

## The Influence of U.S. Strategic Culture on Innovation and Adaptation in the U.S. Army

Hassan M. Kamara  
*U.S. Army, hassankay@icloud.com*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss>  
pp. 79-91

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Kamara, Hassan M.. "The Influence of U.S. Strategic Culture on Innovation and Adaptation in the U.S. Army." *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no. 4 (2015) : 79-91.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.8.4.1453>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol8/iss4/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

---

## **The Influence of U.S. Strategic Culture on Innovation and Adaptation in the U.S. Army**

### **Abstract**

Culture is an abstract phenomenon that influences its environment. According to culture theorist Edgar Schein, “culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations that derive from culture are powerful. If we don’t understand the operation of these forces, we become victim to them.” As a subset of culture, the strategic culture of the United States requires study so we can understand its influences on innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army, and try to manage those that adversely affect the institution’s ongoing transformation. Using the American Interwar era (1919-1941) as a case—based on some similarities to the contemporary period—this article focuses on the adverse influences of America’s strategic culture on innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army to provide insight to Army leaders addressing similar (recurring) cultural hindrances to transformation. As the Army transforms amidst conflict and budget reductions, it is important to examine and mitigate the negative influences of the broader strategic culture on its ability to innovate and adapt.

## Introduction

Culture is an abstract phenomenon that influences its environment. According to culture theorist Edgar Schein, “culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations that derive from culture are powerful. If we don’t understand the operation of these forces, we become victim to them.”<sup>1</sup> As a subset of culture, the strategic culture of the United States requires study so we can understand its influences on innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army, and try to manage those that adversely affect the institution’s ongoing transformation. Using the American Interwar era (1919-1941) as a case—based on some similarities to the contemporary period—this article focuses on the adverse influences of America’s strategic culture on innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army to provide insight to Army leaders addressing similar (recurring) cultural hindrances to transformation. The article does not intend to imply, by its focus, that American strategic culture is incompatible with innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army—contrastingly this nation’s strategic culture has fielded arguably the world’s most lethal land force—but it continues to exert some adverse influences on Army innovation and adaptation that require study and mitigation. This writing will highlight these adverse influences and recommend a way to manage them.

The literature on strategic culture reveals various interpretations of what comprises the strategic culture of a state. According to Peter Katzenstein strategic culture is a socially constructed identity that shapes national security policy and strategic behavior.<sup>2</sup> Alastair Johnston explained strategic culture as the interaction of a state’s higher level strategic assumptions shaped by history; and lower level assumptions about the best strategic options for operating in the rules-based international regime.<sup>3</sup> Despite various interpretations of what constitutes strategic culture, there is a common refrain that as a whole it influences state behavior. This theoretical dichotomy holds implications for innovation and adaptation in the U.S Army.

The interwar period is an excellent historical case for studying the influence of strategic culture on Army innovation and adaptation because it is similar to

---

<sup>1</sup> Schein, Edgar H, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2004), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Katzenstein, Peter J, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” *International Security* 4:19 (1995): 46–48, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539119>.

the contemporary period in terms of defense budget and force reductions, economic uncertainty, persistent conflict, and the proliferation of emerging military technology. Some scholars have even compared the complexity of the contemporary strategic environment to that of the interwar period. In 2014, John Peters and his colleagues wrote that “the adversaries and the missions that the Army must be prepared for are more ambiguous and diverse than at any time since the period between the World Wars.”<sup>4</sup> How American strategic culture influenced Army innovation and adaptation at a similar juncture in U.S. history can provide valuable insight into managing its effects on Army innovation and adaptation today.

Military change or transformation is mainly attained through innovation and adaptation. It occurs when technological innovation (new or existing technology) converges with adaptations in the military’s organizational structure, concept of war, and vision of future conflict. Theo Farrell similarly characterizes military change as “change in the goals, actual strategies, and/or structure of a military organization.”<sup>5</sup> Though he views military change as a series of paradigmatic shifts through time—revolutions in the conduct of select aspects of military affairs—Dima Adamsky also similarly characterizes military change, describing it as “radical military innovation, in which new organizational structures together with novel force deployment methods, usually but not always driven by new technologies, change the conduct of warfare.”<sup>6</sup>

