Military Review

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE U.S. ARMY

JANUARY- FEBRUARY 2023

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Cover photo: Aircrew assigned to the 816th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron assist qualified evacuees boarding a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III in support of the Afghanistan evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, 21 August 2021. Evacuees included U.S. State Department and allied civilian personnel as well as some members of the Afghan military and general population fearing retribution from the Taliban. (Photo by Sr. Airman Taylor Crul, U.S. Air Force)

ARMY UNIVERSITY PRESS

Col. Todd A. Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army

Letter from the Editor in Chief

Where Have All the Warrior-Scholars Gone?

A Challenge to All Military Professionals

On 25 October 1882, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman gave his opening address to the second cohort of students attending the School of Application for Cavalry and Infantry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In his speech, Sherman emphasized that soldiers were morally and ethically required to study the profession of arms. He suggested that those soldiers unwilling to pursue higher education were committing fraud against their country. He resented any attempt to belittle the importance of education. He stated, "In war, as in science, art, and literature … we must look to the books—the recorded knowledge of the past." It was imperative for Army soldiers to "know how to read and write," that the best soldiers are the ones "who add to knowledge" and improve the profession.

Col. Todd A. Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army
Director of Army University Press

Recently, several senior officers going through the Command Assessment Program shared anecdotes from their professional experiences. They had served in strategic institutional positions at the very top of the national security policy process and within the headquarters of the Department of the Army. These officers had authored several senior-level policy documents, published articles in peer-reviewed journals, and attained terminal degrees. Many also had multiple combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, having led troops in frontline infantry units from the platoon to battalion levels. However, some considered strategic-level experience, institutional knowledge, and educational accomplishments distinct professional disadvantages.

When preparing to attend the Command Assessment Program, these officers were advised to focus instead on demonstrating their tactical organization leadership experience and expertise. In feedback from their peers and in mentoring sessions with raters and senior raters, the message was clear: diminish and downplay strategic- and institutional-level knowledge, experience, and expertise. Instead, demonstrate and highlight vocational training, qualifications, and proficiency in small-unit tactics and missions. They were advised to avoid referencing accomplishments and contributions to the profession through higher-level education, professional development, and publication

in professional journals. With the current emphasis on great power competition and the acknowledged imperative for agile, adaptive leaders to fight multi-domain operations, the current triage of priorities in how the military selects future strategic leaders seems to neglect the importance of public-facing engagement in critical thought.

The 2020 RAND Corporation study *Raising the Flag: Implications of U.S. Military Approaches to General and Flag Officer Development* found that senior executive officers who serve in selection programs and on promotion boards remain committed to the trend of picking officers that look like them. This, obviously, is a natural human response. The idea that, "if it worked for me, then it must be right," nurtures confirmation bias and provides an experiential knowledge heuristic that aids in a complex promotion selection process with tight deadlines.

As Army University Press and *Military Review* enter 2023 and the next one hundred years of publishing and promoting articles and scholarly work by military professionals, I challenge all our military professionals to lead by example. Take risk. Advocate for and promote warrior-scholars. Contribute to the profession. Push back on anti-intellectualism that continues to pervade the ranks. Put pen to paper. Share your ideas and experience. Tackle controversial topics through scholarly discourse. Write!

As I engage with leaders and students across Fort Leavenworth, I take heart in the continued commitment to education, professional development, and the military ethic. However, there does seem to be an apprehension within that population to writing for publication, an aversion to sharing ideas and experiences in a public format open to debate and criticism. Or, as is the current trend, many potential writers instead opt for immediate gratification and impact by engaging on social media and online forums. There is no incentive. The risks outweigh the rewards.

Often, military writers, or "influencers," run the risk of castigation as self-promoters who are trying to draw attention to themselves. They are categorized as ego-driven in their efforts to write, share ideas, and join the public discourse. Some of that may be true. Regardless, we want and need to encourage our military professionals to contribute their thoughts in writing to make the profession better as well as inform society and the public about our Army, despite any consequences.

It is incumbent on all soldiers who call themselves military professionals to contribute to scholarship and conversation that improves the profession, share best practices and lessons learned, and invest intellectual energy into making "the team" better. We cannot afford weak intellectuals, cognitive misers, and strategic amateurs in the future operational environment. We need and must nurture and promote strong, intellectual warrior-scholars. We need leaders that can write and engage in scholarly public discourse.

I have a mentor that has reached the highest rungs of success both professionally and financially. As a young major, sitting in an elite social club blocks from the White House, I asked him once, after a couple of cocktails, why he was so kind and helpful to me. He reflected that he had been fortunate in "climbing the ladder" of success. But, he said, his mentor, a man by the name of Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, had taught him to look behind him on his way up and always extend a hand to help promising young leaders.

As we launch into 2023, I challenge those who subscribe to the moniker of military professional to write, to share, to engage, to think. Help the profession improve. Cast off and banish any hint of anti-intellectual cynicism or undertone that shames those that seek education and professional development. You can start in 2023 by working with Army University Press, submitting articles or book reviews for publication. Contact us and let us help you reach the full calling and requirement of a true military professional. Write! ■

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(Photo by Spc. Taylor Lakey-Tamacori, U.S. Army National Guard)

2023 General William E. DePuy

Special Topics Writing Competition

This year's theme is "Implementing FM 3-0, *Operations*"

The updated Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, was introduced and disseminated throughout the Army in October 2022. The intent of this year's DePuy competition is to encourage close examination of the impact implementing FM 3-0 will have on the Army. A list of suggested topics for examination is provided below. However, the list is not exclusive and treatment of other relevant topics is encouraged. Manuscripts identifying and analyzing other salient topics that offer insight and productive critique of issues related to implementation of FM 3-0 are encouraged.

Competition opens 1 January 2023 and closes 20 July 2023

1st Place	$1,000 and publication in *Military Review*
2nd Place	$750 and consideration for publication in *Military Review*
3rd Place	$500 and consideration for publication in *Military Review*

For information on how to submit an entry, please visit https://www.armyupress.army.mil/DePuy-Writing-Competition/.

Articles will be comparatively judged by a panel of senior Army leaders on how well authors have clearly identified issues surrounding implementation of FM 3-0 within the Army in general and/or to a significant portion of the Army; how effectively detailed and feasible solutions to the issues identified are presented; and the level of expository skill the author demonstrates in developing a well-organized article using professional standards of grammar, usage, critical thinking, original insights, and evidence of thorough research in the sources provided.

Some Suggested Writing Topics Salient to FM 3-0

- What are the chief obstacles to the implementation of the new doctrinal concepts in FM 3-0?
- What did the new FM 3-0 get right? What did it overlook or get wrong? How does it need to be revised?
- Surviving on the future battlefield. How does a modernized army equipped with the latest technology, to include cyberspace and space capabilities, remain concealed and protected on the battlefield when our adversaries can "see" and track its units from social media and other media posts from home stations (CONUS or other) to the forward line of own troops?
- Given the concepts introduced in FM 3-0, the antiaccess/area denial capabilities possessed by our potential enemies, and what we are observing in Ukraine with regard to the technical sophistication available for defeating air assets, is it time for the U.S. Army to divest itself of its large-scale airborne forcible entry capabilities?
- Has the tank gone the way of the battleship? With the concepts introduced in FM 3-0, the exponential increase of long-range precision fires and unmanned aircraft systems capabilities, and the U.S. Marine Corps'

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Maj. Jeremy Shields, U.S. Air Force Reserve

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42 **Ignoring Failure**

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Eric Michael Burke, PhD

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Understanding Disciplinary Power to Mobilize the Population

Maj. Robert G. Rose, U.S. Army

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REVIEW ESSAY

143 **America's Great-Power Opportunity**
Revitalizing U.S. Foreign Policy to Meet the Challenges of Strategic Competition
Ambassador Douglas Lute, Retired
Lt. Col. Jordan Becker, PhD, U.S. Army
The authors critique a book by Ali Wyne that discusses shifts in the international order and the future of U.S. foreign policy.

General Suggested Writing Themes and Topics—2023

- From the U.S. military perspective, what are the greatest external threats to the United States? Why? And, how?
- Do any external threats realistically risk the survival of the United States or its allies? If so, how?
- Are there nations that consider themselves to be at war with the United States? If so, how are they conducting war and what would increase the probabilities of their success?
- Is there a new "Cold War"? If so, which nations make up the new confederated blocs (e.g., new "Axis" powers) aligned against the United States and how do they cooperate with each other? What types of treaties or agreements do they have that outline relationships they share to reinforce each other?
- Who does synchronization of DIME (diplomacy, information, military, economic elements of power) to achieve strategic goals best on the global stage? Contrast and compare employment of DIME by China, Russia, Iran, and the United States. How should the United States defend itself against foreign DIME?
- Does China have an "Achilles' heel"? What is its center of gravity? If it has one, how can it best be attacked/exploited?
- What does China view as the United States' "Achilles' heel" or "center of gravity"? (i.e., trade relations? Resource shortages? Diminishing technological manufacturing base? Societal instability and factionalism? Etc.) How specifically is it exploiting these? Specific examples?
- What is the impact of irregular immigration on the security of the United States? What role does the U.S. military currently have by law to protect U.S. borders from irregular immigration and criminal activity linked to it? What relationships does the military currently have with other security institutions to protect the border? What relationships should it legitimately have? How should the National Guard be used?
- Update on status of security force assistance brigades. What is the role now of the U.S. Armed Forces in Africa? Far East? Middle East?
- What logistical challenge does the U.S. military foresee due to changes in infrastructure and forward operating locations?
- What is "just over the horizon" in terms of weapons systems about to be deployed? Nanoweapons? Electromagnetic? Artificial intelligence? Other? How is the Army planning to mitigate effects?

Military Review

BOOK REVIEW PROGRAM

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THE UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Section I

The Civil-Military Relationship

"La guerre! C'est une chose trop grave pour la confier à des militaires."
"War is too serious a matter to leave to soldiers."

This section of *Military Review* features a thematic selection of articles that examine the relationship of the military as an institution to its civilian political overseers and the civil-military political process overall in the direction and management of war. It provides particular focus on those aspects salient to explaining the unsatisfactory conclusion to the Global War on Terrorism. This section provides well-known notable extracts from Carl von Clausewitz's masterwork *On War* on his theory behind civil-military relations but begins with equally salient, and perhaps less known, observations on the same subject by Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini, a Swiss contemporary and rival of Clausewitz during the Napoleonic wars, in his master work, *The Art of War*. These quotes are intended to provide possible theoretical insight into the relevance of their observations to the current milieu of twenty-first-century civil-military relationships both in the United States and elsewhere. ■

Left: Prime Minister of France Georges Benjamin Clemenceau, 1917–1920 (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress). **Epigraph:** J. Hampden Jackson, *Clemenceau and the Third Republic* (1959, repr.; London: English Universities Press, 1946), 228.

Summary of *The Art of War*

Extract from *The Art of War*, by Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini, General and Aide-de-Camp of the Emperor of Russia

Definition of the Art of War

The art of war, as generally considered, consists of five purely military branches: Strategy, Grand Tactics, Logistics, Engineering, and Tactics. A sixth and essential branch, hitherto unrecognized, might be termed *Diplomacy in its relation to War*. Although this branch is more naturally and intimately connected with the profession of a statesman than with that of a soldier, it cannot be denied that, if it be useless to a subordinate general, it is indispensable to every general commanding an army: it enters into all the combinations which may lead to a war, and has a connection with the various operations to be undertaken in this war; and, in this view, it should have a place in a work like this.

George Dawe, *Portrait of Genrikh V. (Antoine-Henri) Jomini (1779-1869)*, between 1820 and 1825, oil on canvas, 70 cm x 62.5 cm, Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia. (Painting courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

To recapitulate, the art of war consists of six distinct parts—

1. Statesmanship in its relation to war.
2. Strategy, or the art of properly directing masses upon the theater o!' war, either for defense or for invasion.
3. Grand Tactics.
4. Logistics, or the art of moving armies.
5. Engineering—the attack and defense of fortifications.
6. Minor Tactics.

It is proposed to analyze the principal combinations of the first four branches, omitting the consideration of tactics and of the art of engineering.

Familiarity with all these parts is not essential in order to be a good infantry, cavalry, or artillery officer; but for a general, or for a staff officer, this knowledge is indispensable.

Chapter 1: Statesmanship in its Relation to War

Under this head are included those considerations from which a statesman concludes whether a war is proper, opportune, or indispensable, and determines the various operations necessary to attain the object of the war.

A government goes to war—

To reclaim certain rights or to defend them;

To protect and maintain the great interests of the state, as commerce, manufactures, or agriculture;

To uphold neighboring states whose existence is necessary either for the safety of the government or the balance of power;

To fulfill the obligations of offensive and defensive alliances;

To propagate political or religious theories, to crush them out, or to defend them;

To increase the influence and power of the state by acquisitions of territory;

To defend the threatened independence of state;
To avenge insulted honor; or,
From a mania for conquest.

It may be remarked that these different kinds of war influence in some degree the nature and extent of the efforts and operations necessary for the proposed end. The party who has provoked the war may be reduced to the defensive, and the party assailed may assume the offensive; and there may be other circumstances which will affect the nature and conduct of war, as—

1. A state may simply make war against another state.
2. A state may make war against several states in alliance with each other.
3. A state in alliance with another may make war upon a single enemy.
4. A state may be either the principal party or an auxiliary.
5. In the latter case a state may join the struggle at its beginning or after it has commenced.
6. The theater of war may be upon the soil of the enemy, upon that of an ally, or upon its own.
7. If the war be one of invasion, it may be upon adjacent or distant territory: it, may be prudent and cautious, or it may be bold and adventurous.
8. It may be a national war, either against ourselves or against, the enemy.
9. The war may be a civil or a religious war.

War is always to be conducted according to the great principles of the art; but great discretion must be exercised in the nature of the operations to be undertaken, which should depend upon the circumstances of the case.

For example: two hundred thousand French wishing to subjugate the Spanish people, united to a man against them, would not maneuver as the same number of French in a march upon Vienna, or any other capital, to compel a peace; nor would a French army fight the guerrillas of Mina as they fought the Russians at Borodino; nor would a French army venture to march upon Vienna without considering what might be the tone and temper of the governments and communities between the Rhine and the Inn, or between the Danube and the Elbe. A regiment should always fight in nearly the same way; but commanding generals must be guided by circumstances and events.

To these different combinations, which belong more or less to statesmanship, may be added others which relate solely to the management of armies. The name Military Policy is given to them; for they belong exclusively neither to diplomacy nor to strategy, but are still of the highest importance in the plans both of a statesman and a general. ■

Source: *The Art of War*, Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini, originally published in 1838 as *Precis de l'Art de Guerre*. Translated from French by Capt. G. H. Mendell, U.S. Army, and Lt. W. P. Craighill, U.S. Army, and published in English in 1862 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott). Reprinted by Greenhill Books, Lionel Leventhal, London, 1992 (pp. 12–16).

On War

Extracts from *Vom Krieg* (*On War*), by Carl von Clausewitz

When whole communities go to war—whole peoples, and especially civilized peoples—the reason always lies in some political situation, and the occasion is always due to some political object. War, therefore, is an act of policy.…

… Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will have a continuous influence on them.…

… We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.... (pp. 86–87)

… The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, not trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.…

Karl Wilhelm Wach, *Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831)*, painting, 19th century. (Painting courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

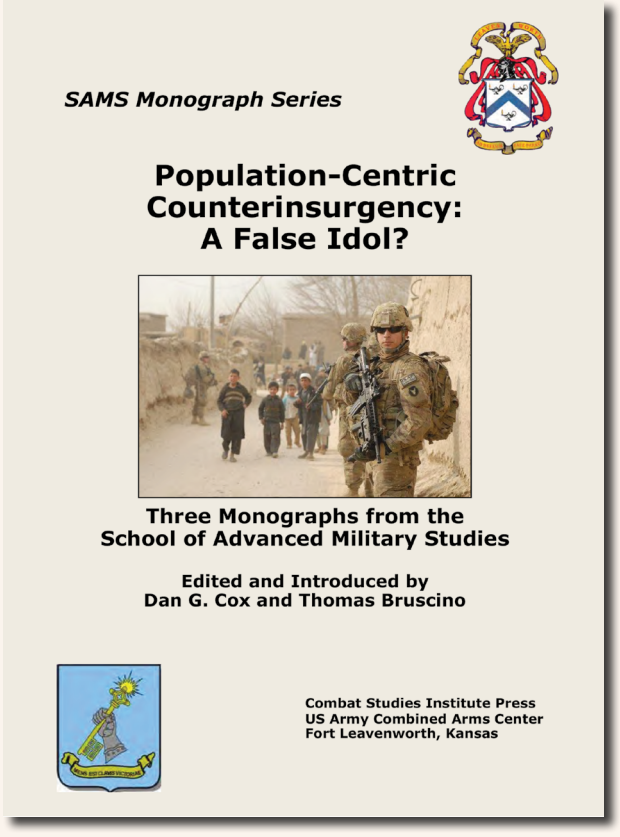
… War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity—composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone. The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government. The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army; but the political aims are the business of government alone. (pp. 88–89) ■

Source: Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1984. *Vom Krieg* was originally published posthumously by Clausewitz's wife Marfie von Bruhl in 1832.

Military Review

Invites your attention to

Population-Centric Counterinsurgency A False Idol?



During the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) 2001–2012, a single idea came to dominate the U.S. approach to counterinsurgency, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. The necessity of a "population-centric approach" was promulgated by the Army's capstone Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, published in late 2006, in a perceived effort to redress shortcomings in fighting what was then perceived as the losing effort in the insurgent war in Iraq.

The manual called for increasing dramatically nonkinetic means to redress popular grievances by shifting the effort away from the use of raw force and balancing it against other sociological and humanitarian means, as dictated by the situation.

Critics have long argued that the U.S. Army has a severe bias toward conventional war that makes it "uncomfortable" when called upon to deal with the messy and complex factors that must be incorporated into counterinsurgency operations, giving it a predilection toward conventional warfighting because it is easier.

The monographs in *Population-Centric Counterinsurgency: A False Idol?* provides thoughtful and provocative critiques of the concept overall.

To view *Population-Centric Counterinsurgency: A False Idol?*, visit https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/Population-CentricCounterinsurgency.pdf.

President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden hold a meeting 12 November 2013 with combatant commanders and military leadership in the Cabinet Room of the White House. (Photo by Pete Souza, White House)

Civilian Control of the Military

A "Useful Fiction"?

Col. Todd Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army

Effective civilian control of the military is a "useful fiction" and a fanciful myth.[1] This is the underlying and unspoken cause for recent articles declaring civil-military relations under extreme strain. This strain has three primary causes: a shrinking pool of seasoned, capable, effective civilian leaders; an increasingly politicized military; and the exceptional influence of military elites on the national security policy process.

In the 2022 War on the Rocks op-ed "To Support and Defend: Principles of Civilian Control and Best Practices of Civil-Military Relations," an unprecedented list of signatories penned an open letter to the public.[2] Eight former secretaries of defense and six retired chairmen of the Joint Chiefs sounded a clarion call for adherence to basic principles of civilian control. The premise of the op-ed is that current civil-military relations between U.S. elected and appointed officials and the Nation's military are strained because of recent policy decisions related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, pandemic-induced societal turmoil, economic fluctuations, and continued debate over events related to the 2020 presidential election. Esteemed and exceptionally respected defense experts and scholars Michele Flournoy and Peter Feaver followed up with a supporting article that reinforced the sanctity of the principle of civilian control and offered an anecdote related to how military elites related to and behaved with senior members and the president during the Trump administration.[3]

Effective Civilians

To military professionals and scholars of U.S. civil-military relations, these articles outline aspirational principles. Unfortunately, real-world nuances and realities of the current civil-military balance of power were neglected or omitted. There was further a failure in these articles to explain why civil-military relations have deteriorated over the past several decades and why effective civilian control of the military is no longer sacrosanct.

"Effective civilian control of the military" is a founding, bedrock principle of democracy in the United States. It is noteworthy, however, that the principle comes with a recent conventional qualifier, describing the imperative for "effective" civilian control. Scholars, however, tend to focus on "civilian control" while completely ignoring the imperative of an "effective civilian."

Over the past two decades, scholars have found that civilian leadership of the military is increasingly conditional. In multiple studies, to include one by RAND, military service members increasingly believe that submitting to civilian control is contingent on the ability of civilians to provide able leadership.[4] In other words, to have effective civilian control in government, there must be effective civilian leaders.

There are, no doubt, extraordinary civilians that lead and serve in the Department of Defense, and they are exceptionally qualified. They understand and comprehend the complexities of national security and strategic policy. They are seasoned, experienced, and possess the cognitive and intellectual capabilities required to serve at the highest levels of government.

However, these qualified civilian elites are a minority in a rapidly shrinking pool of talent. The resulting impact is that inexperienced, novice elected officials and appointees are heavily reliant on military elites to inform national security policy development and decision-making. Military elites are relied upon to establish, lead, manage, and implement policy that has become ever more militarized and less whole-of-government in its approach. In return, military elites are reportedly disconcerted by the amateurism of their civilian counterparts within the national security policy process.[5] In the findings of Kori Schake and James Mattis, civilians have become so reliant on the military that they have allowed resident "strategic thinking to atrophy."[6] It is important to note that President Joseph Biden recognized this in the early release of his *Interim National Security Strategy Guidance*, calling for increased investment in the professional development of national security civilian officials and a recommitment to the principle of civilian control.[7]

A Politicized Military

Members of the Armed Forces swear an oath to the U.S. Constitution. Thus, there is a fair expectation that military elites in a democratic republic will be apolitical and above the partisan, political scrum. Yet, the mythical narrative that the military is apolitical is fraught with contradiction.

