The U.S. Armed Forces' View of War

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Abstract: Many military analysts now argue that the challenges of Iraq and Afghanistan have prompted a paradigm shift within the U.S. armed forces. They believe that techno-centric formulaic concepts of warfare, such as effects-based operations, have been replaced by more complex, human-centered approaches, such as those laid out in the 2007 Counterinsurgency Manual. This essay details the evolution of U.S. military thought about warfare. It discusses how lessons from the past shaped current policy, the impact of a technologically inspired Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), and the subsequent conviction that properly equipped U.S. armed forces could rapidly and decisively defeat any and all opponents. The inability of U.S. forces to achieve national objectives in either Iraq or Afghanistan despite their success on the battlefield has caused war intellectuals to seek new lessons from history, question the existence of an RMA, and formulate a new vision of war that stresses uncertainty, adaptation, and innovation.

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Despite the continual issuance of buzzwords emphasizing service unity and harmony – such as "jointness," "An Army of One," or "The Few, the Proud" – the armed forces' internal divisions have been vividly displayed during the last decade. A number of important books detail the disagreements between civilian and military leaders and the long struggle to implement the "surge" and the counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy.[1] The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have generated a radical transformation in military thought: that is, a paradigm shift from idealized, techno-centric, scientific formulas – such as "network-centric warfare" (NCW) or "effects-based operations" (EBO) – to more complex, ambiguous, and human-centered visions of war, which were encapsulated in 2007 by *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*.[2] This intellectual renaissance has led, according to some, to military victory in Iraq and a path to eventual success in Afghanistan. This interpretation is attractive because it implies that the U.S. armed forces are adaptive, learning organizations that will develop new concepts to replace failed ones. But it begs a number of central ques-

tions, not least of which is how the armed forces and their war intellectuals – broadly defined in this essay as officers who write on the theory and practice of war – could have been so wrong about the nature of warfare going into Iraq and Afghanistan. Answering this larger question requires looking beyond the immediate debate over Iraq-Afghanistan to examine how the U.S. armed forces arrive at their understanding, or vision, of warfare, particularly in their use of history and the role of war intellectuals.

Interpretations of the past, perceptions of the present military situation, and predictions for the future combine to shape the U.S. armed forces' vision of war. All three variables are the subjects of intense debate. War intellectuals argue over such basic questions as whether the preferable strategy is to employ primarily land, sea, or air power; to attack the enemy's physical resources or his morale; or to pursue a battle of annihilation or grind away in a long war of attrition. One Air Force officer identified no fewer than seventeen different theories of airpower, noting that the service had made little effort to reconcile them.[3] In a recent issue of *Joint Forces Quarterly*, two articles by Army officers, "Let's Win the Wars We're In" and "Let's Build an Army to Win *All* Wars," simultaneously provided commentaries on Iraq-Afghanistan and engaged in the latest round of almost two centuries of intra-service debate.[4] Few of these internal disputes are ever resolved despite recurrent top-down efforts to impose conformity through "capstone" and "vision" statements, doctrine, and other official pronouncements.[5] Perhaps as a result, American military thought tends to be cyclical, with concepts (often little more than buzzwords) being heralded as revolutionary or "transformational," then quickly going out of fashion, only to re-

emerge under a new rubric a decade or so later.

For many war intellectuals, the past is prologue to the future. But it is a past that has been carefully edited to display the correct lessons, most notably the importance of military preparedness in peace and military autonomy in wartime. There is a tendency to interpret the nation's martial history as a dismal cyclical narrative, or as one Army general staff described it in 1916: "a startling picture of faulty leadership, needless waste of lives and property, costly overhead charges . . . due entirely to a lack of adequate preparation for war in time of peace. But we have not yet learned our lesson."[6] The critique of American society goes far beyond civilians' unwillingness to fund adequate military budgets. War intellectuals have attributed the nation's physical and moral decline to a variety of factors: immigration and urbanization prior to World War I; pacifism in the interwar period; permissive teachers and parents after World War II; the media, politicians, academics, and pot-smoking hedonists after Vietnam; and, in recent years, the physical, moral, and educational deficiencies that may render 75 percent of American youth unfit for military service. In many narratives, civilian fecklessness is only redeemed by the dedication, patriotism, courage, and skill of professional officers. Senior commanders' memoirs often detail the protagonist's struggle against inept or corrupt political masters, a tradition spanning more than a century, from Civil War General George B. McClellan, to World War II General Douglas MacArthur, to the conqueror of Baghdad, General Tommy Franks.