## Strategic Culture and Army Innovation and Adaptation in the Interwar Period

Examining a broad, abstract subject as strategic culture requires adoption of units of analysis. Based on the earlier characterization of strategic culture as a driver of state behavior, this article adopts the following units of analysis to evaluate the influence of American strategic culture on U.S. Army innovation and adaptation in the interwar era:

---

<sup>4</sup> Peters, John et al., *A Methodology For Developing Army Acquisition Strategies For An Uncertain Future* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), 2, available at: [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND\\_MG532.su.m.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG532.su.m.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Theo Farrell, “Innovation in Military Organizations Without Enemies,” *International Studies Association Annual Convention*, April 16–20, 1996, in Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff (eds.), *The Sources of Military Change: Culture Politics and Technology* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Adamsky, Dima, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the U.S. and Israel* (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press 2010), 1.

- U.S. Congress and its role in defense legislation and oversight;
- U.S. Presidency and the preference for force and diplomacy; and the
- American Way of War

These units of analysis are adopted based on the theory that shared institutions and traditions and a mutual way of seeing things are aspects of culture. The cultural theorist Edgar Schein lists encompassing customs and rituals, and common paradigms of thought and shared meanings among the approaches to defining or describing culture.<sup>7</sup> The latter applies to culture at the strategic level. In other words, there are traditions, common paradigms of thought and shared meanings in the institutions that authorize (legally mandate), fund and employ America's Army in support of its strategic goals.

## The U.S. Congress and its Role in Defense Legislation and Oversight

The United States Congress has constitutional control of the national purse. The nation's elected legislators can shape policies supportive or obstructive of Army innovation and adaptation by affording or withholding the monetary resources vital to research, development, experimentation, procurement and doctrinal reorganization.

During the interwar period, Congress hindered conditions supportive of innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army. Arguably influenced in part by an anachronistic, 18th century tradition of post-war force and spending reductions, Congress adopted a parsimonious approach to national security that drastically reduced Army forces as well as War Department funding for research and procurement post World War I. According to Allan R. Millett and his co-authors, Congress believed the nation did not need a large active duty post-war force, thus it denied the Army's request for 500,000 active duty troops, and opted for an active force of 280,000 in the 1920 National Defense Act.<sup>8</sup> Congress chose not to fund the 500,000-man Army proposed by then Army Chief of Staff General Peyton March in the Baker-March bill. Congress did not see the need for a large standing army after World War I, despite the strategic commitments of the day, or the mobilization lessons of that conflict. David Johnson concurs that interwar

---

<sup>7</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Millett, Allan R., Peter Maslowski and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 344.

“Congressional attitudes reflected two fundamental American traditions: distrust of large standing armies and an unswerving belief in the preeminence of the citizen soldier. The U.S. National Army had mobilized when it was needed and demobilized when the emergency had passed—just as it always had.”<sup>9</sup>

The Congressionally mandated force and budget reductions of the interwar period denied resources vital for research and experimentation with doctrine, organization and technology—critical components of Army innovation and adaptation. Millet and his colleagues wrote that congressionally mandated spending cuts further “limited the Army to developing weapons prototypes: it did not have enough money to reequip its field forces to contemporary European standards.”<sup>10</sup> Defense spending cuts during the early interwar period denied critical funding for materiel development and procurement for the Army. According to the Richard Stewart and the Center of Military History, the 1920 National Defense Act (signed by President Warren G. Harding) gave the War Department around roughly “\$300 million per year. This was about half the estimated cost of fully implementing the force structure authorized in the National Defense Act.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Millet and his co-authors wrote that

“...from 1925 until 1940 the War Department spent about \$6.2 billion. Of this sum, \$854 million (roughly two years’ appropriations) went to weapons procurement and research and development; the ground forces received only \$344 million of these appropriations, or an annual average of \$21 million for new procurement.”<sup>12</sup>

Richard Stewart and the Center of Military History help to illustrate the consequence of the decreasing Army budget; they wrote that for much of the interwar period (until the mid to late 1930s), “Army arsenals and laboratories were consequently handicapped by small budgets. Little new equipment was forthcoming for ground units until Army appropriations began to rise in 1936.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, David E., *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917–1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 55.

<sup>10</sup> Millet, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 358.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, Richard W. and U.S. Army Center for Military History, *American Military History, Volume II: The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917–2008* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2010), 61.

<sup>12</sup> Millet, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 358.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart and Center of Military History, *American Military History*, 61.

