

The division endured throughout the twentieth century as the Army's principal independent fighting organization because it was able to meet the nation's strategic requirements and address battle-field needs under the Army's resource constraints. The division's flexibility and adaptability have given it staying power throughout the twentieth century. The implications of national military strategy, national resources, and force structure have foremost determined the capabilities required of divisions and their end-strengths. Operational flexibility, firepower, agility (timeliness, mobility, and deployability), sustainability, and economy (manpower, money, and other resources) have been the primary objectives of division design, and balancing the needs of mobility, firepower, and survivability have determined the "shape" of divisions, be they square, triangular, or pentangular.

As technological advances in firepower, transportation, and communications have been introduced into Army divisions, the lethality, mobility, and responsiveness of divisions have increased tremendously, with the capability to occupy and cover increasingly expansive ground area. Furthermore, over time, combat power and operational responsibility have devolved to lower and lower echelons. While combined arms operations were generally available only at the division echelon during World War I, the proliferation of tanks, radios, motorization, and airpower brought combined operations to the brigade, regimental, and even battalion level by World War II. At the very least, this would mean that today's division is capable of a multitude of simultaneous, diverse missions compared to the simple, sustained mass infantry pushes of the World War I square division.

While the division of the twentieth century was first formed not necessarily to improve combat effectiveness but to enhance mobilization, its continued existence is explained by the fact that it is an extremely flexible and robust organizational concept that provides the Army with the basis for organizing and supporting combat forces capable of destroying powerful enemies on the contemporary battlefield. The division has endured because it has been able to adapt to overcome the spectra of likely enemies and battlefield conditions while successfully absorbing new equipment, weaponry, and evolving tactics and leadership dynamics.

Today, many criticize the division for being too large, heavy, and cumbersome to respond quickly to the nation's most pressing needs, particularly when the United States no longer faces a large, heavily armored enemy. Some experts have responded by arguing that the Army should possess smaller, more deployable forces that could carry out the entire range of likely missions. In questioning whether the division is a truly necessary organization or asserting that it is a hindrance to the achievement of greater combat effectiveness, they point to current information and transportation technologies that could help the Army assemble these smaller maneuver units. The division may be flexible and adaptable, they say, but it might no longer be an optimal organizational design. These arguments are strong and merit investigation. Of course, elimination of the division would have great implications for all Army activities. At the very least, the elimination of the division echelon from the Army combat hierarchy would necessitate the development of new organizations and training requirements, a reallocation of combat support responsibilities, and possibly a major restationing of units.

Elimination of the division may well be worth considering, but because of the division's profound institutional ramifications, it should be pursued only if careful study, experimentation, and debate indicate that such a decision is in the nation's best interests. The history of Army organizational design experimentation suggests that thorough study and testing should not only validate good organizational designs and doctrine but also yield beneficial knowledge from tests that are otherwise failures.

Determining the fate of the division and alternative force designs will be a difficult task, should it come to pass. Apart from the truly rele-

vant issues involved in force design, Army decisionmakers will have to face a barrage of biases, misinformation, political interests, and just plain uncertainty when deciding if, when, and how to go about selecting optimal combat formations. Rather than being strictly wedded to what is admittedly a very robust and effective organizational design, Army leaders should examine from the ground up what it is they need from their forces on the likely future battlefield. What will the nation expect of the Army and how can the Army best meet the nation's needs? Are smaller units indeed the right answer in all circumstances? Would a mixed force structure composed of divisions and brigade-size forces be appropriate? In the end, experimentation might or might not reveal that smaller, more deployable forces will be more appropriate to the missions for which the nation may call on the Army to undertake. Regardless, any exploration of optimal force designs must consider the most relevant factors in creating effective modern combat power in the context of the nation's interests and the global security environment.

In addition to exploring whether the division should now be abolished, it is instructive to ask why it has not been before now. From the standpoint of combat effectiveness, the combat commands of World War II certainly seemed to provide an opportunity to eliminate divisions, considering their flexibility and power. Independent brigades and regiments and the subcommands of the ROAD and more modern divisions have been quite powerful, too, and capable of independent, albeit limited, action. When facing large and powerful enemies, the division has provided invaluable and irreplaceable mechanisms for observing and evaluating the battlefield that corps cannot provide to smaller units, while also allocating the proper forces and assets and commanding them to defeat the enemy and negotiate obstacles. Certainly the corps' span of control is a problem that the division solves. Indeed, there may be other "irreplaceable" mechanisms that the division provides. Ultimately, divisions and other fighting organizations must be evaluated considering their effectiveness under expected battlefield conditions; those that make best use of national resources can then be identified.