An increasing number of studies find that U.S. military elites openly identify with a political party and

Various dignitaries witness President Harry S. Truman signing House Resolution (H.R.) 5632, the National Security Act Amendments of 1949 on 10 August 1949 in the White House Oval Office, Washington, D.C. H.R. 5632 converted the existing National Military Establishment into the new Department of Defense and made other changes in the national security system. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

purposefully and deliberately engage in partisan activity.[8] In the lead up to the 2020 presidential election, for example, nearly seven hundred retired generals and admirals publicly endorsed the Republican or Democratic presidential nominees. Some promoted misinformation, endorsed extremist views, spread wild conspiracy theories, or condoned the idea of a military coup d'état.[9] Reports on the 6 January 2021 riots at the Capitol building found that nearly one in five participants were retired, recently separated, or active-duty military personnel.[10]

Despite this tragic episode, military elites have demonstrated a historical propensity for praetorian behavior. Praetorian behavior is defined as a dynamic in which members of the military actively participate in government in positions historically reserved for civilians. Politics penetrates the military ranks. Political beliefs and policy preferences affect decision-making. It is in our DNA. Shaping and controlling the operational environment, whether in garrison or combat, is what military leaders are trained to do. Leaving conditions to chance, luck, or hope is not a method.[11]

Following World War II, military elites played an important role in the creation of the National Security Council (NSC). The intent was to inoculate the Nation's national security policy process against unorthodox, unconventional, inexperienced, and disorganized presidents with chaotic leadership styles.[12] As Adm. Sidney Souers, former executive secretary of the NSC, testified before Congress, the NSC was intentionally created to be run by the military as a measure of

Col. Todd Schmidt, PhD, is director of Army University Press at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and author of the book *Silent Coup of the Guardians: The Influence of U.S. Military Elites on National Security.*

Civilian and military officials pose for a group photograph 1 December 1990 prior to discussing U.S. military intervention in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Shield. Dignitaries include (*front row from left*) Paul Wolfowitz, undersecretary of defense for policy; Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney; Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander in chief, U.S. Central Command; Lt. Gen. C. Waller, deputy chief of staff, U.S. Central Command; and Maj. Gen. Robert Johnston, chief of staff, U.S. Central Command. In the back row are Lt. Gen. W. Boomer, commander, I Marine Expeditionary Force; Lt. Gen. C. Horner, commander, Ninth Air Force, Tactical Air Command; Lt. Gen. J. Yeosock, commander, Third Army; Vice Adm. Stan Arthur, commander, Seventh Fleet; and Col. Johnson. Cheney commented that he felt "surrounded by military elites that made him feel nominally in charge." (Photo courtesy of the Department of Defense)

control over future presidents. By 1953, a presidential committee report attested to the military's influence, finding that civilian elected officials and appointees lacked leadership, lacked respect for the importance of strategy and planning, were "wedded to a philosophy of reacting to problems as they arise," and that "military professionals are the makers of national policy," not the president or Congress.[13]

More specifically, President Dwight Eisenhower found his administration undermined by his generals throughout the entirety of his time as commander in chief. Gens. Matthew Ridgway, Maxwell Taylor, James Gavin, and William Westmoreland famously worked to subvert and sabotage Eisenhower's "New Look" policies, believing they were following a higher calling.[14] Distraught by the subterfuge of his generals, Eisenhower confided to his closest friends that "some day there is going to be a man sitting in my present chair" with no military experience and little understanding of international affairs.[15] His apprehensions were formidable, his fears prophetic. And, despite more recent legislation that endeavors to balance military influence, civilian positions increasingly are left empty and vacant while military officers fill the void and provide continuity across administrations.

Praetorian Propensity

Civilian control of the military is supposed to be exercised across all three branches of government. This "best practice" is idyllic. However, the military

is deeply embedded across the government and has come to constitute and behave as an epistemic community with exceptional influence over national security policy and process that can overwhelm a system of "checks and balances."[16]

Within the executive branch, the military assigns detailees across the Executive Office of the President, the National Security Council, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and many other institutions and agencies, providing the best and brightest officers to advise and inform senior executive leadership. For example, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice credits then Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno for convincing her to support "the surge" in Iraq in 2007.[17] Former Secretary of Defense and Vice President Richard Cheney describes military elite influence as so powerful that he unwittingly absorbed the military's policy preferences. Civilian appointments, often left vacant, left him surrounded by military elites that made him feel nominally in charge.[18]

"Former Secretary of Defense and Vice President Richard Cheney describes military elite influence as so powerful that he unwittingly absorbed the military's policy preferences. Civilian appointments, often left vacant, left him surrounded by military elites that made him feel nominally in charge."

Congress also follows the military's lead. With the repeal of the 1921 Budget and Accounting Act, the military was free to directly lobby Congress for its budgetary wants and needs. Congressmen often bragged of trusting "God and General Marshall" to inform them of the military's budgetary requirements.[19] The National Security Act Amendments of 1949 further unencumbered military elites in providing unsolicited and unconstrained "best military advice" to legislators regarding their budgetary requirements. In an understatement, Samuel Huntington called this "a problem" for balanced civil-military relations, while Sen. Barry Goldwater described taking the military's budgetary requests "as gospel."[20] With over one hundred military officers embedded across congressional staff and offices, exceptions to congressional acquiescence to military spending requests typically only occur in matters that may affect domestic and electoral politics.

The judicial branch tends to demur from matters of civil-military relations, particularly since the Reagan administration. Post-Civil War, Congress enacted laws to ensure that military officers were prohibited from serving in positions intended for civilian officials. These laws were reaffirmed in the mid-1920s and codified again by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in *Riddle v. Warner* (1975), which ruled that the laws enacted were to "assure civilian preeminence in government" and prevent "the military establishment from insinuating itself" into civil government.[21] However, these laws were repealed in the 1980s, allowing senior military officers such as John Poindexter, Colin Powell, and most recently, H. R. McMaster to serve as national security advisors while remaining on active duty.

Tired Theories

The theoretical framework or lens by which to view these dynamics is found in the scholarly field of civil-military relations theory. Unfortunately, civil-military relations theory and scholarship is challenged; it is stale, stuck in the past, and backward looking. It fails to account for future operational environments in which the velocity of war shrinks the time and space available for national security decision-making. It fails to account for the "ineffective civilian" leadership that increasingly haunts the human capital among our elected officials and civil servants.

Although there are important principles of civil-military relations and best practices in maintaining civilian control of the military, they are not necessarily practiced or inviolate. As authorities, responsibilities, and powers are increasingly delegated to the military,

Gen. Mark Milley (*second from left*), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the joint chiefs listen as President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting 7 October 2019 with senior military leaders. (Photo by Brendan Smialowski, Agence France-Presse)

expectations of civilian control must evolve. If jurisdiction over national security policy and process are ceded to the military, as they often are, then delegation of authority and decision-making requires continued adjudication. In fact, current studies at the Army War College advocate for renewed study and negotiation of an antiquated civil-military framework that no longer accounts for current and future political, international, and threat environments.[22]

Current civil-military relations theory also fails to account for an evolution in American politics. As political actors rend and tear at the fabric of our Nation, often exploiting societal divisions for political gain, the military stands on the sidelines. Military elites find themselves providing overwatch as some in American society, including politicians on both fringes of the spectrum, appear to be intent on upending the very democracy the military has sworn to protect.

Congressman Michael McCaul describes the current political environment as increasingly occupied by ignorant, disrespectful mischief makers with no intent to faithfully serve their Nation. They are more intent on buffoonery—spewing vile, slanderous rants and demonizing the opposition to gain media attention and raise money for their political coffers. They have succeeded in turning the American political system into what many characterize as a circus and its institutions as increasingly populated by "clowns."[23]

In the halls of the Pentagon and the cubicles of the NSC, or the personal offices of members of Congress, military elites exercise immense influence that often makes civilian leaders feel "boxed in." They are boxed in deliberately, or, more aptly, encouraged to face the realities of the limitations of civilian authority and power. Yet, fragile egos must be protected, and the "useful fiction" maintained.

Moving Forward

If civilian leaders and lawmakers are to confront the dangers of strained civil-military relations, they need to focus less on the military and more on themselves. Strained and imbalanced civil-military relations are less about how powerful and influential the military is and more about how broken our political system is and how weak our political leaders

have become. Imbalanced institutional investments, a dearth of competent political appointees, a political environment that discourages and disincentivizes civil service, extreme partisanship and polarization, uninspired recruitment of younger generations to public service, poor civic education and growing political ignorance, lack of intellectual curiosity exacerbated by deliberate disinformation—all these factors have created a vacuum of capable leadership among our elected and appointed officials.

In the end, I agree with concerns related to strained, unhealthy, and imbalanced civil-military relations. Polite academic alarms, however, fall short. The issue is more urgent. It is worse than "they" say, and here is why: Americans, and a huge portion of civil-military relations scholars, view civil-military relations through a normative, unidirectional, idyllic lens that is elementary. It provides a textbook description of what civil-military relations in the United States or a democracy should be.

But, that is not the reality—it is not black and white. There is nuance. Structural challenges in the policy process and between civilians and the military are real, just below the surface of a salute and a smile. Civilians do not always realize this because, for the military, issues of national security are existential. We have deployed and fought for over twenty years in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our families are committed. Our sons and daughters now increasingly wear the uniform in what has become the "family business." We are stewards of the military profession. We have a little skin in the game. So, while civilians come and go from government, more concerned with maintaining power than ensuring good governance, the military remains vigilantly engaged, safeguarding the system and the Republic. It is incumbent on those civilians that wish to serve, whether in elected or appointed positions, to be equally, if not more so, qualified, engaged, and committed to duty to country. ■

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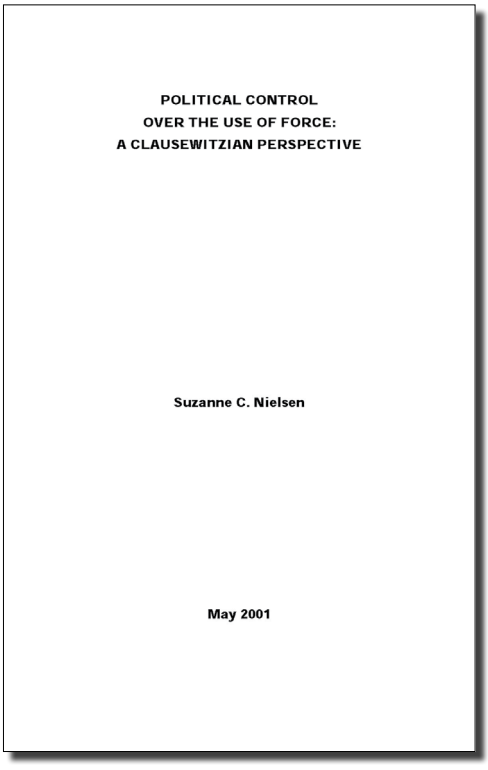
Military Review
WE RECOMMEND



In her 2001 Army War College monograph, *Political Control over the Use of Force: A Clausewitzian Perspective*, Maj. Suzanne C. Nielsen discusses and analyzes the challenges and impediments that exist in the often fragile relationship between military commanders and political officials during time of war. She uses tenets specified by Carl von Clausewitz in the formulation of his theory of war as outlined in his master work *On War* to analyze the civil-military relationships as they relate to the nature of political decisions regarding the application of force. She asserts that Clausewitz provides a clear argument that extensive political influence over the direction of military operations is not only inevitable because of the nature of war itself but is of vital concern because the quality of political influence has a decisive influence on the outcome of a conflict. After reviewing his theoretical approach, she discusses four key implications of the basic idea that political purposes govern war. Her argument suggests that Clausewitz has issued both statesmen and commanders a challenge. Commanders must appreciate the necessity of subordinating military means to political ends, and statesmen must think as strategists as they make decisions about the relationship between ends and means and the achievement of their goals.

To view *Political Control over the Use of Force*, visit https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA389673.pdf.

Then Vice President Joe Biden (*center*) is seen during the national anthem at a welcome home ceremony for the XVIII Airborne Corps 8 April 2009 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Biden, joined by Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, then XVII Airborne Corps commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Allen, welcomed the soldiers home from Iraq after their second deployment. (Photo by Gerry Broome, Associated Press)

Who's the Boss?

Defining the Civil-Military Relationship in the Twenty-First Century

Lt. Col. Kevin F. Krupski, U.S. Army

In the summer of 2020, prominent scholars of civil-military relations publicly debated the role of the military if a sitting commander in chief refuses to leave office upon losing an election.[1] Unfortunately, the events of 6 January 2021 verified the precarious balance present in America's civil-military relationship. Exacerbating this debate is a polity removed from serving in the conflicts the public authorizes their elected leaders to pursue, with concerning implications for American democracy.[2] These challenges reinforce Risa Brooks's call to develop a new framework for military professionalism.[3] When entering an era of great power competition and increasing political polarization, the military must decide how it will interact with the rest of the American political system.

President Abraham Lincoln meets with then General-in-Chief George B. McClellan about a month before relieving McClellan of command on 5 November 1862 for perceived lack of initiative and incompetence in leading the army against more adroit and audacious Confederate forces. (Photo by Alexander Gardner, courtesy of the Library of Congress)

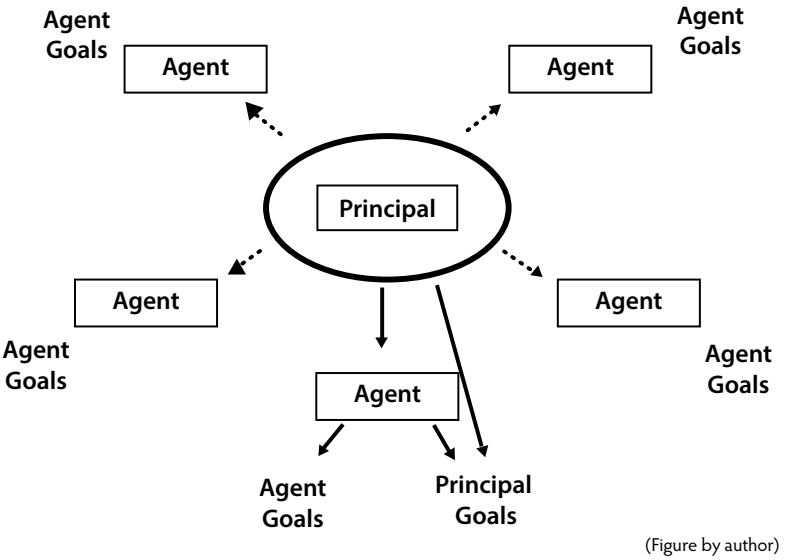
The roles of senior military leadership and their civilian counterparts trace back to constitutional authorities as well as traditions established throughout American history.[4] In addition to preserving the values of the republic, the articulation of this relationship has implications for the effectiveness of strategic decisions in pursuance of national interests. The military is more than simply an agent to its civilian principals. Instead, the most accurate description is that of principal-steward.

The Civil-Military Relationship

The civil-military relationship is, at first glance, a simple proposition: the civilians are always right and retain supreme authority. The *Anti-Federalist Papers* explain the fears that led to that conclusion, and the *Federalist Papers* rightfully argue how the new republic would ensure the execution of that proposition.[5] This is one of the easiest dilemmas in American history. The cases of George McClellan and Douglas MacArthur defying Abraham Lincoln and Harry Truman are tropes so simple that they elicit very little argument for the merits of the military versus the civilian elites. However, the relationship remains complex and abstract. How civilians manage the military, how the military offers advice, and what areas the military is given less oversight muddle the picture. Likewise, the information asymmetry between military elites and civilian authorities, compounded by increasingly separate cultural ideals and experiences, complicates this relationship further.[6]

Therefore, the debate over the civil-military relationship inherently involves discussion over how these two actors interact. Richard Kohn noted over two decades ago how the military had begun to actively oppose the agendas of its civilian authorities and aimed to further its own military agenda.[7] The gap at the elite level is composed of knowledge and trust, exacerbated by civilian leadership that routinely overexaggerates military capabilities.[8] The statements of military elites can affect public opinion, and much like the media, interest groups, and public opinion, the military has an influential role in policy making, though how it conducts that role is open to interpretation.[9] The military must, to paraphrase Aristotle, both lead and be led in the political process governing the military.[10] Douglas Bland supposes that this resembles a division of labor, dividing responsibilities and sharing control between military

and civilians based on regime type.[11] Meanwhile, James Burk complains that each theory of civil-military relations is incomplete, positing that any unifying theory lacks consensus along separate levels of analysis.[12] The debate has moved beyond Samuel Huntington's model of objective civilian control of the military through professionalization of the officer corps and Morris Janowitz's "constabulary" model in the last sixty years.[13] This proposition of civilian control is less a fact than a process, cultivated over successive generations of military and civilian elites, recognizing that "effective national defense requires social, political and military harmony."[14]



(Figure by author)

Figure 1. Centrifugal Agency Model

Feaver's Agency Model of Civil-Military Relations

Peter Feaver's conceptualization of this relationship utilizes agency theory, which describes the relationship between principals and their agents. The information asymmetries and competing demands of the military and civilian actors create a principal-agent problem. To account for this, monitoring should reduce the moral hazard inherent when the military may act in its own perceived best interest, in contradiction of the desires of the principal. Feaver's conclusion is that in the absence of effective monitoring, the military will "shirk," following its own preferences rather than the principal's. The military is "working" when it aligns with the civilian principals, which is more likely when those principals put added effort into monitoring the military agents. For example, Feaver argues that the schism between the military and the Clinton administration stemmed from military leaders seeking to make military considerations such as the Weinberger Doctrine paramount to political considerations in a post-Cold War era.[15] There are a few implications of taking this stance toward the relationship.

First, the agency model accurately depicts private market transactional relationships. There are usually numerous potential "agents" that the principal can hire, and there is inherent goal conflict between the principal and the agents. In addition, this information asymmetry allows the agents to use their knowledge for gain at the cost of their principal. Monitoring therefore becomes a tool of the principal to align the agents. The problem with applying this to the civil-military relationship is that military services and counsel are not bought in anything resembling a market—the military is already there the day a civilian principal steps into office. There is no competition among militaries to become an agent. In addition, the agency model negatively portrays the agent's moral and collective behavior as self-seeking, ignoring worker loyalty, pride, and identification with the organization's mission and goals, as well as ignoring the possibility of opportunistic behavior on the part of the principals.[16] While the agency model may be effective at describing how the government contracts out defense to private military contractors in an era of increased privatization, it is more awkward when applied to public servants that the government has already "made."

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Figure 1 (on page 28) presents a conception of agency theory that places the principal at the center of a market with multiple agents capable of exercising on the principal's behalf. The principal can only pick one of the agents—hence, the solid lines—but that agent has its own goals that may not align with the principal. In this model, the force of movement is outward. That is to say, the only factor keeping the agents and outcomes of the relationship aligned with the desires of the principal is the hold that the principal decides to keep on the agent. Absent attention from the principal, there is nothing holding this system together. All forces are centrifugal, pulling away from the center.

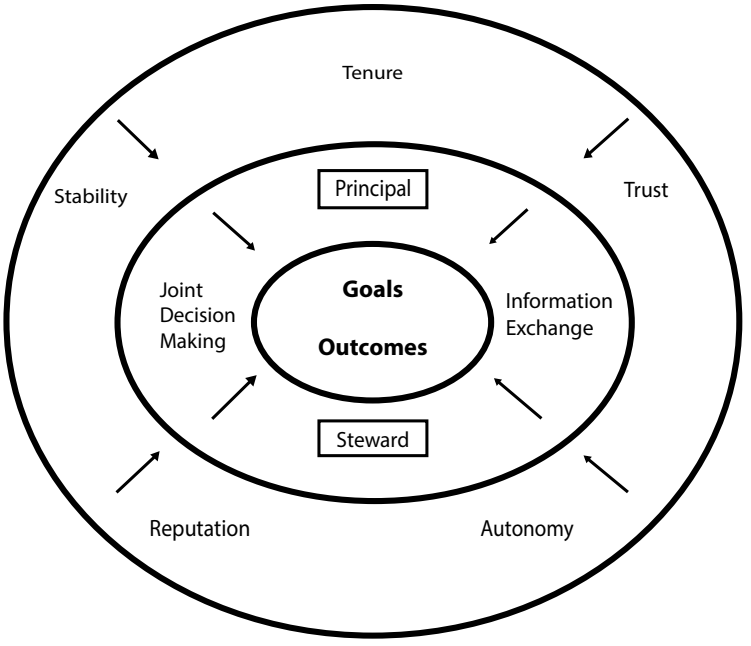
Second, civilian principals are themselves agents of the American people, contracted through the U.S. Constitution. A major tenet of civil-military relations applies to how this relationship fits with in specific regime models. How then, does one become a principal and another an agent? The "master contract" outlines the roles of all the major institutions of U.S. government but is itself cautious to grant a single branch of government the ultimate authority normally bestowed upon a principal. Congress, as possibly the most powerful branch, is given only partial authority over the military, while the president retains the rest. Further complicating this is the roles of state governors, granted their own authority over their respective state's national guards. Simply put, "The People" remain the ultimate principal in American politics, yet their representatives in the legislative, executive, and judicial spheres at the federal and state levels claim the legitimacy to speak on their behalf. The military must therefore speak to these multiple principals as well as to the American people.

Last, the agency model neglects a simple fact: government is different than private markets. Applying private practices to some public endeavors is an apples-and-oranges dilemma.[17] There is little discussion of how public values shape decisions and affect the relationship between principals and agents. The security of the state is not only a goal of both actors but also of their ultimate principal as well. If government is doing a task, it must be because of a failure of the market to provide that task either within the confines of the market structure or due to values inherent to the regime and held by the people. Agency model does not accurately reflect this dynamic.

Conceptualizing the Military as Stewards

Stewardship theory offers a better conception for describing civil-military relations. Stewardship theory "defines situations in which managers are not motivated by individual goals, but rather are stewards whose motives are aligned with the objectives of their principals," and individual psychological attributes and organizational characteristics drive the choice to be a steward rather than an agent.[18] Similar to agency theory, it focuses on using tools such as monitoring, trust, reputation, incentives, and sanctions in contract relationships in order to achieve goal alignment between the parties to the contract. However, stewardship theory is an organizational behavior counterweight to rational action theories of management.[19] While agency theory assumes goal divergence, stewardship theory assumes convergence, based in part on shared collective interests. Rather than focus on short-term arrangements centered around a zero-sum relationship, stewardship theory assumes that "long-term contractual relations are developed based on trust, reputation, collective goals, and involvement where alignment is an outcome that results from relational reciprocity," and "stewards are motivated by intrinsic rewards, such as trust, reputational enhancement, reciprocity, discretion and autonomy, level of responsibility, job satisfaction, stability and tenure, and mission alignment."[20] This takes a much more long-term view, with an appreciation of a longer-term relationship. This necessarily requires higher transaction costs at the outset of the relationship, especially from the principal, "involving the steward in problem formulation, joint decision making, information exchange, and generally attempting to understand the needs of the steward" but increasing trust and reducing the need for intrusive monitoring in the long term.[21]

Stewardship theory is more amenable to describing the relationship between the government and agencies that perceive themselves as promoting the public good. Scholars have identified the unique relationship between nonprofits and the governments they work with, in relationships that resemble stewardship more than agency.[22] Members of the military similarly espouse a desire to serve the public good. An organization that prides itself with ethos of selfless service and personal sacrifice inherently shares the same goals as its civilian principals.



(Figure by author)

Figure 2. Centripetal Stewardship Model

Figure 2 presents a conception of stewardship theory that places goals at the center of the system. These goals have their own gravitational force, coalescing the parties and actions in orbit around them. The principal and the steward are placed at the same level, bound together by joint decision-making processes and less-hindered exchanges of information. In the outer ring are factors such as trust and stability that exert pressure on each party to converge on the same goals. All forces are centripetal, pulling toward the center.