Congress did foster some innovation and adaptation in the Army to mitigate the force reduction and the lack of modern equipment to replace obsolete World War I gear. Amidst the defense budget cuts of the era, Congress passed the Air Corps Act in 1926, which improved the Army's air capability. This legislation also set the Air Corps as a separate branch within the Army, and authorized a 1,800 airplane modernization plan.<sup>14</sup>

## The U.S. Presidency and the Preference for Force and Diplomacy

A President's operational code refers to his or her preference for the employment of the military and diplomacy. This shapes the level of resources he or she is willing to invest in the Army and the other services—something that is vital to innovation and adaptation. Steven Hook argues that a president's preference for force or diplomacy is based on his "operational code"—a confluence of "principled beliefs regarding the virtues and limitations of human nature, the proper roles of government and...national...and global problems," as well as "causal beliefs about the best means available for solving these problems."<sup>15</sup> In other words, Presidents assume office with their own distinct personalities, preferences and world views, which shape their perceptions and their decisions about considerations of policy inputs regarding the use of force and diplomacy in international affairs.

A brief look at defense policy during the interwar era Presidencies of Woodrow Wilson from 1913 to 1921, Calvin Coolidge from 1923 to 1929, Herbert Hoover from 1929 to 1933, and Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 to 1945 highlights how Presidential preference for the use of force and diplomacy influenced two key prerequisites for Army innovation and adaptation—funding and manning.

President Woodrow Wilson was averse to the use of force even when it was supported by public opinion and instrumental to furthering his views on international norms and influencing the strategic behavior of foreign governments. He strongly preferred diplomacy to force as the means of realizing U.S. foreign policy objectives. According to Arthur Walworth, during the crisis with Mexico involving the military junta of General Huerta

---

<sup>14</sup> Millett, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 349.

<sup>15</sup> Hook, Steven W., *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), 93.

“Wilson reluctantly reached the conclusion that force must be used to dislodge Huerta, but he hoped that it would not have to be the force of the United States.”<sup>16</sup> To this end, Walworth wrote, Wilson lifted an existing U.S. arms embargo on Mexico that permitted the flow of arms to Venustiano Carranza, who was fighting against Huerta.<sup>17</sup> Writing on Woodrow Wilson’s outlook on war and diplomacy, Walworth stated that the President

“...gave consideration to both disarmament and arbitration as means to peace. Though he said little or nothing in public about disarmament, he talked with Sir William Tyrrell of the necessity of curbing armaments.”<sup>18</sup>

It follows, given Wilson’s preference for diplomacy, that the Army was small, and unprepared in terms of equipment at the start of World War I. Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote that the interwar Army under Wilson’s administration was modest in size; “its total strength in the spring of 1915 was approximately 120,000.”<sup>19</sup> Writing about war mobilization on America’s entry into World War I in 1917, Eisenhower stated “as usual, our country was sadly—close to totally—unprepared. While we had mobilized a few more regular regiments in 1916, the strength of the Regular Army was awfully small. Intensive efforts had to start at once to bring our strength up.”<sup>20</sup> Walworth adds that “there was no Army to send. German military experts ranked the force of the United States on a level with those of tiny nations.”<sup>21</sup>

President Calvin Coolidge’s (1923-1929) operational code indicated a strong preference for diplomacy over force thus he continued Army downsizing with limited (treaty enforced) naval armament. According to David Johnson, “Coolidge’s avowed domestic program was to reduce government expenditures and enable a tax reduction, and his foreign policy focused on international disarmament. War Department pleas for a larger Army were contrary to both programs.”<sup>22</sup> Coolidge continued the reduction of Army ground forces pursued by the Harding administration, but grew the U.S. Navy

---

<sup>16</sup> Walworth, Arthur, *Woodrow Wilson, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 369.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>19</sup> Eisenhower, Dwight D., *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc, 1967), 33.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>21</sup> Walworth, *Woodrow Wilson*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, *Fast Tanks*, 68.



to meet the nation's strategic maritime interests. He also expanded American airpower. President Coolidge was averse to maintaining the peacetime ground forces deemed necessary by the Army's leadership to meet the nation's strategic obligations and war readiness. Thus, budget cuts during Coolidge's administration would reduce the army to about 130,000.<sup>23</sup> Johnson adds that in a speech delivered in 1925, President Coolidge expressed doubts as to whether the post-World War I strategic environment warranted the budget requirements of the War Department, and stated that "the turning of such resources into the making of good roads, the building of better homes, the promotion of education and all the others [sic] arts of peace which ministry to the advancement of human welfare."<sup>24</sup>

