



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive
DSpace Repository

Faculty and Researchers

Faculty and Researchers' Publications

2020-07

Resurrecting War Plan Blue

Kline, Jeffrey E.

U.S. Naval Institute

Jeffrey E. Kline, Resurrecting War Plan Blue. Resurrecting War Plan Blue. Naval Institute Proceedings Vol. 146/7/1,409 (2020).

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/65360>

This publication is a work of the U.S. Government as defined in Title 17, United States Code, Section 101. Copyright protection is not available for this work in the United States.

Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun



Calhoun is the Naval Postgraduate School's public access digital repository for research materials and institutional publications created by the NPS community. Calhoun is named for Professor of Mathematics Guy K. Calhoun, NPS's first appointed -- and published -- scholarly author.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

Resurrecting War Plan Blue

By Captain Jeffrey E. Kline, U.S. Navy (Retired)

July 2020

Proceedings

Vol. 146/7/1,409

“The United States eventually became the great ‘Arsenal of Democracy’ but only because of two fortuitous factors: time and distance. If the continental United States had not been thousands of miles from the major battlefields, the nation would not have had the time to properly organize for war.” Historian Kerry E. Irish on World War II mobilization, *The Journal of Military History*, January 2006

With the emergence of submarine-launched cruise missiles, hypersonic weapons, cyber warfare, and autonomous unmanned systems, the great ocean barriers may no longer provide the United States the time and distance to organize for an extended major conflict. In an era of great power competition between technologically advanced nations, advance investment in war preparations is required—and may be the best deterrent to future war. This does not necessarily mean an arms race, but rather clearly demonstrated preparations to absorb initial contact, employ follow-on forces, sustain those forces, and, if necessary, mobilize the nation for an extended conflict.

Joint Publication 4-05, *Joint Mobilization Planning*, addresses the areas that would need attention during a mobilization effort—such as manpower, material and equipment, transportation, and communications—and incorporates lessons from the most recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. But it describes mobilization as “the process of assembling and organizing national resources to support national objectives *in time of war or other emergencies*” [emphasis added].¹

Will the current environment allow the time to plan then act after hostilities commence?

In the interwar years, color-coded war plans addressed strategies for dealing with hypothetical conflicts with various countries. These documents evolved into the Rainbow Plans just before the beginning of World War II. War Plan Blue dealt with defensive plans and preparations the United States should take before war, regardless of adversary.²

The United States today needs a new War Plan Blue effort, a series of studies and actions coordinated by the Joint Staff but including the Departments of Homeland Security and Commerce, as well as elements of private industry, that would explore strategic choices and make recommendations for national actions in preparation for information-age conflict. Emerging technologies offer new strategic opportunities in three critical resource areas in particular: industry, people, and infrastructure.

Industry

Industrial mobilization first requires an established government–industry organization to oversee the relationship between the government and suppliers and address any shortcomings. A new War Plan Blue would include recommendations for how this organization should be structured, so it can be agreed on early by government and private participants. A review of Dwight Eisenhower’s 1930 Industrial Mobilization Plan is a good start, but new information-age industries must be added to the list of suppliers.³

The government–industry organization’s initial effort would be to assess U.S. industry’s existing expansion capacity to repair ships and produce satellites, aircraft, armament, and missile systems. This is not new ground, as several studies show industry challenged to meet basic fleet maintenance requirements.⁴ U.S. dependencies on foreign supplies of certain products, materials, and minerals must be addressed as well.

Today, additional attention should be given to industry’s capability to quickly produce unmanned systems and inexpensive platforms as weapon deliverers and lift holds. In the robotics age of warfare, these systems, produced in numbers, may provide the rapid force augmentation needed in a war of capacity. And, if damaged, inexpensive unmanned assets lend themselves to rapid replacement instead of lengthy repair. There is a historical precedent: The most numerous naval combatants built during World War II were patrol boats, and the most numerous ships were small amphibious and cargo ships.⁵

People

Reserve force models generally fall in three categories: individual augmentation, complete unit augmentation, and total mission assumption. Each of these models is valid for select mission objectives.

An informal 2016 Naval Postgraduate School study on human mobilization identified several critical naval enlisted rates that will be difficult to fill from training resources alone should the United States experience attrition. These include machinist mate (Nuclear), gas turbine electrician, aviation mechanic, and others requiring long school times for proficiency.⁶ For officers, examples include pilots and nuclear-qualified officers.