The armed forces' ambivalence toward American society and its political representatives has helped shape military intellectuals' understanding of the present as well as their perceptions of future war.

Since the 1820s, military scenarios dealing with foreign attacks have all assumed that the public would be essentially helpless to defend itself. In the view of many war intellectuals, civilians are to set policy, ensure the armed forces have sufficient resources, and let military leaders conduct the battles and campaigns that secure victory. Civilian leaders who violate this division, who dare to disregard the advice of military professionals – or worse, interfere in combat operations – are held in special disdain. One of the services' most bitter historical memories is that of President Lyndon B. Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara micromanaging the war against North Vietnam, even to the extent of charting the daily bombing sorties, while the supine commanders in the theater and the Joint Chiefs of Staff abrogated their military responsibilities. General Franks asserts that this lesson from Vietnam taught him to insist on maintaining his operational independence against political and military superiors who sought to interfere in his conduct of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.[7]

History also influences the U.S. armed forces' conception of war by providing examples to support or criticize current policies, organizations, equipment, or weapons. In the late nineteenth century, naval officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan, who all but invented maritime history, interpreted the past as demonstrating the need for the United States to acquire global markets and a new steel battle fleet. Following World War I, cavalry advocates looked particularly to the Civil War for evidence to repudiate those who said the horse had no place on the modern battlefield. For decades, Marine Corps war intellectuals have invoked the Gallipoli debacle to highlight their own service's superior conduct of amphibious

warfare. The authors of a 1989 article on "fourth-generation warfare" postulated that war had passed through three successive generations and was entering a new one. Consistent with many other writings of the 1980s, the article warned of the threat from guerrillas and terrorists but also rhapsodized about futuristic technologies, such as directed-energy weapons and robotics, which few would argue have been the decisive factors in recent insurgencies.[8] Drawing on the lessons of the past as a means to anticipate the future, military intellectuals often claim to be prophets when some of their predictions are realized.

The dangers of what the services call "lessons learned" from history are evidenced in the use of *blitzkrieg*. For decades, the term has been synonymous not only with a type of warfare characterized by speed, flanking, encircling movements, and psychological paralysis of the opponent, but also with institutional innovation and transformation. According to some American war intellectuals, after defeat in World War I, Germany learned the correct lessons and recognized the opportunities of a "Revolution in Military Affairs" (RMA) defined by new technologies (tanks, airplanes), new concepts (infiltration, maneuver, close air support), and new organizations (mechanized forces). In contrast, France, which had access to the same lessons, the same technologies, and the same concepts, hid behind the Maginot Line. In 1940, Germany launched a whirlwind campaign that shattered France in six weeks, thereby demonstrating the consequences of the RMA. At this point, the narrative ends; rarely mentioned are the Wehrmacht's failure against the Soviet Union or its complicity in the Nazi state's atrocities. Indeed, the blitzkriegers were, and are, less interested in history than in proving that military organizations that seize

Brian McAllister Linn

the opportunities offered by an RMA achieve victory, and those that do not are defeated.

This sanitized, didactic, almost mythological blitzkrieg/RMA/transformation narrative has been interjected into virtually every military reform debate in the last four decades, from discussions of Marine Corps doctrine to which fighters the Air Force should purchase. It has caused numerous unanticipated consequences, not least the fact that it may have led some U.S. senior commanders unknowingly to repeat what historians have identified as a major mistake in the "German way of war": that is, fixating on tactics and operations while failing to consider how individually successful battles and campaigns will achieve the nation's war aims (or strategy).[9] This fascination with rapid maneuvers, tactics, and battles was compounded when the blitzkrieg of 1940 was apparently replayed in the Gulf War of 1990 to 1991. The latter victory led many to conclude, "[T]oday, and in the future, armed conflict is expected to be short, decisive, and accompanied with a minimum of casualties."[10] That assumption, in turn, validated the belief that defeating the enemy's military forces on the battlefield defined victory, while everything else – including occupation, reconstruction, and pacification – was not in the dominion of war.