The Coolidge administration did make some investments in the Army with regard to emerging airplane technology. According to Millett and his co-authors, in 1926 Coolidge signed the Air Corps Act into law, "which... provided for a force of 1,514 officers, 16,000 men and 1,800 planes, which would be modernized by a five-year expansion and modernization program."<sup>25</sup>

President Herbert Hoover (1929 to 1933) seemed to prefer diplomacy to force as a way to preserve U.S. strategic interests. Consistent with this outlook, Herbert Hoover cut back on the naval shipbuilding plans of the Coolidge administration, and maintained the peacetime trend of reduced Army budgets. According to Millett and his co-authors, in addition to agreeing to further limits to naval shipbuilding at the 1930 London Conference with Britain and Japan, the Hoover administration opposed the 1929 shipbuilding program. Millett and his co-authors added that under Hoover,

"...the United States agreed to cut its heavy-cruiser program to eighteen ships within an 180,000-ton ceiling...and funding for manning the fleet, operations, maintenance, and modernization dropped about 20 percent below the funds actually authorized in 1922."<sup>26</sup>

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration (1933 to 1945) sought to reverse the disarmament and military resource deprivation of the Hoover

---

<sup>23</sup> Millett, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 355.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Fast Tanks*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> Millett, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 349.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

administration. This was consistent with events in the global strategic environment (including the ascendance to power of Adolf Hitler in 1933 and German rearmament). Millett and his co-authors note that “after more than a decade of limiting its armed forces through international agreement and unilateral fiscal action, the United States in 1933 began to rearm.” An early example was Roosevelt’s 1933 public works allocation of \$238 million for building “two carriers, four cruisers and twenty destroyers” over three years.<sup>27</sup> Johnson observes that Roosevelt also wanted to greatly expand American airpower, and that he pursued a 6,000 airplane development plan by 1939 on the recommendation of the War Department.<sup>28</sup>

The interwar era Presidents discussed above generally seemed to prefer diplomacy to the military instrument of U.S. national power. Thus, with the exception of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was compelled to rearm by growing conventional threats in Europe and Asia, the executives during this period reduced Army ground forces and funding.

## The American Way of War

How America perceives, prepares, fights and ends wars is part of its strategic culture and can be called the American Way of War. According to Meilinger, the American approach to war is characterized by a peacetime preference for small, standing armies that can be rapidly mobilized, enlarged with reserve and National Guard forces, fight quick and decisive battles, and demobilize at war’s end.<sup>29</sup> This approach impacts and shapes factors critical to Army innovation and adaptation—funding, manning, organization, doctrine, and experimentation. Phillip Meilinger wrote that America’s “approach to war has developed in its own distinctive way.”<sup>30</sup>

In a sense, the American Way of War is a cultural approach that justifies drastic post-war force and funding reductions for the U.S. Army, which hinders innovation and adaptation. America’s primarily Anglo-Saxon heritage causes most Americans to adopt a linear, inductive mode of reasoning that underpins the national cognitive approach towards war and military readiness. According to John Mole,

---

<sup>27</sup> Millett, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 363–364.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, *Fast Tanks*, 65.

<sup>29</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, “American Military Culture and Strategy,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 46 (2007): 80.

<sup>30</sup> Meilinger, “American Military Culture and Strategy,” 80.

“...since the renaissance Europe has been divided between the pragmatic, empirical, inductive thinking of Anglo-Saxon and North Sea cultures and the rationalist, deductive thinking of the rest of the continent. Anglo Saxons are uncomfortable with theories and generalizations and concepts. They prefer to deal with data.”<sup>31</sup>

This means that for the most part Americans think inductively—they develop general laws from facts and empirical data, going linearly from cause to effect. This helps explain the practice of reducing forces and funding vital to Army innovation and adaptation in periods between wars despite persistent global conflict and threats to the United States.

Writing on the influence of society on the military during the course of U.S. history, Millett and his co-authors assert that Americans’ “fear of large standing forces” has been one of the factors that have “at various times imposed severe limitations on the availability of monetary and manpower resources.”<sup>32</sup> Article I of the U.S. Constitution encourages this ad hoc and socially reinforced congressional approach to Army readiness by stipulating that “Congress shall have the power...to raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years.”<sup>33</sup> The implication here is that Congress is expected to constantly reevaluate the need for an Army and expand and reduce it accordingly. In other words, the U.S. Constitution reinforces and perpetuates the national perception that the Army is to be drastically retrograded between wars, and frantically upgraded to fight and win them—a great concept for an 18<sup>th</sup> century developing nation, but a serious problem for a superpower in an era of persistent conflict.