This poses a very different conception for the civil-military relationship. The military is neither working nor shirking in relation to the goals of the civilian principals. The military acts as a steward of the Nation's defense and the values of the Constitution. The military, to maintain its reputation, must police itself vigorously. Failure to do so may result in increased oversight and lead down a path akin to Huntington's conception of subjective control, which places legal and institutional restrictions on military autonomy.[23] The military does not have an incentive to shirk as that would only lead to a decrease in reputation. Whenever that happens, the loss of reputation and trust is of greater damage than anything gained by shirking. Civil-military literature frequently places Eliot Cohen's "Supreme Command" theory into the agency model, perceiving that presidents meddle with and fire their military agents until they find one that will run a war as the politician sees fit.[24] In reality, the successful general/presidential relationships had no extra enforcement methods to ensure compliance with the political imperative than the unsuccessful ones, which the agency model would require. Instead, the successful generals were the ones that were good stewards, sharing the goals of their presidents through deliberate collaboration.

The goals that anchor the stewardship model may vary based on the three levels of regime power in American democracy: fundamental sovereignty, primary powers, and the policy making process.[25] On the first level, all actors can agree that the ultimate sovereign is the people. On the second level, the military must interpret regime goals from how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches exercise their specific powers. On the third level, the military finds itself as one of many actors involved in the planning, initiating, and mobilizing support for a policy. As one looks across each level to identify the goals—or better define them, as in the nebulous term "security of the state"—the answers move from concrete to abstract, and are open to greater debate, but they are still present.

One of the most important jobs of the military is to maintain the trust of both its civilian principals and the American public. This is most important whenever there is a transition between principals. More time must be spent early on developing this trust before anything substantive can occur. Trust goes beyond simple comparisons between institutions. The principal must trust that the steward's goals are aligned.

The Call for a New Model

The old conceptions of the military relationship hinder how senior military leaders give advice to their civilian superiors. William Rapp argued this same point, noting six realities of national security policy making:

- there is rarely clear policy guidance,
- the process is iterative rather than linear,
- political decisions are rarely timely,
- mutual trust is not automatically conferred and is the result of personal relationships built over time,

- civilian and military leaders need each other, and
- the civil-military divide neglects strategy.[26]

These realities are problematic because they conflict with the agency model. However, these realities are much more in line with the centripetal stewardship model. Rapp's realities rely on longer-term relationships and accept that people in the policy making process value their reputations more than an individual transaction as espoused by the traditional model. Further, the dialogue required in the stewardship model increases understanding and reduces the civil-military divide so that each side understands the capabilities of the other.

Embracing the stewardship model can mediate the problem of Rapp's six realities. The tenets of joint decision-making and information exchange address Rapp's first, second, and third realities. The long-term, habitual relationships stressed in the stewardship model ameliorate Rapp's fourth and fifth realities. In national security, there is a common goal between civilian and military leadership, and a lack of honest dialogue can obfuscate that fact. Military leaders who strive to be true stewards can combat that.

Implications for the Civil-Military Relationship

This discussion can offer prescriptions for how the civil-military dynamic must improve. For the military to move from agents to stewards, the burden must rest on the military. The adage still exists that the civilian principal has the ultimate authority as well as the right to be wrong. So, the burden cannot be on the principal. It must be on the steward. Embracing itself as stewards forces the military to recognize the burden it bears in ensuring healthy civil-military relations.

First, the centripetal stewardship model is a new way for officers to understand civil-military relations. Rapp argues that senior officers do not lack moral courage, but their voice is limited by a culture that emphasizes conformity and evasion from assignments with civilian thought leaders. He asserts that "personal relationships, experience, and education all matter because they lend weight and credibility to dissenting opinions."[27] The centripetal stewardship model should be a new part of officer education early on because understanding it can change the culture that currently assumes an agency model pitting itself against civilian principals. Much like the theories of Huntington, Janowitz, and Feaver affected how generations of officers perceive their role in the republic, so too can the stewardship model shape the next generation's perceptions.

Second, the military must identify what factors can promote stewardship within the Department of Defense. There are structural and psychological antecedents that can encourage stewardship in an organization.[28] Leaders need to identify what those are for the military to drive organizational change. Few—if any—military leaders would claim they are not stewards of the profession of arms, but they either may not fully understand what stewardship is or their actions might be constrained by existing structural and psychological characteristics that discourage stewardship behavior. Among these could be bureaucratic politics, political or social narratives, misaligned incentive structures, or a bevy of other factors.[29]

Third, the military must reengage the development of its trust and reputation with civilian principals. The "bargain" between the American people, the president, Congress, and the military is under a constant renegotiation that relies on trust.[30] Popular polls about trust in the military institution suffer from an appraisal of the tasks the military executes rather than how it conducts them. Therefore, the military is not a good instrument to measure this. If civilian leadership cannot trust that the generals are—within the constraints of the Constitution— "on their team," then the military has failed. In the debate leading up to President Barack Obama's surge of troops in Afghanistan, the president did not seem to trust the advice of his generals, feeling they were manipulating his options.[31] Likewise, the military must avoid gaining trust based on which political party is in power.[32] Finally, the tenor of negotiation in the civil-military bargain is more important than who controls it, and military leaders must show leadership by emphasizing the tenets of the stewardship model rather than posing themselves as agents competing with their civilian principals.[33]

The military divide from American society is concerning. The military was successful in improving public confidence since the Vietnam War due to reforms, marketing, and battlefield success.[34] However, confidence in the military varies inversely with contact. Less than 50 percent of civilian elites in the government with no military service had confidence

in the military.[35] This is a crisis of "ghettoization" reducing reciprocity between institutions.[36] Colford and Sugarman's suggestions aimed at greater crosspollination across civil and military institutions is a start at breaking this divide.[37] In policing, this resonates with the concept of community policing, where officers proactively engage with the community rather than simply respond when crimes occur. For the military, "community engagement" forces interaction at a substantial level.

The military must actively prepare for transitions in civilian leadership. Under stewardship theory, new presidents, congressmen, and civilian appointees will require greater involvement at the beginning of their terms. This is not a burden; it is an opportunity. Higher engagement at the onset must have an aim of aligning goals with the newly elected or appointed civilian principals. The fact that many civilian principals now have very little military experience makes this even more important. The military must actively engage its leaders and receive guidance. There is no need to frame threats. Military leaders must understand that their issues may be only one of many national interests their leaders are trying to address. Perhaps much of the failures associated with Afghanistan related to a lack of consensus over what goals we were trying to achieve.

Conclusion

A stewardship approach might be the ideal, though in many cases we can observe the military acting as agents. Therefore, the challenge is to get those prone to act as agents to be more collectively oriented instead and to act as defense-wide/national stewards. The military must become stewards to improve the civil-military relationship.

The description of the civil-military relationship is an abstract concept with tangible implications. Most important is how it drives the discussion of the profession of arms. Theory and scholarship drive how the profession teaches its own and perpetuates its own corporateness. Utilizing a paradigm of agency to describe how the military fits into the American political system is detrimental to the development of the profession. Instead, military officers must understand at an early point of their development how they fit within the larger context of American bureaucracy, government, and society. This better informs how officers should deal with the gray areas that they will face in their careers. Most importantly, it makes officers better prepared to deal with national security dilemmas in the twenty-first century.

Future scholarship should focus on testing stewardship theory across the Department of Defense. Certain organizations in the military undoubtedly exhibit higher levels of stewardship than others. Identifying them and determining how this develops can inform new directions for the military profession and serve as learning points for civilian leadership to understand how to cultivate a better relationship with the military. In-depth case studies articulating how a positive civil-military relationship allowed achievement of democratic goals or national security are necessary to illuminate how certain forces can push the military and its civilian principals closer together rather than farther apart. ■

Notes

1. Jim Golby and Kori Schake, "The Military Won't Save Us – and You Shouldn't Want Them To," Defense One, 12 August 2020, accessed 1 November 2022, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/08/military-wont-save-us-and-you-shouldnt-want-them/167661/; John Nagl and Paul Yingling, "'… All Enemies, Foreign and Domestic': An Open Letter to Gen. Milley," Defense One, 11 August 2020, accessed 1 November 2022, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/08/all-enemies-foreign-and-domestic-open-letter-gen-milley/167625/.

2. Andrew Bacevich, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 193.

3. Risa Brooks, "Paradoxes of Professionalism: Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in the United States," *International Security* 44, no. 4 (Sp8ring 2020): 7–44, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00374.

4. For brevity and simplicity, "military" refers to all services of the Armed Forces, and "civilian principals" refers to elected and appointed leaders in both the executive and legislative branch. The military is a conglomeration of disparate bureaucracies with varied missions that constantly compete with one another, while the actual stance of "civilian principals" can be hard to discern in an increasingly polarized political environment. For more discussion, see James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); or Bartholomew H. Sparrow, "Who Speaks for the People? The President, the Press, and Public Opinion in the United States,"

Presidential Studies Quarterly 38, no. 4 (December 2008): 578–92, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2008.02665.x.

5. Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist Papers: Primary Documents in American History," nos. 10, 24–28, 69, Library of Congress, accessed 8 November 2022, https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text.

6. Information asymmetry is a central tenet of agency theory. In the civil-military context, military elites have a much greater knowledge about military operations than the civilians who direct them to conduct those operations. The decreasing number of veterans in Congress only exacerbates this dilemma. Even without that trend, the modern battlefield is more complex and dynamic than ever before, making it even harder for civilian elites to fully understand or stay attuned to military operations compared to military elites.

7. Richard H. Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," *The National Interest*, no. 35 (1994): 3–17.

8. Rosa Brooks, "Civil-Military Paradoxes," in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 21–68.

9. James Golby, Peter Feaver, and Kyle Dropp, "Elite Military Cues and Public Opinion About the Use of Military Force," *Armed Forces & Society* 44, no. 1 (January 2018): 44–71, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X16687067.

10. Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics* (London: Penguin, 1976), 275–9.

11. Douglas L. Bland, "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 7–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9902600102.

12. James Burk, "Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 7–29, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X0202900102.

13. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, reissue edition (New York: Free Press, 18 July 2017).

14. Douglas L. Bland, "Patterns in Liberal Democratic Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 525–40, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X0102700402.

15. Peter Feaver, "Domestic Politics and the Long War," in *Lessons for a Long War: How America Can Win on New Battlefields, ed. Thomas Donnelly and Frederick Kagan* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2010), 11–32.

16. Lex Donaldson, "The Ethereal Hand: Organizational Economics and Management Theory," *Academy of Management Review* 15, no. 3 (July 1990): 369–81.

17. Paul H. Appleby, "Government Is Different," in *Classics of Public Administration: Seventh Edition, ed. Jay Schafritz and Albert Hyde* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012), 122–26.

18. James H. Davis, F. David Schoorman, and Lex Donaldson, "Davis, Schoorman, and Donaldson Reply: The Distinctiveness of Agency Theory and Stewardship Theory," *Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 1 (July 1997): 21, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1997.9707180258.

19. Ibid.

20. David M. Van Slyke, "Agents or Stewards: Using Theory to Understand the Government-Nonprofit Social Service Contracting Relationship," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 17, no. 2 (2007): 157–87, https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mul012.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 690.

24. Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 4–8.

25. James W. Ceasar, "In Defense of Separation of Powers," in *Separation of Powers: Does It Still Work?*, ed. Robert A. Goldwin and Art Kaufman (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1986), 168–93.

26. William E. Rapp, "Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Military Leaders in Strategy Making," *Parameters* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2015): 13–26.

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28. Morela Hernandez, "Toward an Understanding of the Psychology of Stewardship," *Academy of Management Review* 37, no. 2 (2012): 172–93, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2010.0363.

29. For a great example of how narratives can affect how services view themselves and what they think they must do, see Conrad Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam: The U.S. Army's Response to Defeat in Southeast Asia* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 14–19.

30. Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Is Civilian Control of the Military Still an Issue?," in Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 69–96.

31. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 324–88.

32. For more evidence and discussion, see Jason K. Dempsey, *Our Army: Soldiers, Politics, and American Civil-Military Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 152–92.

33. Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 158–70.

34. David King and Zachary Karabell, *The Generation of Trust: Public Confidence in the U.S. Military Since Vietnam* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2003), 80–85.

35. Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, BCSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 459–68.

36. The decrease in percentage of Americans serving in uniform combined with basing consolidations because of base realignment and closure decisions have created pockets of military communities segregated from the rest of American society. This physical separation from most Americans may save money but it also prevents contact between society and military communities that could foster integration, dialogue, and understanding.

37. Matthew Colford and Alec J. Sugarman, "Young Person's Game: Connecting with Millenials," in Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 245–64.

Walt Rostow (*right*) uses a topographic model on 15 February 1968 to update President Lyndon B. Johnson (*second from left*) on the ongoing battle for Khe Sanh, which was fought in Vietnam from 21 January to 9 July 1968. Critics of the Johnson administration have asserted that it provoked ire from the military leadership by attempting to micromanage battlefield operations from the White House, purportedly under the direction of then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Such micromanagement, based on the political theory of gradualism, dramatically eroded the relationship between administration officials and the military leadership attempting to conduct the war. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

Politics, Warfare, and the American People

How America's Uneven Political Leadership Harms Its Ability to Win

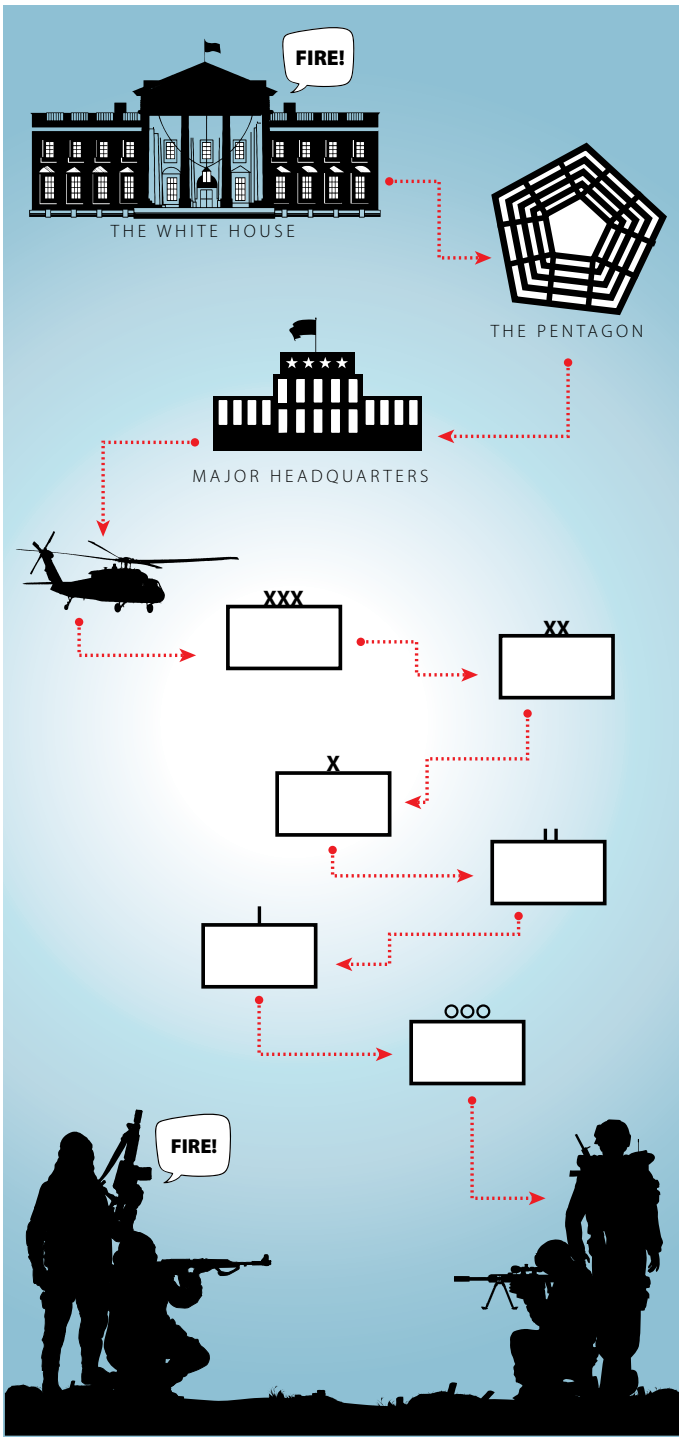
Maj. Jeremy Shields, U.S. Air Force Reserve

Despite overwhelming economic, technological, and military advantages, America's tradition is always to struggle its way to craggy victory. Is the eventual victory because of political leadership or is it because of how America organizes, trains, and equips?

Colin Gray asserts the American way of war promulgates a tradition of nonstrategic, apolitical methods that favor the American military's tactical might.[1] This theory is consistent and successful when it fights a quick, decisive, and clean conflict with a clearly defined *military* end; however, many of the engagements that the American military has undertaken since World War II were waged with ill-defined *political* goals that do not necessarily need military might to succeed.[2] These blurred lines have significantly contributed to America's uneven record of victory, primarily due to a lack of national leadership outside the military's control or persuasion.

America's struggles in matters of warfare are simply a manifestation of its messy political system's leadership and its inability to articulate and lead to appropriate military end states. Carl von Clausewitz's famous line of war as a continuation of policy by other means is manifested in America's political system that inherently relies on warfare to achieve whatever political goals the country has outside its borders.[3] However, countless entanglements in America's history have shown that political objectives do not readily nest within the specific capabilities of violence. The military is not suited for nation-building, neocolonialism, or security operations in faraway lands after primarily military objectives are achieved and political objectives oriented toward nonviolent ways begin.

Because of the physical separation of the United States from much of the world by the two oceans bordering the North American continent, public sentiment often skews toward noninterventional opinions as skirmishes around the world unfold; foreign skirmishes are often perceived as some other country's problem. Even today, some Americans still question why President Joseph Biden would contemplate helping Ukraine, believing the war is clearly a European problem versus the existential threat to self-determination and the rights of sovereign nations everywhere to exist peacefully. Much of this isolationism comes from the healthy tradition of wariness of foreign entanglement. Additionally, the average American's lack of global understanding of how interrelated many issues are in an interconnected world diminishes the domestic appetite for American intervention. As a result, U.S. political leaders are



(Image by Arin Lynn Burgess)

slow to wake up to the challenges that eventual military intervention will entail. What remains in that void is the vacuum of truth and political leaders who are reluctant to tell the American people the connectedness of world events, the need for America's assistance, and that issues on foreign lands will eventually come to America's shores. This lack of foresight and understanding is the usual course for America to play catch-up instead of leading the world in response to the sobering and difficult realities.

Prior to the two world wars, American attitudes in preparation for warfare followed a similar path of isolation and restraint, reflecting that the primary strategic role of the military was the continental defense of American borders and territorial protection of assets in the Pacific.[4] The prevailing thought in the interwar periods was one of antipathy toward war, which led to a lack of political strategic aims in preparing for the eventual outbreak of World War II.[5] In his book on prewar plans and preparations, Gen. Mark S. Watson succinctly summed up America's approach to war by saying that strategy to military events is unrolled almost entirely in the theater of war, within the sound of the guns.[6]

Adm. Harold Rainsford Stark became chief of naval operations in 1939. From 1940 to 1941, he oversaw the expansion of the Navy as well as its involvement in the neutrality patrols against German submarines during the latter part of 1941. During this time, in anticipation of conflict with both Germany and Japan, he authored the "Plan Dog" memorandum that laid out a strategy for conducting a two-theater war. This memo became the basis for America's "Europe First" policy in which the initial focus of conflict would be attaining victory in Europe before providing more robust support to the war against Japan. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy)

This history of uncertainty in national strategic direction, leadership, and policy did not start with any single president and has continued as a tradition. At the outset of World War II, on the European continent, American military leaders felt they did not fully understand the president's strategy for national defense.[7] The repeated pattern of military preparedness preceding American foreign policy has been and remains one of the most challenging political leadership problems affecting easy success in all foreign military endeavors.

Post-World War I, people of every nation were tired of war, scarred by loss, and depleted of funds to entertain any more conflict.[8] America had entered the Great War without any say or influence on who the enemy was or the best methods to defeat them. The guiding principle was the disillusion with warfare and the need to bask in an intervening peace dividend. Practically speaking, this meant that strategy solely focused on preserving the peace, designing nonmilitary peaceful institutional bodies such as the League of Nations and other instruments of world unity to ensure a sense of lasting peace was possible and enduring. However, Congress, as the body of the American people, rejected President Woodrow Wilson's liberalist approach as concerns over the League's other imperial members would entangle America in ceaseless wars as they pursued hegemony over their colonial holdings. Writ large, this meant no more military intervention but the start of political leadership. However, this was not to be in the years that followed.

Military officers knew that the world order would not stay static for long. As early as 1937, even as the

commander in chief continued to pursue a policy of peace, military leaders saw the writing on the wall as they set about making contingency plans for possible scenarios involving offensive warfare.[9] As evidenced by Adm. Harold Stark's November 1940 letter, the military machine went to work on different plans to meet various scenarios—a tradition that is still practiced today—the military would face with little political or governmental direction. The so-called "Plan Dog Memorandum" would go on to serve as the basis for the entire government's response to the eventual two-front war.[10] The reverse order of the military designing what would become the official policy of the U.S. government misses the mark and underscores just how dysfunctional America was then and has become worse since the halcyon days of Franklin D. Roosevelt. A return to strong and decisive guidance from America's political leadership communicating and in concert with the military leadership will arrest this abysmal history of failed planning between the military and the political classes.

World War II's eventual end state of unconditional surrender meant that the military was no longer hinged to a limited war without an appropriate military end state or objectives to achieve that goal. The total war concept of neutralizing the German and Japanese militaries while breaking the civilians' will to support further aggression meant that the military was unrestrained from political limits to achieving its objectives. At this moment, the overarching objective of the military was of paramount importance to the extension of politics, when the optimal conditions had been achieved to realize the Clausewitzian dogma of war as a method of political advancement. Further, by setting the condition of complete and told surrender, the American leadership inferred the Soviets and the British could not sue for their own peace with Germany until the Allied militaries had achieved their desired end state. Not since those days have we had a more clear and direct policy to our military strategy.

American leadership was strong and assertive in what was needed to restore world order and defeat bad actors. The coalition of Allied partners that achieved the peace following World War II shared the common goals of repelling fascism, restoring world order, and destroying the pillars that held up these maligned structures, so that they could not reconstitute to rechallenge peace and order.[11] This was primarily achieved by routing the Nazi military machine and detonating two atomic bombs in Imperial Japan. With total war from the military now bringing maligned actors to their knees, the messy job of establishing world order from a position of diplomatic and political means began in earnest. So why has this leadership capability been so absent since that time?

The postbellum period of World War II allowed time for the political and military leaders of the United States to debate, contemplate, and understand the new way of warfare following the release of the atomic weapons in Japan.[12] Defining what sort of military structure would be necessary for the nuclear age, how the services would be aligned, and in what types of wars America would involve itself seemed clear. There was an opportunity to synergize the political with the military and organize in such a way that military combat power would be deployed only as a last measure of a robust and complete deployment of all instruments of power. The strategy of containment presented a unique case for a whole-of-government approach to national security that wrangled the political, military, diplomatic, and professional realms toward one goal.

