC Commanding General David G. Perkins opposed. Army General Order 2018-10 established the Army Futures Command to lead the Army's future force modernization enterprise.<sup>87</sup> General John M. Murray was charged with this mission as Army Futures Command's first commanding general on August 24, 2018.<sup>88</sup> What that mission means is still the subject of considerable debate.

A commentary from 2017, the year before Army Futures Command's establishment, recommended three goals: creating a centerpiece of Army Modernization with a culture of experimentation and developing concepts and technology together. The Army would gain a bona fide end-to-end solution with unity of command.<sup>89</sup> A commentary from 2018 sets the stage with the Army Modernization Strategy and its six capability areas to modernize critical core capabilities to regain overmatch for multidomain operations against near-peer adversaries.<sup>90</sup>

The Army Futures Command has a deliberately unorthodox structure to establish nontraditional relationships within the Army and across elements of the Joint Force, the interagency, and the private sector. It was also not built from scratch. In brief, the Army Futures Command received the reassignment of six subordinate organizations, three from the Training and Doctrine Command, one from the Medical Command, and two from the Army Materiel

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86. US Army Futures Command Task Force Course of Action Analysis War Game Pre-Event Brief, January 24, 2018.

87. HQDA, General Orders No. 2018-10 (June 4, 2018).

88. Britney Walker, "Lt. Gen. John M. Murray Promoted to General and First to Lead Army Futures Command," DVIDS (website), August 24, 2018, <http://www.dvidshub.net/news/290253/lt-gen-john-m-murray-promoted-general-and-first-lead-army-futures-command>.

89. Neil Hollenbeck and Benjamin Jensen, "Why the Army Needs a Futures Command," War on the Rocks (website), December 6, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/12/army-needs-futures-command/>.

90. Daniel S. Roper and Jessica Grasseti, *Seizing the High Ground – United States Army Futures Command*, ILW Spotlight 18-4 (report, Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, October 2018), 1–2, <https://www.ausa.org/sites/default/files/publications/SL-18-4-Seizing-the-High-Ground-United-States-Army-Futures-Command.pdf>.

Command.<sup>91</sup> There were some name changes.<sup>92</sup> Of greater note are the eight cross-functional teams designed to narrow existing capability gaps and the four integration and synchronization teams.<sup>93</sup> The command articulated its 2021 accomplishments by explaining the 35 priority systems for modernization.<sup>94</sup>

Such boldness has received mixed marks in its first four years. A 2019 report to the House Armed Services Committee from the Government Accountability Office emphasized the command's incomplete adoption of leading practices and the lack of a formal plan to identify and share lessons learned.<sup>95</sup> The 10-month gap between Murray's retirement and General James E. Rainey's appointment as commander further muddied evaluations of Army Futures Command's value to date.<sup>96</sup>

Recent analyses cite hindrances to Army Futures Command initiatives, such as senior official confirmation of the independent role of acquisition entities for modernization.<sup>97</sup> The same author foresees an identity crisis with "a rare public schism among Pentagon leaders."<sup>98</sup> The crux remains how to approach modernization. Decades of Army experience highlight several insights. First, the US Army, if not the wider Joint Force, is fond of technical solutions. Yes, these are major aspects of change. More rapid materiel acquisition is one element of future thinking and modernization. The command's lead is in concepts, experimentation, innovation, and thought. The search to regain overmatch for multidomain operations is no mere materiel solution, but rather a cultural and mental one.

## Conclusion

The US Army has changed its institutional structure infrequently and reluctantly when confronted with wartime problems or pressure from the

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91. Roper and Grassetti, *Seizing the High Ground*, 5.

92. "Army Futures Command – Supporting Commands," U.S. Army (website), n.d., accessed October 24, 2022, <https://www.army.mil/futures#org-who-we-are>.

93. "Army Futures Command – Cross-Functional Teams," U.S. Army (website), n.d., accessed October 24, 2022, <https://www.army.mil/futures#org-who-we-are>; and "Army Futures Command – Integration & Sync Teams," n.d., accessed October 24, 2022, <https://armyfuturescommand.com/ist/>.

94. "Army Futures Command – Year in Review," U.S. Army (website), n.d., accessed October 24, 2022, [https://www.army.mil/article/253447/army\\_futures\\_command\\_releases\\_2021\\_year\\_in\\_review](https://www.army.mil/article/253447/army_futures_command_releases_2021_year_in_review).