The American Way of War induced and rationalized defense sequestration that seriously hindered Army innovation and adaptation in the interwar era. According to Millett and his co-authors

“...from 1925 to 1940 the War Department spent about ... \$854 million on weapons procurement and research and development; the ground

---

<sup>31</sup> John Mole, “The Geography of Thinking,” *Clinical Medicine* 2 4(2002): 343.

<sup>32</sup> Millett, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, xiv.

<sup>33</sup> The Charters of Freedom, Constitution of the United States, available at: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html).

forces received only \$344 million of these appropriations, or an annual average of \$21 million for new procurement.”<sup>34</sup>

This amount of funding—though helpful for research and development of new equipment like the M1 Garand rifle, the 105 mm howitzer, and the 60 and 81 mm mortars—was insufficient for refitting the interwar Army to keep pace with European armies.<sup>35</sup> As previously mentioned Congress chose not to fund the 500,000-man Army proposed by Army Chief of Staff General Peyton March in the Baker-March bill. Consistent with the long-established American Way of War, Congress did not see the need for a large standing army after World War I, regardless of the strategic commitments of the day or mobilization lessons of that conflict.

### Some Insights for Today’s Army Leaders

Analysis of the influence of strategic culture on Army innovation and adaptation in the interwar period provides useful insight for today’s Army leaders facing recurring strategic cultural challenges to transformation. Congressionally-mandated force and spending reductions beset today’s Army much like they did in the interwar period. Congressional parsimony to the Army during the interwar period could be partially explained by a lack of persuasiveness of strategic net assessments, which were made by the War Department’s Joint Army-Navy Board. The latter was also responsible for developing war plans. A close link should exist between strategic net assessments of potential adversarial state and non-state entities, and military capability development. Allan Millett concurs that “the history of the interwar period does demonstrate a relationship between strategic net assessment and changes in military capability.”<sup>36</sup>

Net assessments can partially explain the level of resources (supportive of innovation and adaptation) made available or withheld from the Army during the interwar period. Thus, the relatively low level of resource investment in Army ground forces during the interwar period can be attributed to what David Kahn assessed as a general lack of consideration of the developing defense capabilities of potential adversaries. Kahn wrote that

---

<sup>34</sup> Millett, Maslowski and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 358.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Allan R. Millett, “Patterns of Military Innovation in the Interwar Period,” in Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (eds.), *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 336.

“in designing and procuring military forces...matters as whether Germany had 100 divisions or 300 and whether Japan had 10 carriers or 20 were not even raised when policy-makers examined the basic issues of strategy.”<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, Congressionally-mandated force and budget reductions reduced the force capabilities required to defend U.S. interests in the Pacific based on War Plan Orange. According to Calvin Christman, War Plan Orange was the Joint Army-Navy Board’s plan for fighting Japan and it called for the Army’s defense against an initial Japanese attack on the Philippines while the Navy fought and destroyed the Japanese Navy enroute to relieve the Army.<sup>38</sup> Christman wrote that for a successful naval maneuver to the Philippines, War Plan Orange required “advanced bases in the mandated islands...to be seized, and neither the army nor the Marines had the necessary troops to seize them.”<sup>39</sup>

It is disconcerting that not only did the Army lack the troop levels needed to execute War Plan Orange, it also lacked the amphibious capability essential to maneuver in the Asia-Pacific, which arguably boasts the Earth’s largest concentration of non-contiguous land mass (lots of islands). Leo Daugherty wrote that the Army would not designate amphibious forces until 1939 when it tasked the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division to conduct training for amphibious operations. Daugherty cited “the lack of money and public support for the military” as factors responsible for the lack of training and readiness.<sup>40</sup> Today’s Army finds itself in a similar predicament vis-a-vis the strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific.

Strategic Net Assessments showing the Army’s sequestration-induced unpreparedness to execute War Plan Orange failed to convince U.S. policy makers to invest the resources needed to bring Army ground forces to the level adequate to attain national strategic goals in the Pacific. The Army’s ability to defend U.S. interests in the Philippines and Hawaii against an

---

<sup>37</sup> David Kahn, “The United States views Germany and Japan in 1941,” in Ernest R. May (ed.) *Knowing One’s Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 478.