Two other significant wars in which America entangled blood and treasure had diametrically opposed outcomes due mainly to the way in which they were conceived and executed. The wars in Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm bear no resemblance to each other except for the overwhelming flex of combat power America brings to every fight. But to understand how one war could be so utterly demoralizing and the other war such a tremendous political and military success, one must examine the leadership contributions of Gen. Colin Powell, who was a soldier of both wars, to understand the undercurrent of restrained military engagement coupled with

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Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell points to Iraqi air bases at a Pentagon briefing 22 January 1991 during the first Gulf War. (Photo by Greg Gibson, Associated Press)

the exhaustion of all other nonviolent means. Enter the Powell Doctrine, named for the general.

The importance of the Powell Doctrine is to consider the "so what" of outcomes before pondering military action. This forces leaders to the examine how power projection will link to political objectives and what comes after the end of hostilities. Powell, like his mentor and former boss, Caspar Weinberger, realized that America's station as the leader of the free world made it impossible to ignore problems elsewhere and impractical to embrace the isolationism that has persistently made up the fabric of American ideology.[13] While America did not ask for this responsibility, the mantle was nonetheless hoisted onto its shoulders postbellum World War II. As was stated earlier, the lessons borne of that era reveal that problems in other places eventually come to America's doorstep. How political leaders choose to answer those calls can be distilled to the specific questions of the Powell Doctrine.

First, the Powell Doctrine seeks to provide an arbitrary but achievable political clarity to the often messy and arcane reality of partisan politics. The doctrine generates pause among the political class by posing several questions. For example, are America's vital interests involved? Is the action supported by the American people? Do our allies agree with our approach? Using this approach has the potential to align America's strategic political goals with those of its military. That said, what is missing today is America's national leadership insisting on the consideration of such endeavors.

A second aspect of the Powell Doctrine is framed within the case of the Vietnam War. The ambiguity and incremental framing of the core problem in Vietnam mixed with the gradual escalation of forces doomed a coherent long-term strategy that aligned America's overall

strategic ends.[14] As a counterexample, in the Gulf War, Powell worked with political leaders to codify what was militarily feasible once other instruments of power had been exhausted. He then worked with military leaders to design plans that would enable strategic success.[15] Within this construct, defining clear objectives made the military piece attainable in the Gulf War, which is quite the opposite of the Vietnam War's outcome.

To further illustrate the malfeasance of the Vietnam War as an extreme example of military strategy not aligning with national policy, we must contemplate the unrealistic expectations of success in a limited war.[16] As was the case in World War II, the political arm of America's democratic institutions did little to bring the country along with their aims in Vietnam as violence escalated, body counts mounted, and Americans debated the value of fighting someone else's war. While America had an overarching strategy since the end of hostilities in World War II to contain the spread of communism abroad, the Vietnam War lacked a coherent public affairs program to sell to the American people the reason why stopping the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia was so important. But while the war progressed, the tenuous connection to stopping Communism and building capitalist support in the decolonizing world became ever more difficult to sell to a skeptical American public. As a testament to this ambiguous and conflicting strategy, the messaging of the Johnson White House was that the goals and end states of the war should be kept as ambiguous as possible to preserve political capital should the Vietnam endeavor fail.[17] Is this how we want America to lead the free world?

As a juxtaposition to the Vietnam War, the Gulf War against Iraq and Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard is perhaps the last and greatest example of war as a means of last resort. Powell's doctrine was put to the test because from the outset of Iraqi aggression in Kuwait, the United States led the world in aggressive diplomacy, expert information dissemination, paralyzing economic flexing, and the largest deployment of American combat power since World War II. The lead-up to the Gulf War was a masterstroke in exercising all instruments of power and leading the free world to a decision point. President George Bush worked for months to build the case that Iraq's occupation of Kuwait was unacceptable and put forth a policy to return the status quo to the region, antebellum. When those diplomatic and economic levers failed, Bush laid out four primary strategic goals for the military to execute in National Security Directive 54.[18] These clearly defined objectives and a specific desired end state allowed the American military to prosecute an unparalleled level of warfare to a successful military and, by extension, political end.[19]

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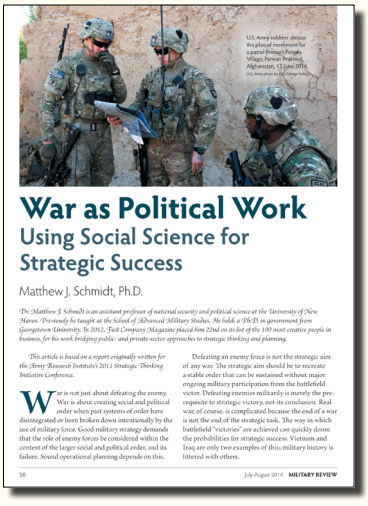

Dr. Matthew J. Schmidt asserts that strategic thinking requires the subjectivity of a qualitative approach to problem-solving as it relates to terminating a conflict by promoting a stable order within the defeated population that can be sustained without further major ongoing military participation from the battlefield victor. Consequently, defeating enemies militarily should be seen merely as a prerequisite step to of ultimate strategic victory, not its conclusion.

To read "War a Political Work: Using Social Science for Strategic Success" from the July-August 2014 edition of *Military Review*, visit https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20140831_art012.pdf.

That said, America has learned little from the Weinberger or Powell Doctrine's success in the Persian Gulf. As we close out more than twenty years of counterinsurgency operations, we only contemplated three of the eight questions of the Powell Doctrine. Crucially, the most important unanswered question of having a plausible exit strategy has haunted three separate presidential administrations and led to the unnecessary exhaustion of blood and treasure with a claim to a tenuous victory. While it is easy to initiate the military option, it is often difficult for both military leaders and senior statesman to link beautifully crafted campaigns with clear ideas for how the war should end and diplomacy begins.[20]

Today, echoes from the interwar period are slowly building to a crescendo. The European continent is embroiled in conflict as another belligerent despot, Vladimir Putin, is focused on rebuilding historical, ethnographic, and perceived cultural geographic lines. The tenuous peace that global institutions like NATO, the European Union, and the United Nations have enjoyed over the last seventy-plus years is under threat. In the last seven years, the once-steady hand of the United States tremored under slogans like "Make America Great Again" and the isolationist hubris of "America First." As these wildly popular catchphrases capture the minds of Americans and the policies they endeavor, they mainly serve to break down America's commitment to liberal world ideals, demonstrating that Americans once again are impervious to the entreaties of an unstable world beckoning for leadership and security. The national security policy America can trace to the ideas of international liberalism and Roosevelt are increasingly under strain. What does this change mean for today's military professionals and America's collective national security?

Military professionals have every right to demand clear and attainable military objectives from their political leaders that support American strategic policy. However, since the end of the twentieth century, what has endured has been an overly optimistic assessment of the end of state-sponsored hostilities and strategic narcissism in hoping away conflict by meekly investing in international institutions that support world peace.[21] When given limited, measurable, and achievable objectives with clearly defined end states, military professionals prove successful time and again. When ambiguity, mission creep, and shortsighted strategic planning cycles pervade military-based solutions, the metrics for military success skew toward uneven ends. Our most recent end to the Afghanistan war is encapsulated with the words of Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster when he said, "Afghanistan was a one-year war, fought twenty times over."[22] This crystalizes America's lack of political leadership marrying military end states.

America's political system, by design, is messy, slow to react, and often wrong in its ability to steer the global narrative. The transient nature of America's political stability over the last forty years has produced incoherent national strategy and instability as to the nature of its objectives abroad. While liberal internationalist institutions are effective at keeping the status quo, much like the Joint Planning Board of the interwar periods, American military leadership cannot rely solely on strategic direction from a president who is only realistically effective for the first two years in office and a congress hell-bent on internecine partisan battles. From simply supplying combat power with little strategic input in World War I to the disastrously vague Vietnam War, the ambiguity of America's approach to war is outdated. Merely reacting with overwhelming combat capabilities first, then working out the details later is no longer tenable in the fast-moving, multidimensional warfare of the twenty-first century. America needs to be a beacon of leadership that provides a unified, steady voice of strategic policies that harmonize the instruments of power toward achievable end states. Unified political leadership with a shared mental and policy model is essential to break the cycle of uneven victories. Our national interests require this, and more importantly, our military deserve this. ■

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The author of "The Need for a Brigade Politics-and-Policy Staff Officer" argues that brigade line commanders engaged in occupational duties in Iraq often lacked a staff officer capable of providing expertise, insight, and clarity regarding the local political environment affecting their assigned areas responsibility. Drawing upon his own experiences serving in such a capacity, the author asserts brigade staffs often lacked a clear procedure or person to assist in interpreting the Iraqi government's political decisions at either the central government or regional level, and for conveying to the brigade staff the differences between the Title 10 authorities and functions of the combined joint task force and the Title 22 functions of the Office of Security Cooperation that has been operating in Iraq since 2011. This lack of staff structure limited a brigade commander's ability to fully understand the operational environment, which adversely impacted decisions on how best to apply combat power. This gap resulted in a recurring complaint about field grade officers and more senior military leaders—that the "best military advice" they provide is too frequently tactically sound but strategically and politically uninformed.

To read "The Need for a Brigade Politics-and-Policy Staff Officer" from the January-February 2017 edition of *Military Review*, visit https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_2017228_art009.pdf.

A tank of the North Vietnamese army flies the National Liberation Front flag 30 April 1975 at the Presidential Palace in Saigon, capital of South Vietnam. The fall of Saigon to communist forces marked the end of the Vietnam War. (Photo by Alamy)

Ignoring Failure

General DePuy and the Dangers of Interwar Escapism

Eric Michael Burke, PhD

Some of the most dramatic consequences in war arise from the faulty calibration of an army's preparations, strategy, and tactics with the political and strategic particularities of a specific mission or foe. As Carl von Clausewitz famously warned, the "first, the supreme, the most decisive act of judgment" for any senior leader is to accurately assess the evolving political nature and strategic character of a war, "not to take it for something, or wish to make of it something, which by the nature of its relations it is impossible for it

to be."[1] Long influential mistranslations of the assertion have suggested that conflicts can be neatly categorized into more or less static "kinds" (conventional, unconventional, limited, total, etc.), ignoring the political essence and chaotic dynamism organic to human conflict that the original author had emphasized. Because of this, soldiers and scholars alike have long taken Clausewitz's admonition to mean that an army must be right-sized and prepared for a specific "kind" of conflict they interpret as looming on the immediate horizon. At the very least, they often assert that preparations made to develop or "modernize" a force during interwar periods must get the equation "less wrong" than potential adversaries.[2] To be sure, no leader can predict with perfect accuracy what kind of challenge will arise on the morrow. One historically prevalent blind spot, however, is the propensity for wars to fundamentally transform from one "kind" to another, via the chaotic exchange of blows and counterblows that collectively comprise them, upending the prior preparations of both belligerents.

The Army's new Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, refers to these changes as "transitions." Transitions in military operations can occur between strategic contexts (competition, crisis, or armed conflict), tasks (offense, defense, or stability), operational phases, or branches of a campaign. They can unfold expectedly, as when a headquarters shifts from a main to supporting effort, during task organization changes, or when handing off responsibilities between units. They can also happen unexpectedly, forcing abrupt and often dramatic adaptation from one kind of operation or conflict to another to avoid disaster. Thus, planning for, training, and anticipating possible transitions, most especially those of a potentially major character, represents an imperative responsibility for Army leaders at every echelon.[3] Clausewitz said relatively little explicitly on conflict transitions, but his operative paradigm of war as an essentially chaotic and unpredictable activity certainly implied the likelihood for just such a phenomenon to occur.[4]

While alluring in theory, the imagined ability of many armies throughout history to either avoid deployment to certain kinds of conflicts or prevent the transformation of a war from one type to another has always been an act of perilous self-delusion. The best that leaders can hope for is a force prepared to effectively manage, cope with, and adapt to inevitably ever-changing circumstances, anticipating the key transitions most likely to occur given their assigned objectives, national strategies, and the operational environment to which they are deployed. Despite this reality, innovative ideas, technological breakthroughs, organizational restructuring, or novel operational concepts have frequently played the role of dangerous siren songs for armies in interwar eras yearning for panaceas that will enable them to avoid what they know to be their most vexing weaknesses and leverage their perceived strengths. Instead of conducting maximally honest, painfully thorough, and uncomfortably comprehensive analyses of major reversals, armies tend to either ignore completely or, alternatively, focus on how they will avoid particular "kinds" of conflicts the next time around. Often this takes the form of plans to decisively win any future conflict so quickly that a transition toward an unwanted scenario will be rendered impossible. In other cases, especially when certain kinds of inconvenient contingencies seem less than existential threats, interwar armies instead pretend that such scenarios are far less important or pressing than other, allegedly more dangerous, alternatives. After all, why prepare for anything but the worst conceivable eventuality? Everything of an apparently less perilous nature will sort itself out. Or will it?

This latter scenario comes remarkably close to describing the early interwar developmental strategy of the U.S. Army in the wake of the disastrous Vietnam War. Due to the long-term implications of decisions made during such an influential period, many of which continue

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1st Lt. Gary D. Jackson carries a wounded South Vietnamese ranger to an ambulance after a brief but intense battle with the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive 6 February 1968 near the National Sports Stadium in the Cholon section of Saigon. (Photo by Dang Van Phuoc, Associated Press)

to be lauded by historians and soldiers alike as brilliant successes, the Army is still living with their ramifications today. As the force emerges from under the shadow of the war in Afghanistan with far less than a brilliant victory to inscribe on its standard, it is high time to reflect upon how the decisions and predilections of senior leaders like Gen. William DePuy, the first commander of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), set an all but indelible cultural trend in motion in the mid-1970s that still threatens the service's ability to productively learn from its failures and overcome its historical vulnerabilities. Only by eschewing the urge to wish for the impossible escape from that which it does not want to confront can any army grow into the most resilient, capable, and successful force possible. Today's Army leaders have an exceedingly rare second chance to avoid the same pitfalls and get it right this time.

The "Never Again" Club

Expressing what amounted to a near consensus view among contemporary Army officers in his reflections upon the Vietnam War within the final pages of his memoir, *A Soldier Reports*, Gen. William Westmoreland defended not only his own decisions and actions as Military Assistance Command–Vietnam (MACV) commander but also those of the Army at large. "The military quite clearly did the job that the nation asked and expected of it," he argued, convinced that future historians would "reflect more favorably upon the performance of the military than upon that of the politicians and policymakers."[5] Analysts of the Braddock Dunn & McDonald (BDM) Corporation, charged by the Army in 1975 with producing its only official analysis of the crisis, disagreed with Westmoreland's assessment. "There is sufficient credit and blame to share," they asserted.[6]

The conflict in Vietnam had in many ways simply proven beyond the limits of U.S. capabilities. Although soldiers proved profoundly adaptable at the tactical level, with many commands embracing the intricate challenges of balancing counterinsurgency with repelling invasion by main force communist units, as

Marines of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, rest alongside a battered wall of Hue's imperial palace after a battle for the citadel in February 1968 during the Tet Offensive. (Photo by the Associated Press)

historian Gregory Daddis argues, the complex strategic challenge and "hybrid war" facing the U.S. military—most especially the "limitations of what a foreign force can achieve when advising indigenous armies," finally proved beyond the pale. The United States ultimately "could not simultaneously create an army, build a nation and fight a war," even though successfully juggling all three objectives was precisely what the mission required.[7] Heavy reliance upon firepower-oriented "search and destroy" tactics designed for employment against Soviet enemies had only pushed strategic success further away.

While acknowledging the cogency of arguments then in vogue stressing South Vietnamese or communist (as opposed to American) actions when explaining the conflict's ultimate outcome, given BDM's U.S.-focused mandate, the authors sought to address "the main issue facing the United States: why could not our overwhelming military power be translated into equivalent political and diplomatic advantages in Indochina?"[8] After all, as Maj. Gen. DeWitt Smith observed in July 1977, "We won practically all the battles but, by any sensible definition of strategic objectives, we lost the war." Forging a practical understanding of how such an unfortunate circumstance had arisen seemed to Smith, "absolutely imperative."[9]

The BDM analysts felt they knew the answer. While battles and campaigns are among the many tools available to commanders charged with the comprehensive military pursuit of political objectives, combats that prove "unnecessary and costly" could ultimately contribute to strategic defeat, even if they initially appeared to be victories "in the traditional military sense." Conversely, operations deemed defeats on the battlefield could paradoxically "advance a determined and clever opponent yet closer to his ultimate aim." American officers had witnessed just such a phenomenon in the form of the near suicidal communist onslaught in the winter of 1968. Despite enemy forces suffering near catastrophic losses on the battlefield, the political implications of the Tet offensive ultimately redounded to their decisive strategic benefit.[10] In fact,

the dramatic political effects derived from American casualties sustained during the offensive only exacerbated the more than three long years of lesser communist "victories" in the form of brief ambushes deep in the mountainous highlands or the "thousands of lives, limbs, and vehicles lost to mines and boobytraps with not one enemy in sight." These hardly warranted a classification as "battles" in the traditional American military lexicon, but their cumulative strategic effect on shaping both American and South Vietnamese morale and resolve finally proved decisive.[11]

In the final analysis, BDM's writers attributed defeat not only to a "serious disconnect and mismatch between ends and means" within the American war effort but also on the major differences between a fundamentally "straightforward logic of the U.S. leadership" as compared with a "subtle … sophisticated thinking" of its communist foes.[12] Whereas MACV had rested its laurels on conventional measures of progress more appropriate to large-scale combat operations against a near peer, casualty ratios, terrain features "secured," etc., communist authorities had maintained "a broader and longer-range view, focused more on political and psychological gains and losses, [and] shifts in the overall momentum" at the strategic level of war than on individual battles "won" at the tactical-level.[13] If American officers had outfought their opponents, in the end they were ultimately "outthought."[14]

The BDM study suggested that crafting a far more expansive American approach to contemplating and addressing the more nuanced political and psychological aspects of war would pay major dividends in the future. Given Vietnam's lesson that "massive U.S. military power was not the best or only weapon for the Vietnam conflict, at least as it was employed," the question seemed to be where to go from here. The authors asked, "Can U.S. combat forces be trained and mentally conditioned for the kind of people's war that was waged in Indochina?" On its face, given near axiomatic habits of thought deeply ingrained within the American military psyche, the answer seemed doubtful. The historically derived "American Way of War," as the authors termed it, tended to emphasize the science over the art of war, the physical, temporal, and spatial over the moral and psychological aspects of strategy, and firepower-centered direct-action tactics over more subtle indirect approaches.[15] One way to push back against these problematic habits of thought, the analysts suggested in their "Agenda for the Future," was to aim for more "broad/flexible" doctrine that changed the U.S. military's tendency to write and train for "narrow/fixed" operational concepts relevant only to very specific "kinds" of wars and opponents.[16] Above all else, the pressing question seemed to be "how better to prepare and employ [the military]? And for what sort of contest(s)?" The latter question, of course, suggested that the Army would, in the future, have the luxury of choosing just "what sort of contest(s)" it would fight.[17]

"The historically derived 'American Way of War,' as the authors termed it, tended to emphasize the science over the art of war, the physical, temporal, and spatial over the moral and psychological aspects of strategy, and firepower-centered direct-action tactics over more subtle indirect approaches."

The conclusions of the BDM analysts were mirrored by those of an especially thoughtful and reflective minority in the Army officer corps. A month after the January 1973 cease-fire agreement was forged between the U.S. and North Vietnamese governments, Army reservist Capt. James Thomas penned an article for the pages of *Military Review* expressing his concerns for the Army's potential postwar developmental trajectory. Taking a cue from contemporary strategic thinkers like Robert Osgood and Roger Hilsman Jr., Thomas looked back to the years immediately following the 1950–53 "limited war" crisis in Korea. In the aftermath of that early Cold War nightmare, many senior Army leaders had developed a distinct distaste for, indeed repulsion

at the "notion of limiting international violence such as to accord with qualified political ends" in the future. If American political leaders were to call upon the military to exert force abroad, they felt it ought to commit to allowing the employment of all available weapons and tactics to achieve strategic ends swiftly and decisively. "Limited" operations that included messy and seemingly intractable involvement in things like counterinsurgency and nation building had to be avoided. In their view, nothing, to include the employment of nuclear weapons, ought to be left off the table if political objectives were sufficient to warrant the employment of military force. In the minds of many in the Army officer corps, it was this very hindrance of having to fight the communist enemy "with one hand tied behind our backs" that contributed to strategic U.S. defeat in Vietnam.[18] If political ends were qualified at all, presidents and Congress should not come knocking on the Pentagon's door. Thomas referred to such officers as members of the "'Never Again' club."[19]

> In the minds of many in the Army officer corps, it was this very hindrance of having to fight the communist enemy 'with one hand tied behind our backs' that contributed to strategic U.S. defeat in Vietnam.

Unlike so many of his peers, although a Vietnam veteran himself, Thomas felt the mentality inspiring the "Never Again" club represented "a quietly pulsating issue" that "spread, tentacle-like, throughout the Army" and posed a major threat to a force almost certain to be deployed to yet more "limited wars" in the future. "The recent past will thrust itself into the foreseeable future," he warned readers, as the "fact of limited war as an Army mission remains." Instead of seeking to ignore or avoid such missions, he felt, the Army needed to capitalize on the 1973 shift to an all-volunteer force and adopt "changes in our training procedures … designed to prepare our soldiers psychologically and morally for the next limited engagement—should our elected leaders order such." After all, he posited, an "alternative to what has twice occurred in our recent past [in Korea and Vietnam] might be desirable."[20]

Though it is difficult to gauge the influence Thomas's editorial had among *Military Review* readers, his ideas resonated sufficiently with Lt. Col. Donald Vought, another Vietnam veteran, to warrant his penning a letter to the editor in May. Vought, too, sensed the formation of "a new 'Never Again' club developing" and was most troubled by the fact "that the membership in this club appears to be more senior than the advocates of the opposing view." The frequent pronouncement issuing from many in the highest ranks of the Army that Vietnam was "over and so be it" tended to have "a ring of biblical finality about it which I doubt will prove to be the case." The tendency to assume that future wars would principally involve the maneuver of large combat units in conventional operations led Vought "to suspect that we may not be preparing to fight the next war in the style of the last one but in the style of the one before the last [World War II]." While it seemed hard to believe after emerging bloodied and bruised from such a lengthy war that the Army would simply strive to discard "lessons so expensively learned" and instead seek "to disassociate from that unpleasant experience," Vought worried that such escapism "may well be manifested in the creation of a professional army no more capable of fighting limited war than that of 1960." Worse, if such was the case, should U.S. and NATO enemies "refuse to engage in armed struggle in any other form, who will then exert the most influence?" he asked pointedly.[21]

Eight months later, the editors of *Military Review* published similar concerns flowing from the pen of Lt. Col. James R. Johnson, a two-tour Vietnam veteran then serving as a faculty member in the Department of Strategy at the Command and General Staff College. Johnson sensed too many of his fellow officers assessing "the cost to the military" of the Vietnam debacle as having been "too great and assert that Army forces will never be returned to a similar situation." In accordance with this perception, many likewise asserted "that there

is no requirement to educate and train Army officers in internal defense and development." Such meddling in counterinsurgency had proven anything but cost-effective, they proclaimed.[22]

Johnson did not agree. Assertions that "no more Vietnams" were on the horizon, and thus the Army needed to pivot toward preparing only for large-scale combat operations "may provide a sense of comfort and well-being," he wrote, but were "justified neither by historical experience nor by current conditions." After all, he noted, the Army had engaged in far more low-intensity and counterinsurgency operations across its history than conventional wars. "There is little reason to suspect that the future will bring substantial changes in ratio," he presumed, and thus while "some soldiers may, therefore, prefer to study conventional tactics and battlefield technology," neither the past nor the present global situation justified such habits. If conflicts like Vietnam were any guide, it seemed plausible that "protracted, popular warfare heralds a new period of warfare which is based on a doctrine that emphasizes people rather than machines."[23]

> "Regular U.S. troop units are peculiarly ill suited for the purpose of 'securing' operations where they must be in close contact with the people."