In the 1990s, many war intellectuals postulated that an "information RMA" was either about to occur or already had. They pondered its significance in a flood of diffuse and often self-contradictory writing, some of which now appears prescient, but much of which, in fact, was wrong. Supporters of both NCW (primarily in the Navy) and EBO (primarily in the Air Force) came to agree that by networking the technology of the information age – computers, sensors, satellites, the Inter-

net, and so on – geographically dispersed military forces could synchronize their movements and firepower, deploy quickly, and just as quickly overwhelm their opponents. New weapons – stealth bombers, lasers, and precision-guided munitions – would allow a few aircraft to achieve effects that previously required hundreds of aircraft flying thousands of sorties and dropping several tons of bombs. In the words of one proponent, EBO allowed U.S. armed forces to "dominate an adversary's influence on strategic events" without having to "destroy an enemy's ability to act." Further, overtaking its "operational level systems" would induce systemic paralysis and force the enemy to "acquiesce to the will of the controlling force or face ever increasing degrees of loss of control."[11]

Supporters of this "new American way of war" alleged that rapid blows on carefully selected centers of gravity would create cascading effects, leading to psychological paralysis and loss of control; collapsing the will of military and political leaders; and resulting in a quick and bloodless victory. They even claimed the ability to predict the increments of violence that would achieve certain results. Yet for all their claims of being "outside the box" visionaries and futurists, the EBO/NCW prophets were, in retrospect, remarkably unimaginative in forecasting the consequences of their counsel. Indeed, the central fallacy of the EBO/NCW vision of war – that U.S. war objectives would be restricted to destroying the armed forces of a centralized nation-state – is readily apparent. Its advocates only considered "effects" in the most immediate military terms. They did not ponder the intermediate and long-term impacts of "loss of control" in states that were coercive theocracies, dictatorships, or fragile tribal alliances – the very "failed states" the national security strategy con-

sistently identified as the most likely areas of conflict. Nor did they foresee the consequence of creating, under the mantra of "jointness," U.S. armed forces that were organized, equipped, and trained *only* for rapid, decisive operations. Most reprehensible, they did not consider that if EBO/NCW failed to deliver as promised, the most likely result would be the very long, bloody, frustrating attritional struggles they claimed their approach would avoid. In short, EBO/NCW were tactics in search of a strategy.

Unfortunately, ideological imperatives, such as imperialism, neoconservatism, and even apocalypticism, too often filled this strategic vacuum.[12] For instance, military strategist Thomas Barnett, who assisted Admiral Arthur Cebrowski in the development of NCW, maintained that Cebrowski's "vision was a fundamentally *American* way of war, one that promised not just better wars, and not just shorter wars, but perhaps the end of war itself." Barnett envisioned NCW as providing more than an efficient means to kill enemies; he further explained: "I wanted to see it used to short-circuit wars and warfare in general. I want wars to be obsolete because America becomes so powerful that no one is willing to take it on, and thus America is willing to take on anyone – a self-reinforcing deterrence."[13] In another example, commentator William Lind claims that his earlier writings on fourth-generation warfare anticipated a clash of cultures between the West and the rest of the world. In his view, Islamic radicals are perhaps less dangerous than domestic "cultural radicals … who hate our Judeo-Christian culture" and promote "multiculturalism." He predicts that "the next real war we fight is likely to be on American soil."[14] According to these perspectives, military transformation was (and perhaps still is) less a plan for reforming the services than either a means to achieve

American global hegemony or the West's last hope for survival.

In 1998, the operational (and perhaps ideological) rationale for military transformation received official sanction in the Department of Defense's blueprint for the future, *Vision 2010*. The document states: "Today, the world is in the midst of an RMA sparked by leap-ahead advances in information technologies.... [The] advent of the RMA provides the Department with a unique opportunity to transform the way in which it conducts the full range of military operations" by using "information superiority" to "leverage" the "capabilities" of other technologies and assert "dominant awareness of the battlespace."[15] *Vision 2010* assumed that the U.S. armed forces' superior access to information would disperse nineteenth-century theorist Carl von Clausewitz's "fog of war." Information superiority would allow commanders at all levels – from the four-star general at his desk in Tampa, to the infantry captain on the battlefield, to the pilot in his stealth bomber – to have "perfect real-time situational knowledge." By exploiting the potential of experimental technology, one cannon could achieve tactical results that previously required hundreds of shells, thus allowing the United States to use far smaller forces, which in turn would allow far more rapid movement at all levels. Ideally, each bomb or shell not only resolved a specific operational task (such as the destruction of an enemy tank), but also contributed to a cumulative series of "effects." In short order, these "massed effects" would both physically and psychologically shatter (or shock and awe) the enemy's command and control organization.