95. US Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Army Modernization: Steps Needed to Ensure Army Futures Command Fully Applies Leading Practices* (Washington, DC: USGAO, 2019), 16–17, 24–25, table 4, p. 25.

96. Jen Judson, "Army Futures Has a New Commander," DefenseNews (website), October 5, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2022/10/05/army-futures-command-has-a-new-commander/>.

97. Jen Judson, "In New Directive, US Army Reins in Army Futures Command," DefenseNews (website), May 4, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2022/05/04/in-new-directive-us-army-reins-in-army-futures-command/>.

98. Jen Judson, "Futures Command Faces Identity Crisis as Army Shifts Mission," DefenseNews (website), September 6, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2022/09/06/futures-command-faces-identity-crisis-as-army-shifts-mission/>.

highest echelons. The service secretary or Army Chief of Staff pushed five of the six case studies, and the Department of Defense pushed one in 1962. The 1863 Cavalry Bureau and the 1903 Root reforms rested upon activist War Department secretaries; Stanton and Root fathomed the need for substantive reform. Interestingly, the Cavalry Bureau, while one of the least known, is similar to a current cross-functional team, delivering rapid results for units in combat.

Wartime necessity provided great impetus under unforeseen conditions, as in the Cavalry Bureau in 1863–65, the Baker-March team in 1918, and Marshall in 1942. Such urgency is not generally possible in peacetime, however murky in twenty-first-century competition. In addition, wartime reforms did not often survive post-war interest in smaller force structures and reduced budgets. Furthermore, the Army has often accomplished pre-war and post-war adaptation and innovation in response to emerging trends on the world stage, as in the initiatives of Root from 1900–1904 and Abrams from 1972–73.

By 2018, the US Army had not seen a major reorganization of its institutional structures in over 45 years. Forces Command, Training and Doctrine Command, and Army Materiel Command inaugurated the “Training Revolution” of the 1970s and 1980s, AirLand Battle, and the “Big Five” force modernization. Yet, Army modernization slowed, and preparations for large-scale combat operations once again suffered, given the Army’s post-9/11 focus on two counterinsurgency and stability operations.

The creation of the Army Futures Command has a far different context today than in 1972. It is not designed to fix the acquisition system. Its mantra is a wider and deeper effort to transform Army processes (that is, culture and mindset). Traditional lessons learned or best practices may have limited applicability. Such is trailblazing.

These six major Army institutional changes followed a potential pattern. First, a key decisionmaker who recognized and framed a problem conducted an assessment of the situation. Second, higher-level staff presented proposed solutions. Third, senior Army leaders accomplished rapid decisions, including necessary legislative or presidential approvals. Lastly, innovative subordinate commanders and staffs executed aggressive implementation.

The case studies underline how institutional reform goes beyond the structural. Yes, each scenario had to balance the degree of centralized



or decentralized control. The greatest challenges were the ideological and philosophical differences over where to take the Army and how.

The Army faces further implications today amid the ongoing Army Futures Command case study. The case studies showcase timeless institutional dilemmas—irreconcilable interpretations of the roles of historical experience and traditions to solve current problems and how to devise future vision. For example, the Army’s bureau system chiefs from 1860–1960 fought adaptation in four of the six case studies.

The period 1899–1921 underscored the strength of civil-military relations to accomplish change with the powerful combination of the civilian secretary of war and military chief of staff leading the change with presidential and congressional support. Notably, Root’s and Baker’s ignorance of military institutions dictated a long learning curve, which then developed into highly successful tenures.

These case studies also preclude a neat dichotomy between reactionaries and reformers. First, change and adaptation occurred amidst a cavalcade of interest groups, necessitating a blend of continuity and change. Second, the Army adapted as it also reflected or reacted to civilian influences at large, not just government officials.<sup>99</sup> Third, post-war demobilization and “return to normalcy” often resulted in the elimination of proven wartime innovation.

Ultimately, substantive change and adaptation must outlast a specific secretary and chief of staff, especially in the transition from war to peace and current to future operations and peace postured for war. The Army Futures Command has one four-star general among four in the institutional Army. The command’s accomplishments will likely rest upon the synergy of secretary, chief, and all the Army’s four-star generals over time—for example, Abrams as Army Chief of Staff, General Frederick C. Weyand as his successor, and DePuy and General Walter T. Kerwin Jr. as first commanders of the Training and Doctrine Command and the Force Command, respectively. This year’s half-century anniversary of the Training and Doctrine Command and the Forces Command provides inspiration for the next half-century, with the understanding that it will likely be significantly different.

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99. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 1–9, 268, 270–74.

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