While most members of the "Never Again" club sensed an alarming atrophy of American capabilities to confront threats at the middle to higher end of the conflict spectrum, officers like Thomas, Vought, and Johnson feared instead that the Vietnam experience signaled a dangerous incapacity of U.S. forces to reliably compete in "limited" and "people's" wars of the kind they had confronted for more than seven years. "American soldiers … should devote equal time and seriousness to the study of People's War when preparing themselves for future conflict," Johnson insisted. Extant Army doctrine had proven woefully inadequate for such complicated hybrid conflicts, focusing as it did on "mid-intensity nuclear warfare where combatants all wear uniforms, where civilians are regarded merely as possible obstacles … [and] where decisions are based on battlefield intelligence." Instead, the communist doctrine of "revolutionary warfare" had provided American enemies with "the capability of the weak to defeat the strong," and thus Johnson saw "no reason to believe that the lessons will not be read by the [enemy] planners of future wars." Without adequate doctrine and training to do so, "how do soldiers fight an enemy who is not dependent on modern tactical weapons systems?" Only a veritable revolution in the Army's approach to conceptualizing and training all its units for operations across the full spectrum of war could address the deficit.[24]

The incoming commander of the brand-new U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Gen. William E. DePuy, could not have disagreed more. Arguably one of the most stalwart card-carrying members of the "new 'Never Again' club," DePuy's extensive World War II and Vietnam experience had led him to the diametrically opposite conclusion. "Regular U.S. troop units are peculiarly ill suited for the purpose of 'securing' operations where they must be in close contact with the people," he observed. By contrast, firepower-centric tactics were well suited to an officer who, while commanding an infantry battalion in World War II, thought of his primary role as escorting artillery forward observers across France.[25] In Vietnam, his grunts of the 1st Infantry Division had proven especially adept at "search and destroy" tactics focused on finding and neutralizing enemy units with overwhelming firepower. "DePuy viewed the U.S. Army as geared and capable to fight only main force wars," historian Richard Lock-Pullan has noted, convinced as he was that "Vietnam was an aberration rather than a fundamental challenge to the U.S. understanding of war and the U.S. Army's role." Instead, the Army should "gear itself … to the type of warfare it preferred." Charged in 1973 by Army Chief of Staff Gen. Creighton Abrams with rebuilding the entire Army training enterprise, refocusing Army developmental efforts to shore-up what

he felt was a dramatic erosion of warfighting skills relevant to deterring and, if needs be, defeating the conventional Soviet foe in Europe, was precisely what DePuy meant to do.[26]

"A New Ball Game"

Partly due to concerns over the deterioration of Army capabilities in mid-intensity warfare as a result of the prolonged quagmire in southeast Asia, Abrams established the Astarita Study Group in 1973 to evaluate the service's current state as it related to what he and the administration perceived as the free world's most pressing strategic threat—Soviet invasion of western Europe.[27] Although freely admitting that determining "a course for the future is full of pitfalls … [and is] at best an imprecise science, shaped more by perceptions of the past and present than by visions of the future," the group's advocacy for an Army reorientation back to Europe was colored by ever more ominous U.S. intelligence noting menacing shifts in Soviet deployments.[28] At least five Soviet armor divisions had redeployed westward, many of which boasted the much-improved modern T-62 and T-72 tanks. Most analysts considered these new weapons systems to be superior to what NATO had on hand to greet them in case of invasion, and even if they were wrong senior Army leaders knew sheer numbers could compensate for any hidden qualitative disparities. Abrams, DePuy, and most of the Army's leadership recognized that a sudden Soviet onslaught would mean defending western Europe with only immediately available NATO forces in what amounted to a stopgap delaying action until help could arrive from abroad. How long that might take was anybody's guess. The potential price that NATO forces could pay if caught unready, however, seemed to be made starkly clear in the afternoon of 6 October 1973, when forces of an Egyptian and Syrian coalition thundered across Israeli borders to open what would ultimately be called, among many other names, the Yom Kippur War.[29]

U.S. Army Gen. William E. DePuy was the first commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (1973–1977). A highly decorated and experienced combat veteran with service in World War II and the Korean War, he was instrumental in focusing the Army almost exclusively on studying, equipping, and training primarily for large-scale combat in Europe against the Soviet Union, which he asserted was the most likely next adversary. He was also known to have minimized the importance of lessons learned in the Vietnam War, together with discounting the need to train for or study counterinsurgencies, regarding that conflict as an aberration in U.S. military history that would not likely be repeated. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

By overwhelming surprised Israeli forces on two fronts, Arab leaders hoped to secure limited tactical objectives and hold them for long enough to force diplomatic intervention by the United States, Soviet Union, or other Arab allies in a manner that would shift the regional political situation in their favor. Victory over the boastful Jewish state, still proud of its laurels won in the 1967 Six-Day War, could also help restore the diminished morale of the Egyptian and Syrian militaries.[30] In short, the Arab coalition sought to inflict "the heaviest losses on the enemy" in order to convince him that continued occupation of territory seized during the Six-Day War "exacts a price that is too high for him to pay."[31] The Israeli security strategy of intimidation would be directly threatened, which Arab leaders hoped would pave the way for "an honorable solution for the Middle East crisis" and a "basic change" in both Israeli and U.S. diplomacy.[32]

The surprise Egyptian attack was launched by five divisions, and within two days, it had secured most of its objectives on the eastern bank of the Suez

Canal. Armed with deadly Soviet antitank missiles, a wide net of advanced antiair missiles, and most crucially, total surprise, Egyptian infantry and armor rolled back astonished Israeli defenders and stunned the world with their rapid tactical success. Egyptian leaders rejected several appeals from major powers for a cease-fire, hoping instead to maximize their territorial gains and solidify the sudden shift in the regional balance of power.[33] Although several Egyptian officers feared a recovery of Israeli combat power backed by U.S. support should Arab forces advance beyond their strongpoints along the canal, successful Israeli counterattacks enabled by the adept deployment of reserves against Syrian forces on the northern Golan Heights required a renewed Egyptian offensive in the south to relieve pressure on its northern ally.[34] On 14 October, after a delay of several days, a second offensive began, but this time the Arabs were bloodily repulsed.[35] Two days later, Israeli armor turned the tables in a breakthrough back across the Suez Canal. Although both U.S. and Soviet leaders threatened military intervention in support of the belligerents, eventually cooler heads prevailed, and a cease-fire was secured. By the end of the war, with a loss of fewer than three thousand troops, Israeli forces had counterattacked significantly beyond the antebellum borders of the Jewish state and were rapidly closing on the capitals of both their Arab enemies. An entire Egyptian field army was surrounded, and perhaps most importantly, not a single Israeli civilian life had been lost. Almost eighteen thousand soldiers of the Arab coalition were dead, and more than eight thousand captured.[36]

To many of the Army's senior leaders, the war in the Levant bore all the hallmarks of "modern war" they had long expected from a conflict in western Europe. Outnumbered Israeli forces armed with predominately U.S. equipment had initially suffered a dramatic repulse at the hands of Arabs armed with advanced Soviet weapons systems. The need to secure every foot of sovereign Israeli territory, the disastrous implications of losing an opening campaign, and the urgent need to land a decisive blow prior to the intervention of foreign powers advocating a disadvantageous cease-fire all matched NATO concerns in Europe.[37] Even so, although historians have long suggested that the Yom Kippur War functioned as a veritable wake-up call for a U.S. Army focused on its quagmire in Vietnam, in fact officers like DePuy had already determined upon a shift of focus back to Europe before the first Arab columns rolled into Israeli territory. As Saul Bronfeld has shown, DePuy himself characterized the war as "a marvelous excuse … for reviewing and updating our own doctrine."[38] For DePuy and the "Never Again" club, unlike the failed quagmire in Vietnam, the Yom Kippur War was the right kind of war at the most opportune moment imaginable.

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When DePuy spoke and wrote of the need for "updating our doctrine" in light of the Yom Kippur War and the Army's need to play "catch-up on modernization, having missed one generation of modernization during the Vietnam War," he revealed a powerful assumption that the Arab-Israeli conflict was in fact representative of the future in ways that the war in Vietnam had never been, that it was an especially modern "kind" of war, and thus that close analysis of it (and, perhaps more to the point, *not* of Vietnam) would lend itself to improving the Army's ability to successfully confront contingencies on the near horizon. In one month, Israel had lost more artillery pieces and armored vehicles to Soviet-manufactured Arab firepower than all U.S. Army forces maintained in Europe. A "new lethality" seemed to define affairs on the Middle Eastern battlefield, and DePuy and many others could

not miss the glaring similarities between the Arab-Israeli engagements and those they anticipated unfolding in West Germany.[39]

Of course, the similarities in the tactical and especially technical characteristics of the conflict dominated such comparisons. As they had too often done in Vietnam, Army leaders paid little if any attention to the political, strategic, or even operational contours of the war.[40] They mostly ignored the fundamentally psychological political objectives of the Arab coalition that had effectively nullified the sustainment of grievous battlefield casualties, much like the North Vietnamese before them. Nor did they acknowledge the salient role of the incompatibility of prevailing Israeli doctrine with changing strategic circumstances in the region.[41]

for an unsuccessful United States) a thing of the past. Resistance issuing from the Infantry School frequently raised DePuy's hackles, prompting him to condemn those he termed "the infantry generals" (although branched infantry himself) for their "2 ½ mile per hour mentality." Yom Kippur had been a war of armor and mechanized infantry, he explained, completely alien to the combat methods of Vietnam still taught at Fort Benning. "They didn't understand it," DePuy later related, prompting his sense of a need to "shake them out of that lethargy."[44] He was confident that future wars would resemble Yom Kippur far more than Vietnam, and was unwilling to suffer any significant departure from his priorities. The notion that a future war might contain the potential to transition from one into the

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Nevertheless, the conflict not only confirmed DePuy's preconceived notions of modern warfare but also offered "a means to gain leverage in negotiating Army budgets and to convince the infantry generals … of the need to change," Bronfeld explains.[42] Despite the clarity of purpose that DePuy enjoyed, resistance to his myopic reshaping of Army doctrine in response to the lessons of Yom Kippur, most especially from the leadership at Fort Benning, was significant.[43]

Infantry officers like Maj. Gen. Thomas Tarpley, then commanding the Infantry School at Fort Benning, and Lt. Gen. John Cushman, DePuy's pick for inaugural command of the new Combined Arms Center (CAC) at Fort Leavenworth, were reluctant to embrace DePuy's eschewal of Vietnam's lessons from the very beginning. Influenced heavily by the predominately air-mobile and counterinsurgency operations the infantry had conducted in southeast Asia for nearly a decade, both officers had a hard time believing that the armor-heavy Yom Kippur War illustrated that such operations were now miraculously (and quite conveniently other, thus warranting careful preparation for both, remained outside of his consideration.

DePuy's visions only gained further detail following an Israeli-American Exploitation Agreement signed in the spring of 1974, authorizing the turnover of data and captured Arab equipment for U.S. analysis. Over the course of the year several officers traveled on orders to the Levant to collect the data and develop their own conclusions about the lessons of the conflict. Among them was Gen. Don Starry, commanding the U.S. Army Armor Center and School at Fort Knox.[45] The collected fruits of these visitations and analysis efforts culminated in a series of reports on the lessons of the war, the most influential of which was penned by DePuy himself in February 1975.[46] In the report, DePuy concluded that weapons of the modern battlefield were "vastly more lethal than any weapons we have encountered," and that a "highly trained and highly skilled combined arms team" was needed to overcome them.[47] "We are in a new ball game," he repeatedly asserted. The war seemed to illustrate that the Army would one day have to "operate

Israeli tanks of the 143rd Division cross the Suez Canal on the night of 15–16 October 1973 in a maneuver that quickly shifted the initiative of the campaign from Egyptian to Israeli forces. Gen. William DePuy, commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, regarded the rapid-paced ground movement of armored forces characteristic of both sides in the Yom Kippur War as essentially the same kind of warfare that would occur in Europe if large-scale conflict broke out between NATO and Soviet forces, which influenced the doctrinal guidance he developed for the U.S. Army. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

on a battlefield which is populated with those very lethal weapons in very large numbers and still get the job done without catastrophic losses."[48] Doing so would be an exceedingly tall order but not an impossibility.

Above all else, mobility was king. "You can't be static," he warned. Combined arms assets had to be orchestrated in a way that suppressed enemy capabilities to facilitate a war of maneuver culminating "at the critical point and at the critical time." Commanders had to "see the battlefield better than the enemy sees it so you know where to go and when to go."[49] As DePuy knew well, such constancy of relevant intelligence and an ability to "see the battlefield better than the enemy" could not have been more different from that which many of his readers had personally experienced in Vietnam and worried about encountering again. Starry himself had in fact characterized the conflict as a "most difficult informationless sort of war."[50]

Ignoring such qualms about a kind of war he would just as soon abandon and instead comparing modern American with Soviet armor, DePuy emphasized the alarming reality that "we have no decisive advantage, nor do they." Because of this, future war would simply be a matter of what became arithmetical "kill ratios" quite reminiscent of the infamous body counts in Vietnam. "He who has the most tanks on the battlefield will have an advantage," he insisted.[51] The extended range and penetrative capabilities of advanced Soviet tank guns and antitank missiles meant that if U.S. forces "can be seen on the battlefield, then they will be hit," DePuy cautioned. "What can be hit, can be killed."[52] The only way to avoid such a grim fate was to master the use of terrain and concealment when approaching enemy positions and use the tank to take the battle to the enemy. Such masterful maneuvering would require extensive training, and the support of an equally well-trained combined arms team.[53] "The environment of the modern battlefield is becoming more complex, more lethal and more interactive than ever before," he alleged.[54] It was to become a very common refrain.

DePuy envisioned that the lessons of the Yom Kippur conflict would "determine the characteristics required in our new systems."[55] It was important for "our schools, our combat developers and those involved in training, to remember these lessons and relate them to our concepts," he explained. "All that we do," the general concluded, "must relate to these very important lessons, crosswalked to our concepts, and result in the best weapons, the best tactics and the best techniques for the US Army to enable it to win the first battle of the next war while fighting outnumbered."[56] The potential risks inherent in such an aggressively single-minded pursuit of readiness for a profoundly specific strategic contingency were ignored. The possible implications should "the first battle of the next war," or indeed of any future conflict, not follow the script of the Yom Kippur War, or what might happen should such a war transform or transition into a different kind altogether, were left out of DePuy's brief.

Lt. Gen. John H. Cushman was the first commander of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In that capacity, he oversaw a rewrite of the new Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, which was disapproved by Gen. William DePuy in December 1974 because it did not address rectifying the shortcomings of the Army in the way that DePuy believed was necessary to prepare the Army to fight the Soviet forces effectively in Europe. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

"Not … the Smartest People"

Throughout his career, DePuy remained stalwartly committed to increasing combat power at the lowest tactical echelons.[57] This priority, forged in his experiences in Europe during World War II, informed every aspect of his approach to military reform. A veteran of the notoriously hard luck 90th Infantry Division, which suffered 150 percent losses in its officer corps during the 1944 campaign for Normandy, DePuy had emerged from the war with little respect for the innate leadership abilities of American subalterns. Almost all their failures he attributed to inadequate training prior to deployment.[58] The beating heart of the Army's fire and maneuver tactics, he reasoned, was learned skill wedded to understanding of weapons system capabilities in the junior ranks. Without these advantages borne of instruction and drill, all the many innate advantages of American warfighters would be squandered.

Because he tended to interpret his personal experience of World War II as a veritable sine qua non of warfare, more strategically messy conflicts like Korea and Vietnam had never fit neatly with his definition of real war, prompting him to reject their legitimacy out of hand. Yom Kippur, on the other hand, with its massed tanks and firepower-enabled mechanized infantry maneuver, was precisely the kind of fight he had in mind.[59] Now more responsible than any other single individual for the future trajectory of the Army's training and doctrine, the particularities of DePuy's personal experience increasingly informed the entire service's approach to war. The general saw little use for high-brow military theory and strategy at the tactical level, where he felt the Army most required immediate reform. For this reason, he felt the Army needed to tack from an emphasis on military *education* more appropriate for the convoluted contingencies of the Kennedy "Flexible Response" era to one of military training geared toward shaping units and leaders for an imminent Yom Kippur War of their own in Europe.[60]

Although initially charged by Abrams with revamping a collection of personnel issues related the shift to an all-volunteer force, the reform and wholesale reconstruction of Army doctrine and training methods quickly became DePuy's principal focus as

TRADOC's first commander. Understanding that the only way to prepare the Army for what he was convinced was coming was to show it the way in writing, he announced an expectation that all the Army's field manuals would soon be updated and replaced, bringing each into alignment with his concept of the force's primary mission in Europe.[61] By far the most important and influential of Army manuals had long been the successive editions of FM 100-5, *Operations*, the service's capstone operational doctrine outlining the manner in which the service thought about the nature of war and its role in it. Most recently updated in 1968 to address the obvious lessons from the ongoing war in Vietnam, DePuy was convinced that a new heavily reworked edition was necessary to set the tone and standard for all subsequent manuals composed at the branch schools and centers across the Army. The new FM 100-5 would be more than a field manual. It would be, DePuy intended, a surrogate to revolution and a life preserver thrown to an Army he felt was on the brink of disaster in Europe.

Given the centrality of combined arms coordination that DePuy felt was at the very heart of operations on the new exceedingly lethal modern battlefield, it followed that Gen. John Cushman's new CAC at Fort Leavenworth would bear primary responsibility for crafting the new manual. Accordingly, Cushman attended a December 1974 conference with DePuy at Fort A. P. Hill proudly prepared to brief the TRADOC commander on what he felt would certainly be the Army's next capstone doctrinal manual. Alas, the engineer and MIT graduate-turned-infantry officer was wired quite differently from DePuy, with an academic's intellectual bent mixed with a conviction that the best doctrine was flexible doctrine, avoiding hard-and-fast rules in the spirit of the BDM analysts' prescriptions and emphasizing the need for independent judgment and context-dependent reasoning by Army officers in the field. After all, Vietnam had proven that military operations across the spectrum of conflict outlined in the 1968 FM 100-5 required outside-the-box thinking when the book on hand failed to provide ready answers. Accordingly, Cushman's exceedingly concise draft manual characterized war as a "thinking man's art" that had "no traffic with rules." It also pushed back against the idea, so prominent among those enthralled with Yom Kippur, that armor and mechanized infantry were the key to future victories. There were no "supreme weapons systems" universally appropriate to all possible contingencies across the conflict spectrum, the draft asserted, meaning that all tools and techniques had to be left on the table.[62]

> "In a sharp rebuke of Cushman's draft, DePuy dismissed the entire manuscript out of hand, scheduling a new conference in the spring of 1975 and charging Cushman with revisiting the project completely. Understandably upset, the CAC commander did not comply."

Quite contrary to Cushman's expectations, DePuy was appalled. The entire premise of the draft manual flew in the face of every conviction he had about the Army and warfighting in general. Warfare was based in timeless principles and "inviolable rules" that arose naturally from the specific quantifiable capabilities of weapons systems, he believed. Moreover, the kind of initiative necessary for creativity in problem solving was profoundly rare among the officers he had known throughout his career, with most requiring simplistic and to-the-point instructions that were strictly prescriptive in their intent. Soldiers needed step-by-step tutelage in "how to fight," not abstractions more appropriate to a war college seminar on strategic theory, he argued.[63] As Cushman himself put it, his draft had intentionally focused on "how to think about fighting" instead of the strictly practical instructional manual DePuy had in mind.[64]

Perhaps worst of all, nothing about Cushman's draft promised to support Army acquisitions efforts given its tacit admission that the service could not hope to perfectly predict the most likely contingencies threatening national security. Congressional purse holders had to believe that the Army knew precisely what was

coming down the pike, DePuy believed, and it required a manual that gave just that impression.[65] In short, as Paul Herbert observes, DePuy hoped to craft a manual that was "at once a fighting doctrine and a procurement strategy."[66] If the Army could design a cogent doctrine, he reasoned, "Then we must buy the weapons that make it work and write the manuals that say how to use the weapons that make it work."[67] The possibility that the particular political objectives of future conflicts might not ultimately call for such weapons, just as the recent crisis in Vietnam had required a fundamentally different set of tools than those within the contemporary U.S. arsenal, was mostly immaterial to him. Force transformation started with a vision of the future battlefield interfaced with detailed descriptions of plausible tactical scenarios. Diligent calculations given known friendly and enemy capabilities would help identify shortfalls and gaps that needed to be shored up through wargaming and substantiated appeals for additional funding or acquisitions. To DePuy, such logic was unimpeachable. It was also wholly absent within Cushman's draft manual.[68]

In a sharp rebuke of Cushman's draft, DePuy dismissed the entire manuscript out of hand, scheduling a new conference in the spring of 1975 and charging Cushman with revisiting the project completely. Understandably upset, the CAC commander did not comply. As a result, perhaps in accordance with his designs all along, in April 1975 DePuy opted to forge his own somewhat informal doctrinal composition team at Fort Monroe. The handpicked officers chosen for the task saw eye-to-eye with their chief in terms of the Army's most pressing developmental needs, and under his direct supervision, they diligently put pen to paper in a building on post colloquially referred to as "the Boathouse" in order to bring DePuy's vision into fruition.[69] Even while many officers looked forward to an all-volunteer Army filled with the highest quality recruits available in American society, DePuy remained a product of his career-long experiences in the draft-based force. "Our system does not put the smartest people in rifle squads in the best of wars," he warned. The infantrymen and tankers habitually serving in the forwardmost units were "great guys but are not articulate," and most certainly "not intellectuals." They required doctrine mindfully written "so they can understand." He instructed the "Boathouse Gang" to craft the new FM 100-5 with this in mind and avoid Cushman's academic theoretical abstractions. They were to strictly "stick to the arithmetic of the battlefield," he told them, including abundant graphics throughout the draft depicting the key ideas and statistics buried within the text.[70]

Everything about the new manual represented a profound narrowing of focus in the Army's official approach to thinking about and prosecuting war. It re-oriented the force exclusively toward preparing for one and only one highly specific strategic scenario. The new doctrine was explicitly designed to pull "the Army out of the rice paddies of Vietnam," and reintroduce it "on the Western European battlefield against the Warsaw Pact."[71] It urged leaders to focus on the likely imperatives of fighting outnumbered against comparable enemy capabilities in a "short, intense war" wherein the first battle very possibly might be the last.[72] Provided they could achieve readiness for such a mission, the doctrine's authors presumed that the Army would be capable of combatting supposedly lesser threats with only minor doctrinal adaptations on the ground.[73]

Whereas the 1968 FM 100-5 had opened with a broad definition of Army operations as "actions, or the carrying out of strategic, tactical, service, training, or administrative military missions," DePuy instead asserted in its first paragraph that the Army's "primary objective is to *win the land battle*—to fight and win in battles, large or small, against whatever foe, wherever we may be sent to war." The 1968 manual had explained at the outset the intricate connections between national objectives, national strategy, and military strategy, along with an acknowledgement of the many forms that conflicts could take across what it called "the spectrum of war." The Army, its writers asserted, "must be capable of conducting operations under each or all of these forms of war in all geographic areas of the world." While the new 1976 FM 100-5 admitted that the force "may find itself at war in any of a variety of places and situations," facing either Soviet regulars or "irregular units in a remote part of the less developed world," it offered almost no instruction whatsoever on how to combat the latter, nor in the crucial connections between national objectives, strategy, and operations. Much to the contrary, DePuy's battle-focused doctrine centered upon an interpretation of military operations strictly as "how the US Army destroys enemy military

forces and secures or defends important geographic objectives." In fact, the new manual completely omitted guidance on "stability operations," only added to Army capstone doctrine in 1968 to reflect ongoing counterinsurgency challenges and lessons learned in Vietnam.[74]

On 1 July 1976, Army Chief of Staff Bernard W. Rogers approved DePuy's new manual, published in a three-ring binder intended to underscore its tactical focus and ease revisions.[75] In order to ensure compliance with the new doctrine and standardization across the Army's many branch schools and training centers, the following year, DePuy's TRADOC instituted a major reform of the Army training assessment methodology. The new Army Training and Evaluation Program established specific missions and tactical training objectives for every unit and formation in the Army, including standardized checklists of requisite tasks and skills necessary to achieve each mission.[76] Representing a profound improvement over the time-based training measurements it replaced, the Army Training and Evaluation Program revolutionized the rigor and doctrinal relevance of training across the Army and set the stage for developing a highly professional and significantly more tactically competent fighting force.