For America's opponents, *Vision 2010* promised only rapid and decisive defeat. Even before the battle began, their com-

Brian McAllister Linn

munications would be jammed and their access to accurate information disrupted. Precision attacks on command centers would cause further confusion and delay, so that even if an enemy commander were able to issue orders to subordinates, those instructions would have little relevance to the situation. Deprived of its guiding brain, the enemy army would be unable to coordinate its own firepower or maneuver forces effectively. Even if its troops survived and its equipment escaped destruction, the army would be little more than an armed mob incapable of coherent resistance. Unable to control its military forces, the enemy government would lose its will and submit to American dictates. In short, victory on the battlefield or in the air campaign alone was sufficient to secure U.S. national objectives.

For America's armed forces, and especially its senior leadership, *Vision 2010*'s implications were initially intoxicating yet ultimately stupefying. Proponents boasted that commanders would have real-time battle space awareness to track both their own and enemy forces, recognize threats and opportunities, communicate their decisions, and have them executed instantly. But precisely because all future wars would be short and decisive – with success measured entirely in the destruction of enemy military forces – the services placed little value on strategic thinkers. Officers skilled at anticipating long-term implications and consequences were unnecessary for wars that would last a few weeks and had only one objective. Instead, the services selected and promoted officers who were skilled at managing the complicated control systems of EBO/NCW: commanders who defined themselves as "operators." Epitomized by Tommy Franks, such officers proved adept at assembling matrices to destroy enemy military forces but were intellectually unprepared to deal with the

unforeseen consequences of battlefield victory.

Historians will continue to debate the degree to which the U.S. armed forces' embrace of high-tech warfare, applied with scientific precision, and rapid, decisive, and almost casualty-free victory contributed to two interminable, indecisive wars of attrition in Iraq and Afghanistan. Within the war intellectual community, there is little consensus. Some remain convinced that their prewar concepts and technologies were sound; they blame politicians (particularly Donald Rumsfeld) and the media. Others believe that although EBO/NCW was fundamentally flawed, innovative and adaptive leaders fought against the RMA/Rumsfeld "establishment," reinvented counterinsurgency, and gave the United States the means to victory in the war on terror. In keeping with a long tradition of American military historiography – most clearly seen in treatments of Korea and Vietnam – however much they differ on details, both interpretations exculpate the armed forces and throw the burden of victory or defeat on the will of the American public and its political leaders.

Have the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan changed the armed forces' perception of war? The document credited with breaking the RMA stranglehold on military thought, and perhaps providing a path to victory in Iraq and Afghanistan, is *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* of 2007. A project directed by General David H. Petraeus and current U.S. Marine Corps Commandant James F. Amos, the manual is in many ways an anti-doctrine. It even includes such "paradoxes" as "sometimes doing nothing is the best action," and "sometimes the more you protect your force, the less secure you will be."[16] In contrast to doctrines of the 1990s – which empha-

sized technology and treated opponents as passive recipients of U.S. dominance – the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* includes an extensive and respectful analysis of the nature of insurgencies: who leads and who participates, how they are sustained, how they use intelligence and media, and what their capacity is to adapt and innovate. This complex and flexible approach to warfare appears throughout the manual. The chapter on intelligence discusses culture, another covers leadership and ethics, and detailed appendices provide information on social networking and legal guidance. Not surprisingly, both military officers and civilians have termed this doctrine revolutionary.

The two services most affected by the manual have taken different approaches to the lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Marine Corps asserts that it has *always* engaged in counterinsurgency and stability operations – and has done so better than anyone. To add historical justification, Marine intellectuals note that in the 1990s, when the other services were leaping onto the RMA/EBO/NCW bandwagon, Commandant Charles Krulak postulated that the future would be characterized by the "three-block war" – a scenario in which military forces would have to deal with a spectrum of challenges simultaneously, ranging from conventional war to humanitarian aid. The Marines' two-decade-old capstone statement, *Warfighting*, is unique both for its longevity and because it presents a theory of war that emphasizes combat as merely a means to a political end; indeed, it maintains that the application of violence must be consonant with strategic objectives.[17] Given the Marine Corps' conceptual foundation, the freedom of inquiry at such elite programs as the School of Advanced Warfighting, and the willingness to empower its commanders at all levels – what Krulak termed "the strategic corporal" – the

Corps was (and is) far better positioned, at least intellectually, to adapt and innovate in response to the challenges of the post–Cold War security environment. For the Marines, the challenge in Iraq and Afghanistan is in the execution of a warfighting philosophy they believe is inherently sound.