A new War Plan Blue effort would include a study to identify the military and naval specialties requiring long training lead time and at risk of attrition. Based on the results of that study, the individual augmentation reserve force should be shaped to meet possible demand in an extended conflict. Shaping initiatives may include monetary incentives, advanced reserve promotion opportunities, and increased training resources to entice select active-duty personnel with these skills to the reserves after they transition to civilian life.

Complete unit augmentation to active-duty forces still would be appropriate in many roles (such as infantry, medical services, or battle staffs), but in a robotics age of warfare, complete mission assumption offers a new opportunity. Creating entire reserve units dedicated to the maintenance and employment of cyber and unmanned systems will provide a corps of warriors ready to employ these systems in conflict and offer a venue for closer reserve–active duty coordination in exercises. If these systems are able to be built quickly in numbers, the unmanned systems

industry may provide the very reserve expertise to employ them. A new War Plan Blue effort would include a study to assess reservist potential from these industries and recommend resources to begin to establish these units.

The Naval Postgraduate School study further concluded that if current individual recruiting restrictions are applied to the U.S. 2030 population, there will be fewer than 1.1 million eligible candidates between the ages of 18 and 24 for all services to draw on in general mobilization. A focused manpower study effort is needed to verify this finding and understand the impact of relaxing some recruiting restrictions if necessary, and how it might impact general labor requirements in the population.

Infrastructure and Sustainment

National critical infrastructure defense was elevated in importance after the 2001 terrorist attacks. However, serious defense preparations against a state actor's attacks on U.S. military and naval bases and civilian ports—particularly those in potential contested regions—has not been addressed at the national level since the Cold War. Sea ports and airports necessary for long-term sustainment should be identified then reinforced with hardened and redundant infrastructure and air and sea defensive systems. Conversely, undeveloped areas that offer expeditionary basing need to be identified and plans made for rapid development into sustainment basing, even if temporary.

Both efforts will be complex, requiring coordination with allies, territorial governments, U.S. state and local governments, and port captains. A War Plan Blue effort in infrastructure and sustainment would require a whole-of-government effort and may best be led by a national interagency team commissioned by the President and Congress.

A Series of Steps, Not One Plan

These topics are not comprehensive, but they do suggest a series of independent but coordinated efforts to increase the nation's ability to sustain an extended conflict with a national competitor. The Joint Staff is well positioned to facilitate these efforts, but a national-level interagency organization could be formed to fill this function as well. A serious examination of our nation's capability and capacity for military sustainment and infrastructure defense may be the most powerful deterrent to adversary adventurism. And the nature of that mobilization may be heavily influenced by the emerging technologies of the information age and robotics warfare.

1. Joint Publication 4-05, *Joint Mobilization Planning* (23 October 2018), ix, www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp4_05.pdf?ver=2018-11-13-170517-383.
2. Mark E. Grotelueschen, "Joint Planning for Global Warfare: The Development of the Rainbow Plans in the United States, 1938–1941," *Army History*, no. 97 (Fall 2015): 8–27.
3. Kerry E. Irish, "Apt Pupil: Dwight Eisenhower and the 1930 Industrial Mobilization Plan," *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 1 (January 2006): 53.

4. See, for example, B. Martin, M. E. McMahon, J. Riposo, J. G. Kallimani, A. Bohman, A. Ramos, and A. Schendt, *A Strategic Assessment of U.S. Navy Ship Maintenance: Challenges and Opportunities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp, 2017).

5. Naval History and Heritage Command, “U.S. Navy Active Ship Force Levels, 1938–1944,” www.history.navy.mil/.

6. S. Bay, S. Benavides, L. Fredrick, and A. Hogarth, “Manpower Mobilization Campaign for Maritime War 2030,” an informal Naval Postgraduate School study to meet requirements of Joint Campaign Analysis course, September 2016.

Captain Jeffrey E. Kline, United States Navy (Retired)

Captain Kline retired after 26 years of service, including to two sea commands. He currently is a professor of practice in the Naval Postgraduate School Operations Research Department, where he teaches campaign analysis, systems analysis, and executive programs in strategic planning and risk assessment. He has served on the Chief of Naval Operations’ Fleet Design Advisory Board and several Naval Study Board Committees of the National Academies.