At the same time, due to the narrowly focused doctrine such training methods were designed to support, it paradoxically also contributed to a marked decrease in the tactical flexibility of units trained and specialized to conduct a particular mission or combat role. Even worse, it lent itself to the emergence of an inherently technocratic approach to both preparing for and thinking about war embodied within the new FM 100-5.[77] DePuy's commitment to such a methodical training philosophy dovetailed with his passion for quantifiable combat capabilities. He routinely discussed how Israeli tank crews in the Levant had achieved one-to-fifty "exchange ratios" against enemy armor, and how his analyses suggested modern artillery could reduce the combat power of assaulting armored units by exactly 33 percent.[78] Once he asserted the need for the professional capabilities of every Army battalion to be increased by exactly 500 percent, supposedly enabling them to dominate at least five enemy units of comparable size.[79] Precisely how such a dynamic set of variables was actually to be measured was left unstated, but the implied logic of the statement (or perhaps the lack thereof) spoke volumes.

"Due to the narrowly focused doctrine such training methods were designed to support, it paradoxically also contributed to a marked decrease in the tactical flexibility of units trained and specialized to conduct a particular mission or combat role."

Historian Richard Lock-Pullan has observed how the challenge of NATO defense "provided the key specificity that is needed for successful innovation, by presenting a concrete problem for the Army as an institution to address." While unquestionably convenient for officers like DePuy charged with force "modernization," myopic focus on such a hyperspecific strategic challenge also introduced its own extreme perils that extended beyond the mere ignoring of other possible contingencies. This was most especially the case when, as in fact occurred across the succeeding decades, the feared nightmare scenario never ultimately occurred. Even after acknowledging the major budgetary constraints of the era, as Ingo Trauschweizer asserts, it still "seems likely the … army could have maintained greater expertise in small wars and counterinsurgency, yet these were all but deliberately neglected."[80] Moreover, as both Trauschweizer and Lock-Pullan note, the doctrinal, training, and acquisitions decisions made in the early 1970s laid a foundation for future changes that inevitably set the Army on a specific developmental trajectory. For better and for worse (and the vast majority of historians have focused exclusively on the former), future Army leaders could only build upon a structural, ideological, and

cultural bedrock put down by officers like DePuy, which was handcrafted for exclusive relevance in deterring or repelling Soviet armored divisions in West Germany.[81] Choosing to cope with its greatest institutional crisis of the post-World War II era by aggressively abandoning the lessons of its traumatic experience in Vietnam, the Army instead refocused only on what its senior leaders deemed the "most demanding" mission conceivable based on the lessons of a single foreign conflict deemed sufficiently "modern" for relevant contemplation.[82] In so doing, it materially contributed to the struggles it would face in the coming half century as it was forced to engage in painfully costly transitions and laborious adaptations to a dizzying array of challenges fundamentally different from those it had been redesigned to confront.

DePuy's "Active Defense" was to be only the first in a long line of doctrinal reformations that led eventually to the famed AirLand Battle concept and its Global-War-on-Terrorism-era successors, full-spectrum operations and unified land operations. Each of these, while acknowledging (often by sheer necessity) the need for Army forces to prepare, train, and plan for conducting operations other than large-scale combat against a near-peer foe, struggled to successfully reshape a cultural foundation laid down by DePuy's TRADOC in the immediate post-Vietnam era. While Army officers had long maintained a problematic affinity for only thinking about the exceedingly rare "big wars" of American military history, despite centuries of involvement in nearly every other conceivable variety of contingency, crisis, and mission, the Vietnam debacle had offered a rare opportunity for the service to pause and critically contemplate its obvious shortfalls in readiness for similar future episodes—like those which would unfold in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, by allowing itself to be actively distracted by senior leaders bent on looking away from the embarrassing elephant in the room, it was destined to once again suffer the bloody and expensive costs associated with unpreparedness when its greatest challenges of the twenty-first century refused to play by the rules it had long been prepared to expect. ■

Notes

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7. Gregory A. Daddis, "Eating Soup with a Spoon: The U.S. Army as a 'Learning Organization' in the Vietnam War," *The Journal of Military History* 77, no. 1 (January 2013): 229–54; Gregory Daddis, *Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 169; Karl Lowe, "Hybrid War in Vietnam," in *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, ed. Williamson Murray and Peter Mansoor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 254–88.

8. *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, EX-3; David Fitzgerald, *Learning to Forget: U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 51–53, 57–58.

9. *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, EX-1.

10. Ibid., EX-3.

11. Ibid., EX-6.

12. Ibid., EX-4.

13. Ibid., EX-5.

14. Ibid., EX-11.

15. Not to be confused with the influential 1973 Russell Weigley study of the same name.

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72. Jensen, *Forging the Sword*, 44; FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 1-1.

73. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, 9.

74. FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 1-1, 1-2; FM 100-5, *Operations* (1976), 1-1, 1-2.

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76. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, 38–39; Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 201.

77. Linn, *The Echo of Battle*, 200–1.

78. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, 80.

79. Bronfeld, "Fighting Outnumbered," 471.

80. Trauschweizer, "Back to the Cold War," 33.

81. Lock-Pullan, "Inward Looking Time"; Trauschweizer, "Back to the Cold War," 33, 35. Among the most influential works lauding the redemptive and transformative efforts of DePuy in this era include James F. Dunnigan, *Getting It Right: American Military Reforms after Vietnam to the Gulf War and Beyond* (New York: William Morrow, 1993); James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1995); and more recently, Suzanne C. Nielsen, *An Army Transformed: The U.S. Army's Post-Vietnam Recovery and the Dynamics of Change in Military Organizations* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College/Strategic Studies Institute, 2010).

82. Few recent monographs do as effective a job of evaluating the Army's aggressive turn away from gleaning substantive lessons from its Vietnam experience as David Fitzgerald's *Learning to Forget: US Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Section II

Afghanistan and GWOT Retrospective: Will We Forget?

The January-February 2023 edition of *Military Review* thematically commemorates the end of U.S. involvement in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) that is generally regarded as having commenced on 11 September 2001 with a terrorist attack on the United States and is generally considered to have ended with completion of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan on 30 August 2021. This section features articles derived from *Military Review*'s 2022 DePuy Writing Competition that critically examine various dimensions of the Afghan conflict, some addressing unique issues not having been treated exhaustively in the professional literature thus far published. Just as significantly, this edition includes a selection of articles that thematically examine the relationship of the military as an institution to the civil-military political process overall in the direction and management of war, with particular focus on those aspects salient to explaining the unsatisfactory conclusion to the GWOT.

Among the more essential lessons that the U.S. military experience in the GWOT may teach future generations of military leaders that might find themselves in the process of becoming ensnared in so-called "low-intensity conflict" is that historically *counterinsurgency* is only possible under highly unusual circumstances, and that the mantra "winning the hearts and minds" can become an enticing delusion that political leaders as well as future military planners might carefully avoid using unless there is good reason to believe that it is even possible in a given situation. In Afghanistan, successive iterations of commanders and their planners largely ignorant of the culture and history of Afghanistan built their counterinsurgency campaigns over a twenty-year period, with only modest deviation, on achieving success by employing the chimerical concept of "winning hearts and minds." All such efforts were built on a stubbornly enduring assumption passed to each succeeding effort that it was possible to bribe the native groups overtime to set aside their historic, deeply entrenched ethnic differences and radically change their culture, traditions, and lifestyles with a combination of Western materialistic enticements together with a coerced effort to adopt Western methods of governance and socio-economic administration. As history now appears to attest, despite the best intentions, each iteration over the twenty-year duration of the conflict achieved the same failed results.

Whatever positive enduring influence the United States and its allies may have had on the peoples of Afghanistan over two decades using the hearts and minds approach is at present hard to discern. Rather, whatever positive effects the U.S. military presence appeared to be having at any given time in retrospect appears to have been minor in impact, short lasting, and very often counterproductive—many such efforts in the end producing additional popular resentment and multiplying enemies.

A third lesson learned is that much of the failure of the GWOT may be attributed to a lack of sophistication among the political class guiding the conflicts in areas of anthropology and sociology as they applied to the regions of the world in which they had mandated that wars be waged. Following the 9/11 attacks, the political class of the United States in general was in retrospect woefully ignorant not only of the political dynamics but the cultural and social dynamics of the societies against which they were about to declare war. Additionally, over the course of the conflict, the political class maintained a single-minded obsession for imposing Western liberalism on the countries in which we were waging war that colored and distorted a realistic

assessment of what was possible in societies with no history of liberalism or foundation for it. Consequently, the collective ignorance and hubris of the political class directing and managing the war precluded a good faith effort to understand the social and ethnic context of the enemies we were fighting, which in turn precluded any clear vision of what might actually be attainable in the GWOT. A dreary feature consistent throughout the period was that the political leadership seemingly did not care to listen, would not learn, and resisted change to policies even as obvious chains of errors in political judgment built on specious assumptions guiding the effort was leading to the needless loss of thousands of lives and trillions of dollars with little to show for it.

A fourth lesson, perhaps the one of greatest value to the rising generation of new leaders, may be that after twenty years of prosecuting the GWOT, the Nation may actually be more vulnerable today to the type of large-scale terrorist attacks that originally precipitated the war while at the same much less secure from peer enemies—most notably China—that spent the same twenty years investing in improving its economy and advancing its military-related technologies in a wide variety of fields. If nothing else our Chinese adversary has shown a penchant for pragmatism that may well be worth emulating, placing its own national interests above everything else. This lesson might be perhaps the most useful if taken to heart by rising generations of young national leaders both in and out of the military as they weigh where in the future how to best invest both the Nation's treasure and lives in securing its interests. ■

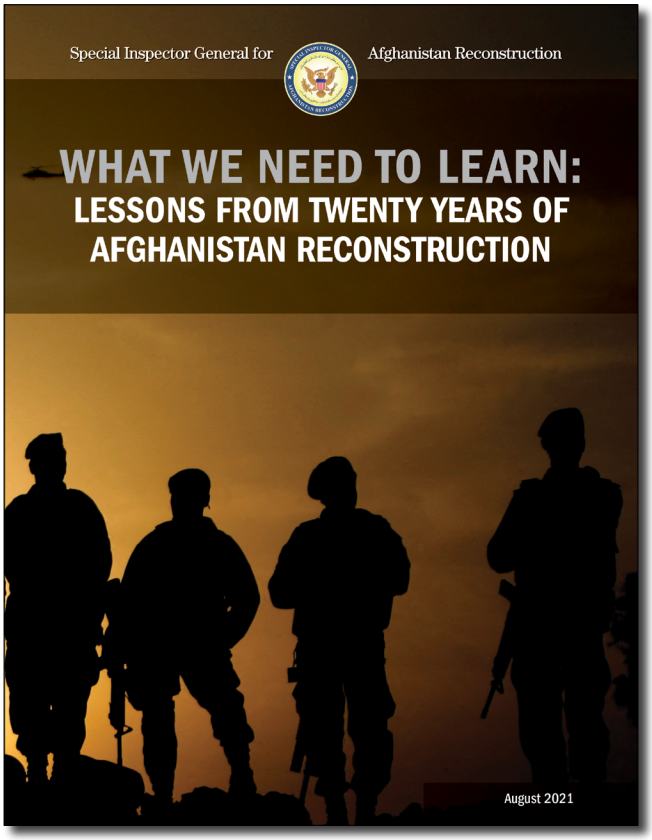
—Editor

Soldiers assigned to the 10th Mountain Division stand security 15 August 2021 at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan. Soldiers and marines assisted the Department of State with an orderly drawdown of designated personnel in Afghanistan. (Photo by Sgt. Isaiah Campbell, U.S. Marine Corps)

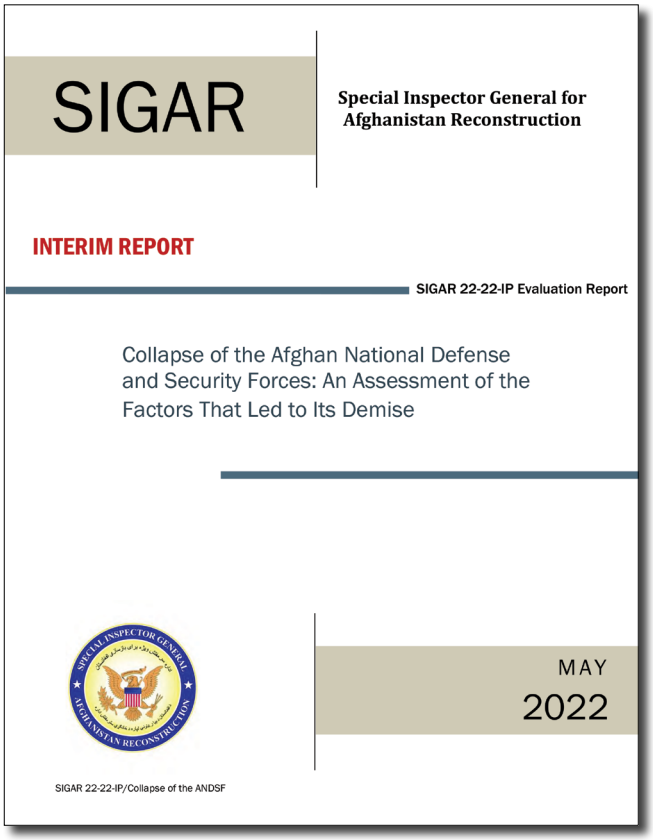
Military Review

Invites Your Attention to

The Special Inspector General reports noted below examine the past two decades of the U.S. assistance and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. They detail how the U.S. government struggled to develop a coherent strategy, to understand how long the stabilization missions would take and what would be required to ensure the projects were sustainable, to effectively staff the efforts with trained professionals, to negotiate the security challenges posed, to tailor efforts to the Afghan cultural and political context, and to understand the long-term impact of programs undertaken. The reports highlight certain bright spots but also reveal how the effort ultimately failed after spending twenty years and more than a trillion dollars trying to rebuild and stabilize Afghanistan. Examining and implementing the programs initiated will be essential to identifying critical lessons to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse in future reconstruction missions elsewhere around the world, and mainly to save lives.



To view *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*, visit https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/what-we-need-to-learn/index.html.



To view *Collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: An Assessment of the Factors that Led to Its Demise*, visit https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-22-22-IP.pdf.

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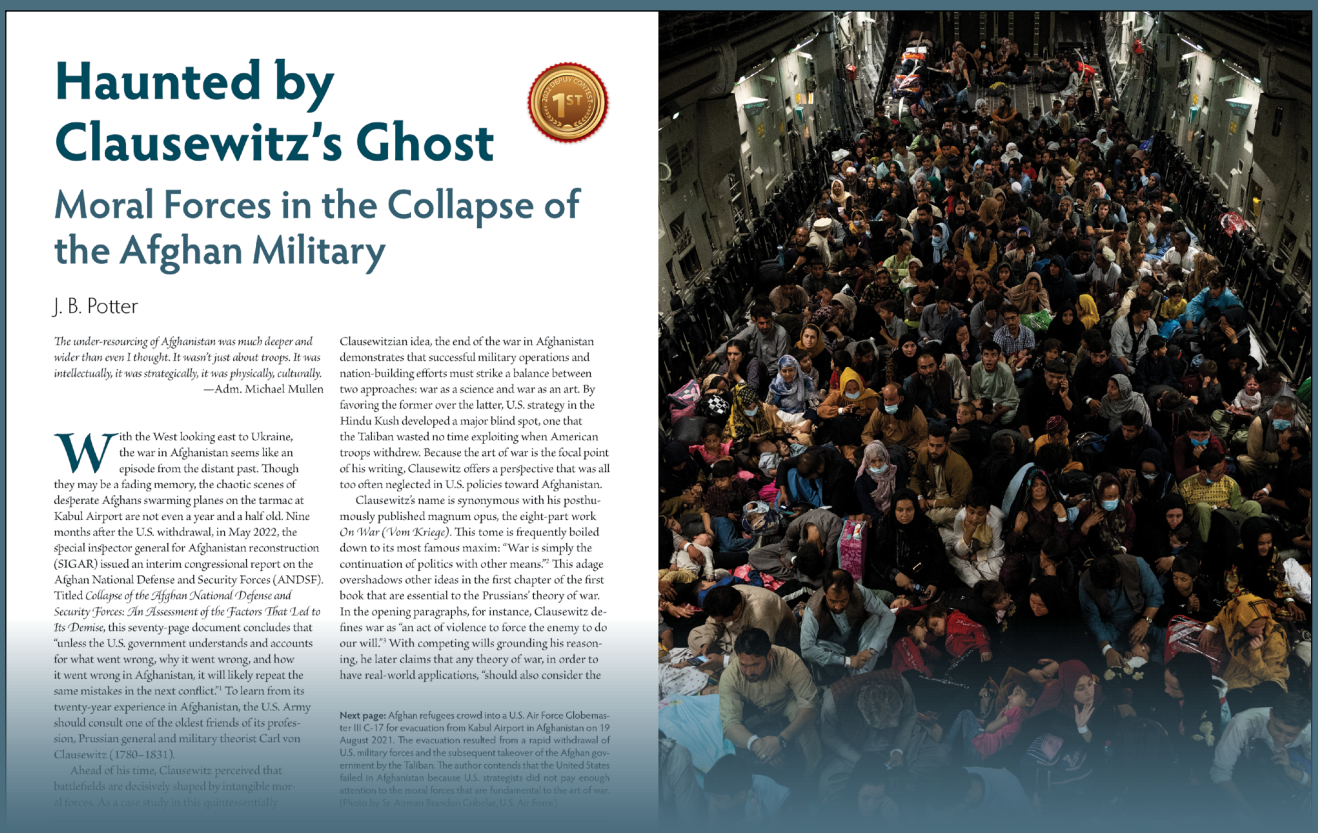

Haunted by Clausewitz's Ghost

Moral Forces in the Collapse of the Afghan Military

J. B. Potter

The under-resourcing of Afghanistan was much deeper and wider than even I thought. It wasn't just about troops. It was intellectually, it was strategically, it was physically, culturally.
—Adm. Michael Mullen

With the West looking east to Ukraine, the war in Afghanistan seems like an episode from the distant past. Though they may be a fading memory, the chaotic scenes of desperate Afghans swarming planes on the tarmac at Kabul Airport are not even a year and a half old. Nine months after the U.S. withdrawal, in May 2022, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) issued an interim congressional report on the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). Titled *Collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: An Assessment of the Factors That Led to Its Demise*, this seventy-page document concludes that "unless the U.S. government understands and accounts for what went wrong, why it went wrong, and how it went wrong in Afghanistan, it will likely repeat the same mistakes in the next conflict."[1] To learn from its twenty-year experience in Afghanistan, the U.S. Army should consult one of the oldest friends of its profession, Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831).

Ahead of his time, Clausewitz perceived that battlefields are decisively shaped by intangible moral forces. As a case study in this quintessentially Clausewitzian idea, the end of the war in Afghanistan demonstrates that successful military operations and nation-building efforts must strike a balance between two approaches: war as a science and war as an art. By favoring the former over the latter, U.S. strategy in the Hindu Kush developed a major blind spot, one that the Taliban wasted no time exploiting when American troops withdrew. Because the art of war is the focal point of his writing, Clausewitz offers a perspective that was all too often neglected in U.S. policies toward Afghanistan.

Clausewitz's name is synonymous with his posthumously published magnum opus, the eight-part work *On War* (*Vom Kriege*). This tome is frequently boiled down to its most famous maxim: "War is simply the continuation of politics with other means."[2] This adage overshadows other ideas in the first chapter of the first book that are essential to the Prussians' theory of war. In the opening paragraphs, for instance, Clausewitz defines war as "an act of violence to force the enemy to do our will."[3] With competing wills grounding his reasoning, he later claims that any theory of war, in order to have real-world applications, "should also consider the

Next page: Afghan refugees crowd into a U.S. Air Force Globemaster III C-17 for evacuation from Kabul Airport in Afghanistan on 19 August 2021. The evacuation resulted from a rapid withdrawal of U.S. military forces and the subsequent takeover of the Afghan government by the Taliban. The author contends that the United States failed in Afghanistan because U.S. strategists did not pay enough attention to the moral forces that are fundamental to the art of war. (Photo by St. Airman Brandon Cribelar, U.S. Air Force)

Haunted by Clausewitz's Ghost

Moral Forces in the Collapse of the Afghan Military

In this first place winner of *Military Review*'s 2022 DePuy Writing Competition, J. B. Potter critiques the outcome of U.S. involvement in the twenty-year conflict fought in Afghanistan using the concepts of war outlined by Carl von Clausewitz in his master work *On War*. He asserts that a principal cause for strategic failure in Afghanistan was the overly mechanistic method U.S. strategists attempted in waging the conflict without due consideration of the underlying moral forces Clausewitz emphasized with regard to underpinning an enemy's motivation and resilience.