The U.S. Army has been the service most influenced by the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan. This was not the case at the beginning, when the first Army "historic" team to reach Iraq after the fall of Baghdad reportedly asked participants only one question: "What was your role in the greatest military victory ever won?" But the collapse of Iraq into chaos, the criticism directed at General Franks and General Ricardo Sanchez, the scandals of Abu Ghraib, and other irrefutable evidence led many Army officers to acknowledge just how poorly their service had trained for operations beyond the battlefield.

The resulting transformation in the Army's vision of war goes far beyond the counterinsurgency manual. The service's 2008 capstone combat doctrine, *FM 3: Operations*, repudiates many of the central ideas of its 1993 predecessor, *FM 100-5: Operations*. The 1993 operational manual was evolutionary, emphasizing its connection with earlier operational doctrines that (from the Army's perspective) had led to victory in the Cold War and the Gulf War. In the context of war intellectual tradition, *FM 100-5* was Jominian, conflating the methods of war – particularly the preparation and conduct of campaigns (or operations) – with war itself. Like its predecessors, the doctrine aimed to achieve a "quick, decisive victory on and off the battlefield anywhere in the world"[18]; it assumed that "modern warfare" consisted of large-unit conventional combat between nation-states; and it

Brian McAllister Linn

used *battle* and *victory* almost synonymously with *war*. The few exceptions to the 1993 manual's intense battlefield focus – such as the comment that "military forces must be prepared to support strategic objectives after the termination of hostilities" and the few sentences devoted to counterinsurgency and peacekeeping – provided little preparation for Somalia, much less Iraq.[19]

FM 3 is, in its own words, "a revolutionary departure from past doctrine," a set of guidelines intended for a volatile era of "protracted confrontation among states, non-states, and individual actors increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends."[20] The manual is consciously Clausewitzian, not only in its numerous quotations from *On War*, but also in its inclusion of sections on "uncertainty, chance, and friction" and its admonitions that officers must understand the nature of the war they are fighting. Whereas the 1993 doctrine was predicated on teaching officers essential skills to master complex technology, the 2008 doctrine emphasizes "how to think – not what to think" because doctrine must be "consistent with human nature and broad enough to provide a guide for unexpected situations."[21] Almost heretically, it states, "[W]inning battles and engagements is important but alone is not sufficient. Shaping the civil situation is just as important to success."[22]

Providing further evidence of the Army's transformation, *The Army Capstone Concept* of 2009 dismisses many previously held convictions – for example, the inevitability of the RMA, the potential of "leap ahead" technology, and the ideal of "full-spectrum dominance" – as no more than "labels." Equally revealing, whereas prewar vision statements portrayed military opponents as hapless victims of American might, the *Capstone Concept* cites numerous recent examples to illustrate their adaptability, dedication, and effectiveness. To defeat them, the Army must create military leaders who have a "tolerance for ambiguity, and possess the ability and willingness to make rapid adjustments according to the situation."[23]

The recently released *Joint Operating Environment 2010 (JOE 2010)* shows evidence of both the transformation and the congruence of Army-Marine Corps thought. Its prewar predecessor was essentially an engineering manual for the next decades, a self-described "conceptual template . . . to leverage technological opportunities to achieve new levels of effectiveness in joint warfighting" and to allow the U.S. armed forces to achieve "dominance," which was an end unto itself.[24] *JOE 2010* rejects such determinism; indeed, one of its goals is "guarding against any single preclusive view of future war."[25] Whereas the prewar vision statement focused on future weaponry, *JOE 2010* begins with an extensive, rich examination of both the nature of war and the nature of change. And whereas the prewar joint vision was relentlessly optimistic about the capability of the U.S. armed forces to dominate any opponent, *JOE 2010* warns: "No one should harbor the illusion that the developed world can win this conflict in the near future. As is true with most insurgencies, victory will not appear decisive or complete. It will certainly not rest on military successes. The treatment of political, social, and economic ills can help, but in the end will not be decisive."[26]