<sup>38</sup> Calvin Christman, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Craft of Strategic Assessment,” in Williamson Murray and Allan Reed Millett (eds.) *Calculations: Net Assessment and the Coming of World War II*, (New York: Free Press, 1992),” 238–239.

<sup>39</sup> Christman, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Craft of Strategic Assessment,” 240.

<sup>40</sup> Daugherty III, Leo J., *Pioneers of Amphibious Warfare 1898–1945: Profiles of Fourteen American Military Strategists* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Company, 2009), 336.

increasingly belligerent Japan under War Plan Orange was degraded by sustained defense sequestration during the interwar period. Brian Linn wrote that after the 1920 Defense Act “the Regular forces in the Pacific never approached the peacetime strength envisioned by General Peyton March. In 1921 the Philippines had a garrison of 13,251 and Hawaii one of 15,368; three years later their forces totaled 11,808 and 13,096 respectively.”<sup>41</sup>

The American Way of War is an anachronistic 18<sup>th</sup> century approach to war that is harmful to Army innovation and adaptation in the current era of persistent conflict. This cognitive approach causes most Americans today—like their 18<sup>th</sup> century countrymen—to object to having a large standing professional military, and reinforces the assumption that the nation can raise a lethal army of fresh young recruits and conscripts on relatively short notice. America’s global dominance (in contrast to its 18<sup>th</sup> century struggle for international survival), coupled with the highly technical and complex nature of military operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, requires a professional, active army adequately funded and sized to attain its strategic goals. Hastily trained masses of recruits and possibly conscripts post authorization of force, or declaration of war could prove a very poor substitute for a larger force of trained professionals, immersed in the highly technical and equally complex human dimensions of 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare. The tradition of raising an Army when needed while practical to the United States in its infancy, and apt for 18<sup>th</sup> century geopolitics, undermines and hinders attainment of the highly matured, complex strategic objectives of the world’s only superpower.

Army leaders today actively sensitize the American people, their representatives in Congress, and the President to the sequestration induced disparity between Army forces, funding and the strategic objectives of the nation. From observation, one could argue that they are doing better than their interwar era counterparts who similarly fought to preserve force and funding levels adequate to innovate, adapt and defend U.S. interests abroad. General Raymond Odierno, the former U.S. Army Chief of Staff, stated that:

“Today we have Soldiers deployed on every continent except Antarctica. We have Soldiers doing important missions in the security environment around the world. Frankly it is probably increasing in instability, which is requiring Army Forces to deploy to different places simultaneously. We are doing this

---

<sup>41</sup> Linn, Brian McAllister, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902–1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 146.

while we continue to downsize the Army and take risks in modernization and readiness, and frankly I am starting to worry about our end strength.”<sup>42</sup>

Sensitization appears to be the most pragmatic and effective alternative available to the Army’s leaders to reduce the adverse effects of America’s strategic culture on Army innovation and adaptation. Relentless sensitization will do well to continuously highlight the harmful effects of an anachronistic national strategic culture that seems to view the military requirements of a highly evolved superpower, through 18<sup>th</sup> century lens tinted with that era’s national and geopolitical concerns.

## Conclusion

America’s strategic culture shapes the ebb and flow of the resources necessary for innovation and adaptation in the U.S. Army. Defense spending and legislation, the national cognitive approach to war, and the operational code of American Presidents traditionally combine to promote resources for innovation and adaptation at the onset and duration of a conflict, and then drastically reduce such resources post-war. This is problematic in the contemporary period of persistent conflict. Army leaders today should continue, and where possible redouble their efforts to mitigate this ebb and flow effect of U.S. strategic culture on Army innovation and adaptation.

Future research could focus on how culture at the organizational level (within the U.S. Army) influenced innovation and adaptation during the interwar period. Such a study could provide insight and help curb recurring interwar era Army practices that hinder the Army’s current transformation efforts. Moreover, this research could contribute to historical dialogue on the role of Army organizational challenges to modernization vis-a-vis the defense policies of the White House, and Congressional oversight.

---

<sup>42</sup> Raymond Odierno, “SecArmy, CSA statement/answers at AUSA Annual Meeting Opening Press Conference,” *U.S. Army*, October 13, 2014, available at: <http://www.army.mil/article/136086/>.