To view "Haunted by Clausewitz's Ghost" from the November-December 2022 edition of *Military Review*, visit https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/November-December-2022/Potter/.

Sgt. 1st Class Scott Kehn of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101 Airborne Infantry Division, conducts a patrol through poppy fields near Nalghan, Afghanistan, 21 April 2011. One of the many intractable features of the war in Afghanistan was attempting to entice Afghan farmers to give up highly lucrative opium poppy cultivation and replacing it with crops that were more difficult to grow and much less profitable. (Photo by Pfc. Justin A. Young, U.S. Army)

Military Power Is Insufficient

Learning from Failure in Afghanistan

Lt. Col. John Q. Bolton, U.S. Army

The 2021 collapse of the Afghan National Army (ANA) prompted a rollicking debate and recriminations. At issue: Who lost Afghanistan? Lt. Gen. (ret.) H. R. McMaster blamed an apathetic public and political class, saying they sent troops "into battle without dedicating themselves to achieving a worthy outcome."[1] This sentiment is an understandably incorrect reading of what happened in Afghanistan. Though an apathetic public undoubtedly dissuaded accountability and policy makers supported (but often did not endorse) the war, blaming them for Afghanistan is intellectual scaffolding for a profound military failure. Both categorically (the Afghan state collapsed) and by the military's own metrics (billions spent on ultimately ineffective Afghan security forces), American efforts did not achieve promised outcomes.[2] Lt. Gen. (ret.) Daniel Bolger came to a similar conclusion: "As I and my fellow generals saw that our strategies weren't working, we failed to reconsider our basic assumptions; we failed to question our flawed understanding."[3] For military professionals, acknowledging failure is the hard but necessary medicine required to better our institution. Military leaders should heed three lessons: (1) military strategy derives from political will, (2) poor strategy leads to compromises that mar the military ethic, and (3) technology is no panacea.

Military Strategy Derives from Political Will

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.

—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*[4]

As a host of examples ranging from French and American counterinsurgencies in Vietnam to Russia's bungled 2022 invasion of Ukraine demonstrate, force alone cannot achieve political outcomes; military strategy requires a political predicate. In Afghanistan, though the initial rationale for intervening after 9/11 was clear, a staying rationale faded over time, certainly after the Obama "surge" ended in 2011. American policy makers clearly did not believe Afghanistan was a vital American interest. Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden all looked to leave Afghanistan. Each pursued "Afghan good enough" policies minimizing American commitments to Afghanistan. Rather than end, the Afghan war became perpetual, acquiring a momentum of its own. Consequently, military strategy suffered.

Much of the fault lies with military leaders who mistook *military competence* for *national will* while becoming unduly attached to a mostly self-prescribed, military-centric Afghanistan strategy. In retrospect, it seems Obama and Trump both endorsed strategies they did not believe in, convinced (or coerced) by a national security establishment that never considered ending the war. In the former, the 2009 leaking of a classified assessment on Afghanistan preemptively tied Obama's hands; in Trump's 2017 case, a cadre of retired and current officials pressured him into escalating the war despite his clear desire to withdraw.[5] Ambivalent policy makers left a strategic void, and the military proffered a counterinsurgency (COIN) solution that, though intermittently effective, was strategically unsound, operationally expensive, and tactically exhausting. Tragically, presidents, Congress, and the public rarely (and never forcefully) questioned these military assessments or promises.

Even when disasters such as the loss of American soldiers at Wanat or Camp Outpost Keating occurred, the resulting inquiries largely focused on "small bore questions of specific orders and decisions" rather than the broader question of whether putting small units of Americans in tactically untenable locations served a larger strategic purpose.[6] Even the debate over the Afghan "surge" in the early Obama administration was about numbers of troops, not strategy.[7] According to one journalist, had Obama questioned military arguments, "he might have turned the tables on the military's leadership and told them that they needed to sort out their command structure and use the existing troops [in Afghanistan] more efficiently."[8]

Because these debates were limited to superficial arguments about troops and tactics, the corresponding lack of political will and strategic theory of victory negated American advantages in firepower, technology, and money, ensuring military efforts would fail over time. The Taliban simply had a willpower asymmetry over Western forces. An eschewing of political reality in favor of military action occurred in Vietnam as well. In his analysis of that war, Lawrence Summers argues American military officers "see war

as something separate and apart from the political process."[9] Similarly, in Afghanistan, military leaders ignored signs that the American public undoubtedly "supported the troops," but the American political system did not embrace loftier *military-endorsed* goals of endowing Afghanistan with a parliamentary democracy. Policy makers may share "blame" insofar as they drifted from supporting the war to ambivalence to wanting American troops out.[10] But it was military assessments regarding a "sustainable approach" and a "declining Taliban" coupled with prognostications about the supposed effectiveness of COIN doctrine that convinced (cajoled) Congress to keep American troops in Afghanistan.

American military leaders, who exercised enormous influence over Afghanistan policy, failed in three regards.

A Long-Term COIN Approach

First, military leaders pioneered, developed, endorsed, and deployed a long-term COIN approach while ignoring obviously diminishing political support at home (see figure 1, page 66). In seeking a decent interval by killing enough Taliban while building the Afghan Security Forces, military leaders oversimplified the qualified success of the Iraq "surge"—which was due as much to Sunni politics as additional American forces—to promise likewise results in Afghanistan. According to scholar and former military advisor Carter Malkasian, the surge let "policymakers, military officers, and commentators [used the surge] to show how the right numbers and methods could defeat an insurgency."[11] For many military leaders and supportive policy makers, COIN doctrine became dogma—a remedy for any conflict rather than a localized approach with, at best, 50 percent success rates.[12] Moreover, as documented by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), military leaders consistently oversold incremental ANA progress and often masked capability shortfalls that American airpower or expertise covered.[13]

The story of the Iraq surge became simultaneously a stretching of real success in Iraq and an oversimplification. Slapping a semisuccessful approach used Iraq onto Afghanistan, military leaders argued that all they needed was time and money. Sufficient troops, bombs, and dollars could make Afghanistan a democracy, complete with a competent army, modern notions of women's rights, and a diverse, participant electorate. This story was initially well-received, especially in its first decade when officials used the legacy of 9/11 to argue failure in Afghanistan would invite another attack on the American homeland. But the good story employed specious assumptions about Afghanistan as a base for terrorism, the utility of force in transforming societies, and the tactical efficacy of American/NATO forces. These linkages were never really challenged, either by Congress, policy makers, or the public. Afghanistan became the albatross no one wanted to support but still lingered on, especially after Osama bin Laden's death in 2011.[14]

Defense scholar Mara Karlin argues military leaders framed recommendations as apolitical "best military advice," which presented policy makers binary choices on issues of profound complexity. "Best" implies no other options while "military advice" tends to ignore political realities, placing risk unduly on policy makers.[15] This Huntingtonian model of separate spheres—political directors and military doers—is deeply embedded in the U.S. military. Too often, however, to avoid partisanship, military analysis and recommendations avoid *politics* and *political factors* entirely, benefiting neither policy makers nor the military.

These failures are shared by a generation of military commanders and policymakers, who let occasional tactical successes in a counterterrorism mission become a proxy for a strategy that never was … it was subtly abetted by journalists … [who] let the senior officials continue their magical thinking.

—David Ignatius[16]

Lack of structural changes. Second, the military made surprisingly few structural changes despite endorsing

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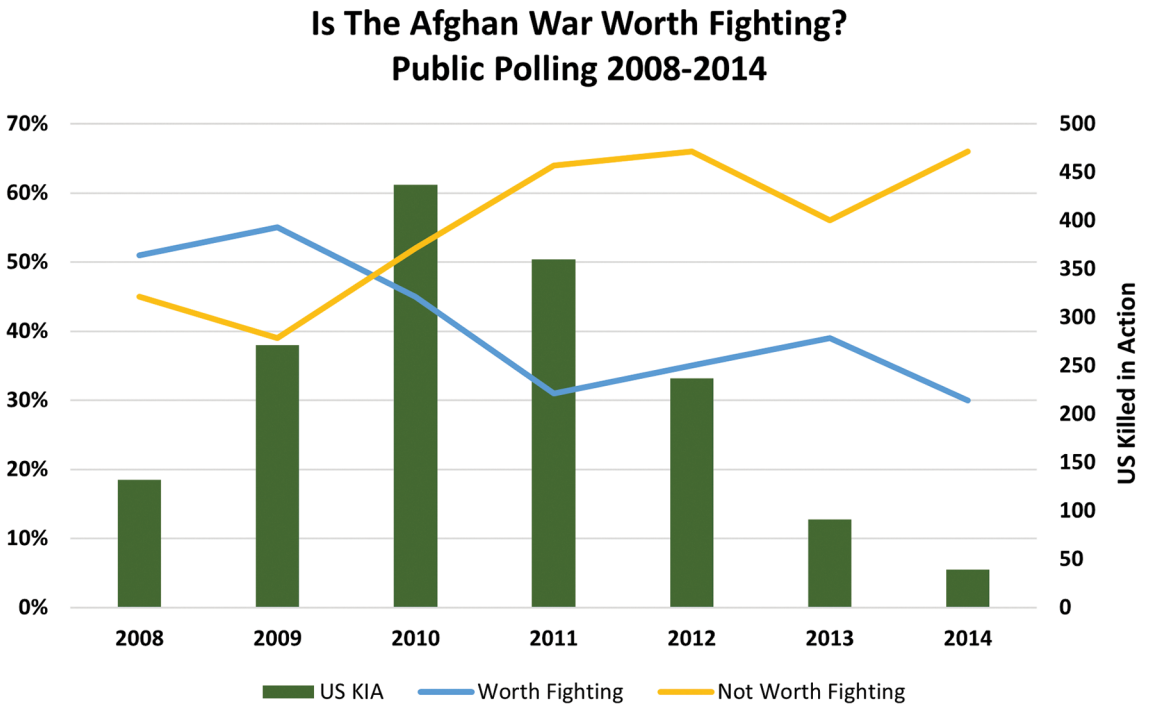


(Figure from author's compilation of data from ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll, December 2013)

Figure 1. Support for the Afghan War, 2008–2013

long-term occupations. Foremost was using unit-level deployments. Aside from limited niche specialties, units rotated wholesale to Afghanistan. Military analyst John Amble argues turnover created repeated losses of local knowledge as unit-level operational focus swung wildly between "key leader engagements and firefights, funding projects, and launching raids."[17] While the rotational model has benefits, it is less effective during long-term stability operations, a fact the Army/Marine COIN field manual points out.[18] Additionally, nearly every deploying unit employed ad hoc to build training teams; not until 2018 did the Army employ a purpose-built training organization. Though the security forces assistance brigade is a competent force structure, its creation took nearly two decades.

Two Air Force officers called this metrics-driven, short-term approach coupled with unit turnover the "perfect storm of myopic decision-making."[19] Required to demonstrate performance during twelve- or nine-month deployments, units inevitably confused *measures of performance* with *measures of effectiveness*.[20]

Mirror imaging. Third, military leaders time and again replicated Vietnam-era "mirror-imaging" errors in building the Afghan military. The ANA resembled the American military—diverse, ostensibly meritocratic, with effective special operations forces, and dependent upon aerial fires and manuever.[21] Profoundly misreading (or ignoring) Afghan's diverse cultural makeup, the American-supported, NATO-coordinated program to recruit and train the ANA overrode Afghanistan's tribal structures. Rather than work through local culture, NATO and American forces supplanted it with Westernized bureaucracy. A Pashtun recruit from Kandahar might attend basic training in Kabul and then find himself guarding the Afghan-Uzbek border alongside an Afghan Tajik who likely spoke a different language. Though anathema to Western sensibilities, cultural differences built over millennia of geographical separation and empowered by religious fervor could not end by forced integration or Western training. This culturally uninformed approach contributed to ANA ineffectiveness.[22]

ANA equipping likewise overemployed means (money) without considering ways (effectively spending funds), giving Afghans fantastic equipment but not necessarily what they needed. Whether Afghanistan's

security situation or geography needed a combined arms army instead of an effective police force seemed irrelevant. Money became a literal "weapons system" in military doctrine.[23] The United States spared no expense, providing over $50 billion in rifles, night-vision googles, vehicles, and aircraft.[24]

An anecdote illustrates this folly. In 2017, I asked the senior American commander in Afghanistan why we were providing Afghanistan UH-60M utility helicopters when their on-hand MI-17s were nearly as effective but more familiar and less reliant on American contractors. He responded not with the common refrain that Congress directed U.S. sourcing but with a performance-based rationale: "Because we want them to have the best equipment … to be able to conduct air assaults above 8,000 feet."[25] Despite its mountainous geography, most of Afghanistan's population lives below six thousand feet. The pressure to give them "the best" coupled with a utilitarian desire to sell weapons overrode basic force design.

The ultimate point of failure for our efforts wasn't an insurgency. It was the weight of endemic corruption.

—Ambassador Ryan Crocker[26]

Ultimately, American largess hindered ANA effectiveness. American war managers did not seem concerned that Afghans could not handle the heavy maintenance burden of modern equipment amid a tenuous supply chain only made possible with American maintenance contractors and logistical support.[27] The SIGAR found profound lapses in accountability for equipment given to the Afghans. With Western spending and aid comprising over 50 percent of Afghanistan's GDP, millions worth of equipment unsurprisingly found its way off ANA bases and fueled corruption. Moreover, the glut of Western money led to ANA commanders fudging the rolls, creating the so-called "ghost soldiers."[28] This hollow force of supposedly two hundred thousand collapsed as approximately fifty thousand Taliban advanced.

We must focus our energies beyond the guns and steel of the military, beyond just our brave soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. We must also focus our energies on the other elements of national power that will be so crucial in the years to come.

—Secretary of Defense Robert Gates[29]

Despite the billions poured into the ANA, stability-producing forces such as the Afghan National Police were relatively underfunded.[30] This partly stemmed from a never-realized civilian surge which forced nonmilitary training requirements the military.[31] Units habitually assigned marginal personnel to police and governmental training teams, leaving them undermanned, underskilled, and untrained.[32] In one case, an incoming division headquarters disbanded police advising teams to "focus on kinetic strikes" seventeen years into the war.[33]

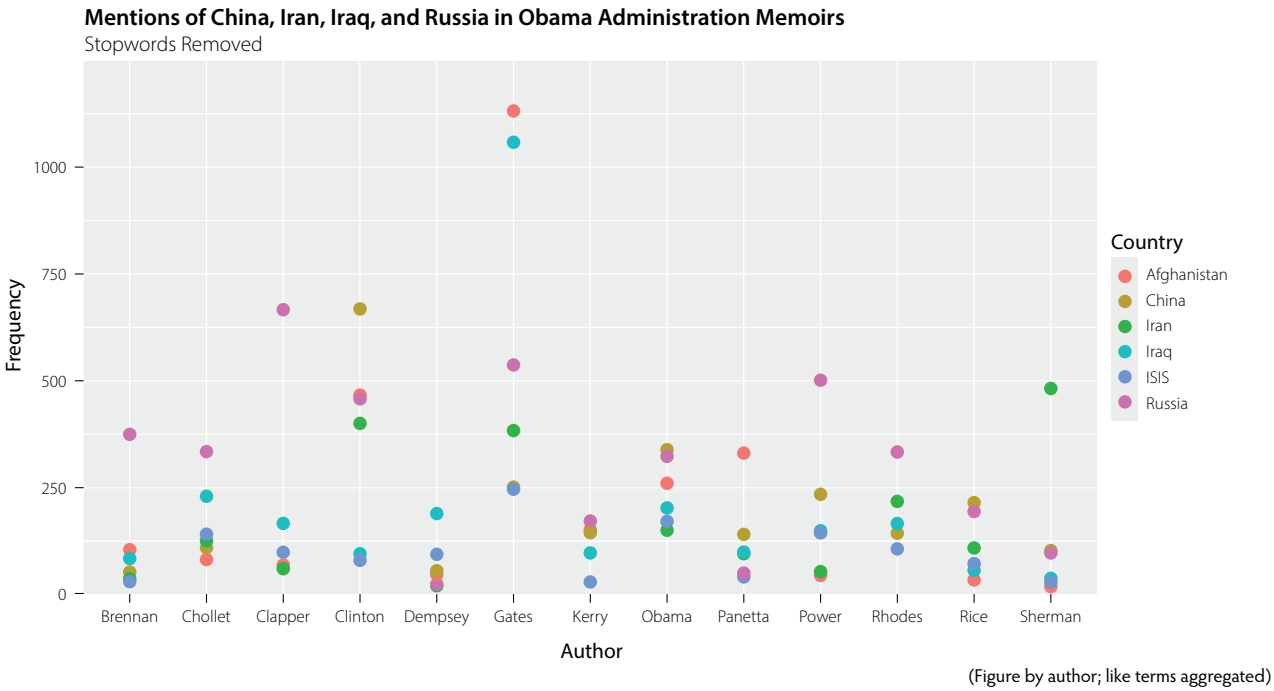
Thanks to bureaucratic momentum, Afghanistan enjoyed an undue share of senior officials' time. Afghanistan is markedly front and center in the memoirs of senior Obama administration officials, despite some pundits calling the war "small" or "manageable" (see figure 2, page 68).[34] That this prevalence occurred during the Obama administration's supposed "pivot" to Asia illustrates troubling aspects of bureaucratic capture. The time and attention of senior leaders is finite, and Afghanistan ultimately took resources and focus precisely when the Obama (and Trump) administrations wanted to focus American foreign policy elsewhere.[35]

How could military leaders pursue this politically and historically ignorant strategy? Because policy makers and Congress allowed it to do so. Aside from reviews during the early Obama administration, the military strategy in Afghanistan encountered little oversight from the White House or Congress. Applying French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau's oft-cited adage that "war is too important to be left to the generals," the military would have likely employed different strategies had policy makers directed more circumspect policy or skeptically interrogated military promises. Instead, policy makers weighed the political risk of a terrorist attack from Afghanistan against the negligible political costs of continuing the war. The military strategy, despite its costs, folded nicely into this void by promising eventual success but eschewing difficult tradeoffs.

David, you shouldn't have assumed I wouldn't do what I told the American people I would [regarding Afghanistan].

—President Barack Obama to Gen. David Petraeus regarding a drawdown of troops in Afghanistan in 2012[36]

And while policy makers placed (some) limits on troop levels, a military operating without constraints is unrealistic. Complaints that commanders "weren't supported" or



(Figure by author; like terms aggregated)

Figure 2. Country Mentions in Obama-Era Memoirs

"faced constraints" ignore the historical record (see figure 3, page 70). All militaries face constraints, and all wars have limits, whether geographical, political, or in terms of means employed. The U.S. military restored the ex status quo ante in Korea amid constraints that prevented full-scale war with China or World War III with the Soviet Union. The means to achieve "victory" had limits based on global factors and resource scarcity. Blaming policy makers for reasonable boundaries is a bit like complaining to a banker about account balances.

But unclear policy or strategic guidance does not abrogate military responsibility. If Clausewitz's first dictum is to not start a war without being clear-eyed about one's goals, the military corollary is to help policy makers understand the utility and limits of force. As Karlin illustrates, ignoring political realities is the fatal flaw of the "normal" theory of civil-military relations.[37] Policy makers don't simply make goals and hand them off to burdened military officers for execution as Huntington suggests. Policy making is an active process, requiring political and military input throughout. When military options outstrip evident political will or obligations require what Petraeus called a "generational commitment", military leaders must encourage an honest, if unequal, dialogue with policy makers.[38]

Poor Strategy Leads to Compromises that Mar the Military Ethic

These military choices—endorsing a long-term strategy despite insufficient political support, rotational force deployments, and building a first-world army for a third-world state—inevitably created contradictions. But few of the prognoses below were scrutinized.

Afghanistan military, economic, political, and diplomatic activity … has shown interesting progress. I think 2005 can be a decisive year.

—Gen. (ret.) John Abizaid, 2005[39]

I am not prepared to say that we have turned the corner… the situation is serious but I think we have made significant progress in setting the conditions in 2009, and beginning some progress, and that we'll make real progress in 2010.

—Gen. (ret.) Stanley McCrystal, February 2010[40]

2011 will go down as a turning point in Afghanistan.

—Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, December 2011[41]

I think we are on the road to winning.

—Gen. (ret.) John Allen, February 2013[42]

[I am] confident that we'll continue to be successful. The road before us remains challenging, but we will triumph.

—Gen. (ret.) John Campbell, December 2014[43]

I would say overall our mission in Afghanistan is on a positive trajectory.

—Gen. (ret.) John Nicholson, March 2016[44]

[We] have turned the corner … the momentum is now with Afghan security forces.

—Gen. (ret.) John Nicholson, November 2017[45]

As Sen. Elizabeth Warren exclaimed during a 2018 hearing, "We've supposedly turned the corner so many times that it seems now we're going in circles."[46] Of course, contrary reports existed. In 2012, a U.S. Army officer's op-ed wrote that conditions in Afghanistan bore "no resemblance to rosy official statements by U.S. military leaders."[47] Some nongovernmental organizations said NATO reports were "sharply divergent" from reality and cautioned that military reports were "intended to influence American and European public opinion" rather than provide "an accurate portrayal of the situation [in Afghanistan]."[48]

But, as in Vietnam, reporting optimism wandered into deceit. Positivity was rewarded while negative reports could potentially be seen as "not being a team player."[49] Endowed by inaccurate assessments from senior officials, the endemic pressure to make reports "green" or "complete" corroded the military ethic. As described by Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerras in a scathing 2015 Army War College report, "repeated exposure to overwhelming demands" had made Army officers "ethically numb" and untruthfulness "surprisingly common."[50] Lt. Gen. (ret.) Dave Barno and Dr. Nora Bensahel argued prevalent cultures of dishonesty resulted from the "corrosive effects" of long-term rotational deployments. They argue a mindset of "taking care of the troops" morphed into dishonest compliance as leaders struggled to balance a culture of zero defects with limited time and troops.[51]

The U.S. military deserves credit for mostly avoiding the worst types of wartime atrocities.[52] Criminal incidents such as Abu Ghraib or the rape and murder of an Iraqi girl by a company descending into madness as described in *Blackhearts* are rightly condemned as aberrations from the American military ethic. Certainly, the moral failure of the Special Immigrant Visa program was mostly nonmilitary.[53] Nevertheless, widespread false reporting is troubling both professionally and practically. The military relies on implicit trust between the profession of arms and the American public. The trust allows for management of internal affairs and freedom of action. Practically, the Russian army's failings throughout 2022 show the deadly consequences of a force built on false reports.

No one expects our leaders to always have a successful plan. But we do expect—and the men who do the living, fighting, and dying deserve—to have our leaders tell us the truth about what's going on.