Although the last decade of unconventional warfare had the most influence on the Marine Corps and the Army, there is considerable internal resistance to both counterinsurgency as a mission and to the methods prescribed in the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. War intellectual Gian Gentile is among the more vocal critics, arguing that the guidebook draws too

heavily from the Iraq and Afghanistan examples, and that many of its proponents repeat the conceptual errors they attribute to conventional warfare advocates.[27] Even among those who believe that the armed forces finally have the concepts and means to pacify Iraq and Afghanistan, there are those who believe that neither the United States nor its armed forces can afford such pyrrhic victories. More discouraging yet, throughout the Iraq-Afghanistan conflicts the Army senior leadership has insisted that the service's future is bound to its prewar, RMA-influenced transformation agenda, a Future Combat System that seems ideally designed to refight the Gulf War of 1990.

The Air Force and Navy visions of war have been even less changed by Iraq and Afghanistan. Though adamant that their contributions to the current conflicts be acknowledged, they remain committed to their prewar concepts. Central to both services is the same assumption held in the 1990s: that is, if they achieve the means (capabilities), then the ends (strategy) will sort themselves out. From this assumption, both services look first to technology, then to concepts that will allow its application. Recent Navy vision statements emphasize sea power's ability to deter conflict, to control the littorals, to support expeditions, to protect the homeland, and to adapt to a variety of threats.[28] The foreword to the U.S. Air Force's 2003 basic doctrine acknowledges the danger posed by asymmetric adversaries who threaten the nation with weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and information attacks. But for the most part, it reiterates earlier concepts, such as EBO and precision strike, viewing the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan as further vindication of these approaches. While the doctrine recognizes the importance of cooperation, it still maintains "the new view of conflict" in which "the prompt continued, aggressive application of airpower" can win wars without a land campaign. This statement, like the assertion that airpower changes the character of the "American way of war," dates back to one of the earliest proponents of airpower, General Billy Mitchell.[29] One senior Air Force officer who has engaged in counterinsurgency debate, Major General Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., views the Army-Marine counterinsurgency manual as flawed by its "infatuation with the individual soldier, an affinity for the close fight, skepticism toward new technology, and an over-reliance on historical case studies."[30] Dunlap maintains that prewar concepts, particularly information RMA and Air Force doctrine, proved themselves in Iraq; thus, he criticizes his service for failing either to articulate its own contribution to the current conflicts or to confront the intellectual challenge of insurgency.

It is too soon to determine whether this last decade of persistent conflict will result in a major transformation in the armed forces' vision of war. Perhaps the current interest in counterinsurgency is no more than an intellectual re-booting prompted by the insurgencies/civil wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this respect, it is well worth remembering that the initial campaigns in both countries were hailed as proving both the RMA and EBO/NCW. They are now cited as proof of the fallacies in these visions – in some cases by the same pundits.[31] The last decade has shown that the armed forces' vision of war matters, and that war intellectuals have more impact, and deserve far more study, than they have received.

The major questions and the most significant critiques emerging from Iraq and Afghanistan are not about the U.S. armed forces' equipment, training, or ability to adapt at the tactical level. Rather, they are directed at the intellectual competence of

Brian McAllister Linn

the officer corps, particularly the senior leadership – namely, its critical thinking skills, its grasp of strategy, and its ability to adapt and innovate. For example, why did it take so long for these experts to understand that the war they were fighting was not the war they had prepared to fight? Beyond the specific issues raised by the Iraq-Afghanistan conflicts lies a host of more general questions. Is military transformation a result of new ideas or new technology? Are "big ideas" such as the RMA, transformation, or fourth-generation warfare important concepts, or do they provide dangerously simplistic interpretations of recent changes in warfare? Is there an American way of war that predisposes the nation and its armed forces to certain strategies or methods? Are the services capable of learning from mistakes? How will officers assimilate the lessons of the past decade into their new visions of war? What form will new challenges to the national interest take? Bearing these uncertainties in mind, the role of war intellectuals is central to understanding the past, present, and future of the armed forces.

ENDNOTES

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