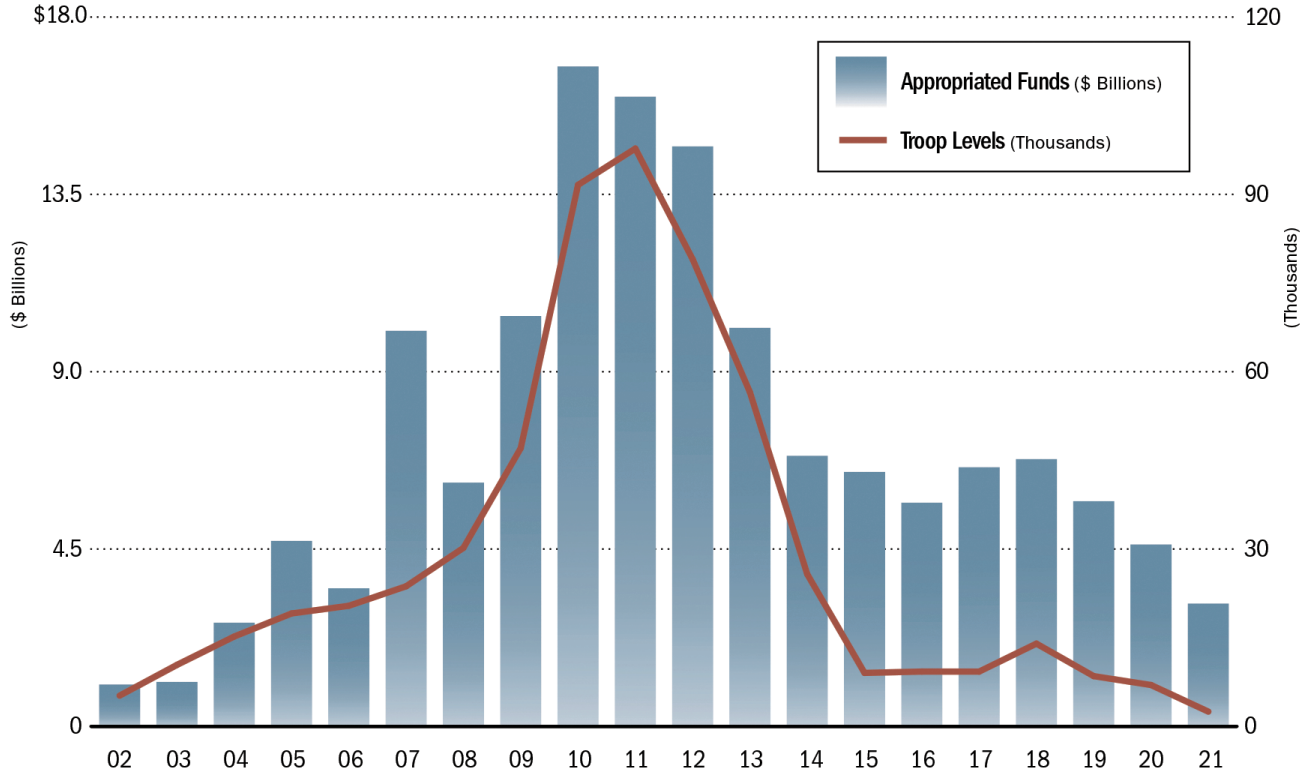
—Lt. Col. Daniel Davis[54]

In 2018, the Modern War Institute at West Point debated the merits of optimistic versus pessimistic generals.[55] Optimistic leaders are certainly endorsed within the U.S. military. Leaders naturally want their units and partners to do well. But excessive optimism contributed to an inability to accurately assess Afghan forces. In an email circulated during the evacuation of Kabul, an Army general conceded this bias: "I was naïve … I knew and spoke about [corruption] … It was a debilitating pall cast over everything we tried to accomplish … But I served with some true Afghan heroes … they were patriots in their own way. I now know and accept that these honorable, noble Afghans were unrepresentative."[56]

More important than personality debates, however, is the honesty military professionals owe Congress, presidents, and the American people. As shown by the *Washington Post*, years of Afghanistan policy hinged on tortured explanations of incremental progress often informed by biased, if not outright false assessments of Afghan security and ANA progress.[57] This yearslong cavalcade of senior leaders offering Theranos-like promises of eventual success undoubtedly projected confidence. This façade masked the reality of Afghanistan and set the stage for the apparently "shocking" collapse of the ANA in 2021.

Technology Is No Panacea

A technology-centric approach abetted professional dishonesty by distorting views of the battlefield. True understanding about Afghanistan



Note: Data from FY 2002 through FY 2007 are annual data, while data from FY 2008 through FY 2017 are averaged quarterly data. Data from FY 2002 through 2017 come from Congressional Research Service reports. Data from FY 2018 and FY 2019 come from the Brookings Institution, as no U.S. government data on U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan are publicly available for this period. Data from FY 2020 and FY 2021 come from public statements made by U.S. officials.

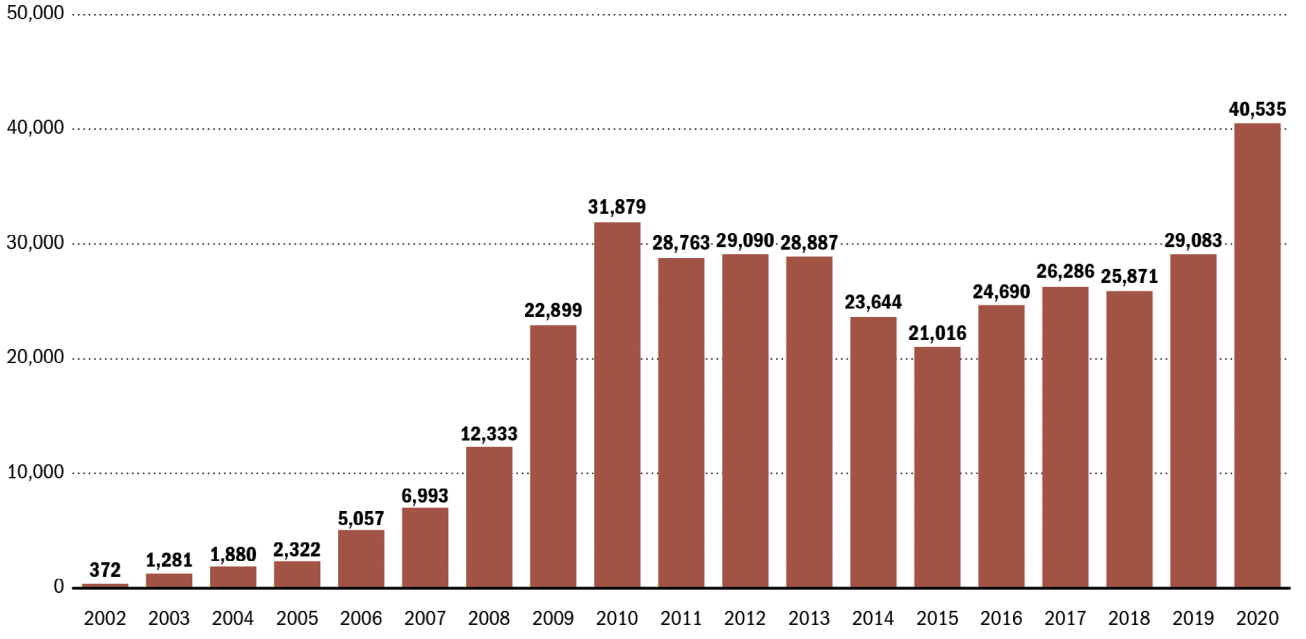
Source: SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, October 30, 2014, pp. 226–227; SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2021, pp. 172–173; U.S. Congressional Research Service, "Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001–FY2012: Costs and Other Potential Issues," R40682, July 2, 2009, p. 9; U.S. Congressional Research Service, "Department of Defense Contractor and Troop Levels in Afghanistan and Iraq: 2007–2020," R44116, updated February 22, 2021, pp. 7–8, 13–14; The Brookings Institution, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking variables of reconstruction and security in post-9/11 Afghanistan," August 2020, p. 5; Elizabeth McLaughlin, "Trump says 'it is time' for US troops to exit Afghanistan, undermining Taliban deal," *ABC News*, May 27, 2020; White House, "Statement by Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller on Force Levels in Afghanistan," January 15, 2021.

(Figure from Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*)

Figure 3. U.S. Appropriations and Troop Levels in Afghanistan by Fiscal Year, 2002–2021

remained incomplete despite decades spent there. As in Vietnam, aside from major campaigns in 2010–2013, the enemy in Afghanistan retained the initiative (see figure 4, page 71). With few Western troops living among the population, intelligence assessments were often little more than speculation.[58] Rather than temper assessments, operating with opaque views of the enemy and unclear information, senior military leaders were free to select assessments that suited narratives of progress.

The military's preference for information over understanding was years in the making. A plethora of '90s-era technologies promised "information superiority," which would simplify battlefield complexities. It was "Clausewitz out, computer in."[59] But instead of a clear picture of battlefield and political realities, military leaders became overwhelmed with information. In the late '90s, a prescient U.S. Army captain recognized as much: "In the mythical world created by the most devoted information age disciples, our enemies lie helpless before our forces while we, armed with complete and perfect information, dispatch them at our leisure. While such images are fun to contemplate, they are altogether unlikely."[60] Instead, as McMaster explained,



Note: The chart reflects data on enemy-initiated attacks sourced from the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency for the years 2002 to 2009, and from the U.S. military headquarters in Afghanistan for the years 2010 to 2020. Defense Intelligence Agency data are generally derived from a larger number of sources and therefore captures more incidents, but these additional sources were not available for the full 19 years.

Source: Resolute Support, response to SIGAR data call, April 1, 2021, and June 12, 2021; Resolute Support, response to DOD OIG vetting, October 2019; U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, response to SIGAR data call, April 2015.

(Figure from Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*)

Figure 4. Enemy-Initiated Attacks, 2002–2020

supposed omniscience can create intellectual "recidivism and resistance to changes."[61]

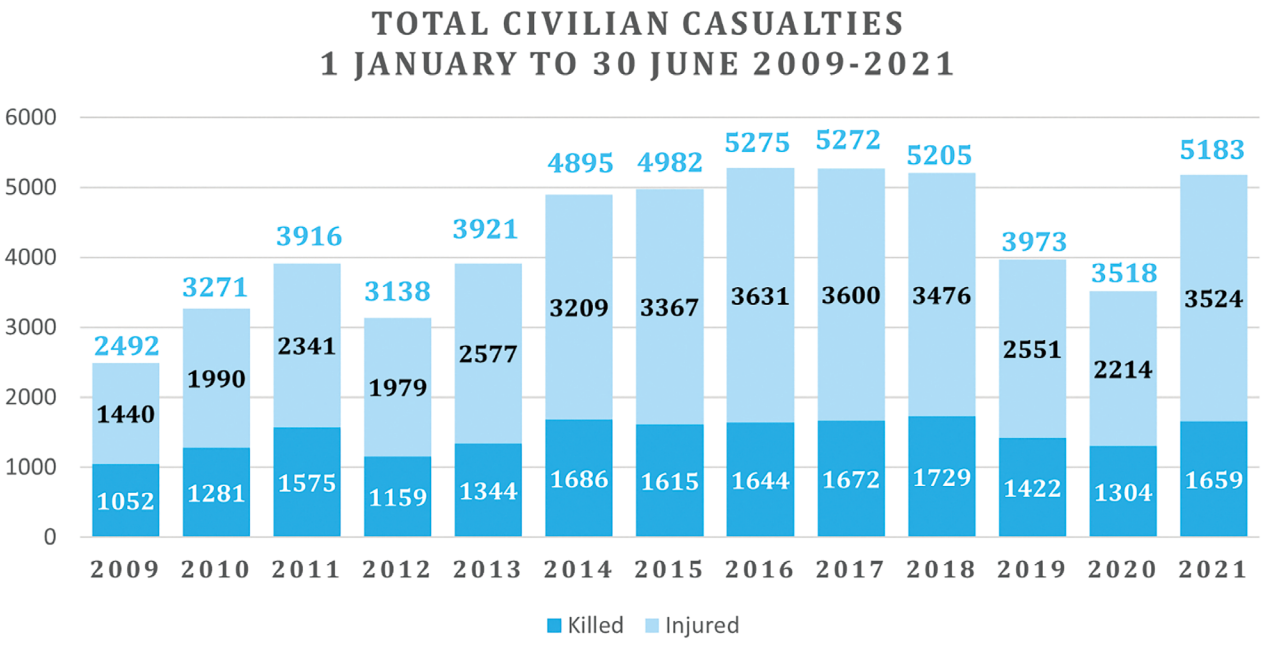
Undoubtedly, the drone is the prototypical example of this technological bias. Interlinked, near-continuous battlefield observation via drones is a phenomenal achievement, but even this technology gave only snap shots or "soda straw" views. Drones too often replaced good analysis based on insightful local knowledge. A drone-centered, bombs-over-boots approach increased "kinetic" action at the cost of innocent lives (see figure 5, page 72).[62] Every errant airstrike eroded support for the Afghan government and Western troops. Faced with nighttime raids and often indiscriminate death from above, many Afghans found even brutal Taliban actors provided better governance than empty promises from Kabul.[63]

The Military after Afghanistan?

After Afghanistan, the military can retreat into cloistered corners, lamenting how the public and politicians failed them as the Army did after Vietnam. Adopting a "stabbed in the back" mentality, however, is dangerous because, as Barno and Bensahel point out, a professional force "faces a greater risk than a conscript force of developing a belief that it is morally superior to the society it serves."[64] Additionally, a distant military will increasingly be a political football as American politics becomes polarized. Military leaders should instead focus on three issues.

First, the military needs a renewed relationship with Congress, one that emphasizes honest discussions on the limits and utility of military power. One way to avoid trouble is for policy makers to better understand the means of getting into it. Scholar Hal Brands makes this point: "Expansion can create vulnerabilities that must be defended at a high price."[65] Therefore, accepting limits in some regions to ensure security elsewhere is good, rational policy. The clear prospect of budget cuts for the Army makes limits even more prudent.

Second, military leaders must rejuvenate the professional military ethic. As Wong and Gerras show,



(Figure from United Nations, *Afghanistan 2021 Midyear Update on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*)

Figure 5. Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan, 2009–2021

perverse incentives can corrode institutions. Unclear goals and poor matching of ends to means can warp institutional values in ostensible service of the mission. Institutional honesty is paramount, especially if the military is to retain a position of trust with the American public. This requires both training and honest dialogue. Placing officers in ambiguous training scenarios tests their character and actions under pressure and fosters a culture of operating in environments characterized by uncertainty and limited resources. However, senior leaders and commanders at all levels must foster discussions about use of training time and be willing to accept "red" or "incomplete" marks on some tasks (nonessential training or otherwise). Discussion regarding the pressure officers felt to manipulate reports on Afghanistan is a good start.

Third, the military must reinvest in professional military education (PME). Much ink has been spilled on *training versus education* and whether PME is "rigorous" or even necessary.[66] But the failures of strategic assessment described above could have been ameliorated, or at least mitigated, by an officer corps predisposed to skeptical interrogation of the battlefield and implicit operational assumptions. Fundamentally, this involves the crafts of research and writing. As scholar Eliot Cohen has argued, "More than one might think, sound foreign policy making rests on the basics of bureaucratic behavior: clear and concise memorandums, crisply run meetings, well-disseminated conclusions, succinct and unambiguous guidance from above. Good process does not guarantee good policy, but it increases the odds of it."[67] Reinvigorating PME to emphasize writing, research, and making strategy toward limited ends using limited means is paramount.

More broadly, PME has not resolved the seemingly intractable problem of mistaking tactical ability for strategic success. Col. (ret.) Antulio J. Echevarria II argues that, despite twenty years of COIN (and perhaps because of it), the U.S. military still substitutes tactics for strategy. In his words, "[America's military] assumes winning battles suffices to win wars."[68] PME cannot fundamentally fix American political dysfunction or force policy makers to provide clear guidance. But PME can, however, create an officer corps that is endowed with the historical understanding to prompt better civil-military relations and explain the utility and limits of force. PME can prepare officers to discuss *political ramifications* and requirements of policy while nevertheless remaining *apolitical*.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid (*center*) addresses the media at the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 13 August 2021. The Taliban joyously fired guns into the air and offered words of reconciliation on 31 August as they celebrated defeating the United States and returning to power after two decades of war that devastated Afghanistan. (Photo by Wakil Kohsar, Agence France-Presse)

No three steps alone can be simple panacea for the post-Afghanistan military. However, senior military leaders can move the institution forward nobly by learning from Afghanistan rather than blaming others. An honest assessment of the failures in policy, doctrine, and execution seen over twenty years is vital—as is renewing the professional ethic so essential to a professional military culture and proper civil-military relations. The three areas described above can be a foundational start. ■

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A group of Afghan community leaders, religious clerks (mullahs), and tribal elders meet to render locally binding decisions based on religious and tribal legal traditions. During the years of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, the populace often resented the government's centrally imposed legal institutions because they perceived the justice system as corrupt, inefficient, and foreign to local norms. Due to this widespread mistrust, many Afghans relied on local leaders convening informal courts outside formal institutions to provide justice in a way they viewed as more rapid, honest, and fair. The Taliban readily exploited this administrative failing by establishing a locally rooted justice system. (Photo courtesy of the Afghanistan Ministry of Justice, Public Legal Awareness Unit)

All Power Is Local

Understanding Disciplinary Power to Mobilize the Population

Maj. Robert G. Rose, U.S. Army

While serving as the counterthreat finance planner in Afghanistan in 2018, I found a problem that exemplified the Afghan government's failings. The Afghan National Security Forces operated countless checkpoints that extorted motorists for money. They capriciously set "taxes" that fed corruption networks. The Taliban also operated checkpoints, but theirs had transparent customs duties, and the revenue largely funded operations. The Taliban even provided receipts, which subsequent checkpoints honored. Why was one set of Afghans so corrupt and the other so administratively efficient?

Bernard Fall argued that "when a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being out administered."[1] He recognized that in Vietnam, the communists created a parallel administrative structure that combined violence with political action.[2] In both Vietnam and Afghanistan, insurgencies developed effective administrative systems built upon traditional, grassroots structures. These insurgencies recognized how to mobilize the power of the population through diffuse, local systems that encouraged participation. The combination of local feedback and the need to compete with the government disciplined the insurgencies into creating effective administrative apparatuses. These locally rooted systems explained the efficient Taliban checkpoints.

Meanwhile, the government of Afghanistan, like the Republic of Vietnam previously, was overly centralized. It lacked a mechanism of feedback from the local population to ensure it represented their will. Foreign support permitted failing regimes to survive and insulated them from pressure to reform. With flows of aid and no checks on power, corruption flourished. The governments in Vietnam and Afghanistan, as well as their American backers, viewed power through a myopic, top-down, centralized lens. This lens created a conceptual void in which they could not recognize they were losing the war.

Due to our inability to understand the context of power in Afghanistan and Vietnam, we lost our two longest wars. We cannot willfully ignore the lessons from Afghanistan as we did with Vietnam. To learn how to effectively fight future insurgencies, the Army must reverse Carl von Clausewitz's famous quote and recognize that politics is the continuation of war by other means. The Army can better conceptualize how power flows through administrative apparatuses and interacts with individuals through the idea of disciplinary power.

Understanding Insurgency through the Lens of Disciplinary Power

To prevent another defeat, the American Army needs to conceptualize power differently. It must recognize that power rests within the population. When Napoleon's brother, Jerome, faced an uprising in Westphalia, he sent Napoleon a message saying, "I'm in trouble." Napoleon replied, "By God, brother, use your bayonets." Jerome retorted back: "Brother, you can do anything with bayonets—except sit on them."[3] Short of exterminating the populace or deploying enough soldiers to keep an eye on every member of it, bayonets alone cannot defeat an insurgency. Counterinsurgents must mobilize the population. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated, "The stronger is never strong enough to be forever the master unless he transforms his force into right and obedience into duty."[4] When the populace is on the government's side, it serves as a million watchful eyes pushing insurgents to the fringes of society. The insurgents are no longer fish swimming in the water of the population. The population is boiling the fish. Philosopher Michel Foucault called this power *disciplinary power*.

Foucault theorized two historic methods of power over a population: sovereign and disciplinary power. Under sovereign power, the head of state is the unity of power.[5] All eyes are on the sovereign. He rules by spectacle. His power is glorified by pomp and ceremony. He makes public examples of those who transgress his rule. The public watches as a criminal is not just executed but agonizingly drawn and quartered in the public square.

Conventional military power is an outcropping of sovereign power. It presupposes a unity of power in conventional forces and relies on the spectacle of the panoply of arms. It is designed to strike fear into foes, deter them, and when necessary, compel them.

Sovereign power works in conventional war but fails in counterinsurgency. Using the naked power of military arms cannot forever subdue a people. The population can see its shortcomings. When the bomber has passed or the patrol has returned to its outpost, the power is gone. Sovereign power breeds contempt and rebellion.

Disciplinary power rests on the reverse mechanisms. It recognizes that power resides in individuals and

attempts to make them into obedient and productive citizens. Instead of the eyes on the sovereign, they are on the population. Disciplinary power works through the discrete but certain application of force. It is a form of power that extends from the heart of the state to the capillaries of its subjects.

Foucault provided an example of how disciplinary power functioned through the panopticon, a prison designed by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. In contrast to dark, tortuous prisons, the panopticon contained a guard tower at the center with a circle of brightly lit cells surrounding it. At any time, the guard could be watching a prisoner and each prisoner would feel the certainty that any transgression would be observed and swiftly punished. The panopticon was a subtle form of power that replaced brutality with certainty.[6]

To ensure the connection between the guard and inmates, the guard was placed in the center to feel vulnerable and tied to the fate of his charges. The panopticon guard was just as counterinsurgent forces should be. David Galula postured that effective "counterinsurgent forces will be forced to live like the population, in shacks if necessary, and this will help to create common bonds."[7] The panopticon serves as an extreme illustration of how disciplinary power functions and is not replicable across an entire state.

Achieving disciplinary power over a population requires a decentralized system of surveillance. Foucault explains that disciplinary power truly took root in society with the growth of the bourgeoisie, which had an interest in protecting its property and surveying its workers to ensure they were conforming to best practices.[8] As the bourgeoise's power grew, it created a disciplinary apparatus through schools, censuses, clinics, bureaucracies, and the police force that monitored individuals and molded them into productive citizens that upheld the laws of the state. In a feedback loop, these institutions relied on popular support. As Robert Peel, the founder of the London Metropolitan Police in 1829, said, "The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police existence, actions, behavior and the ability of the police to secure and maintain public respect."[9]

With their finger on the pulse of the population, local police have always been essential to counterinsurgency, but so are the other decentralized mechanisms of power. Writing of the parallel hierarchies he witnessed fighting in Indochina, Jacques Hogard explained, "The individual is enchained in several networks of independent social hierarchies … networks are layered in different associations according to their age, their sex, their profession, and so on."[10] Similarly, Galula stated that counterinsurgency's "essence can be summed up in a single sentence: Build (or rebuild) a political machine from the population upward."[11] These theorists both understood the diffuse, local means through which disciplinary power operates and can mobilize the population to survey itself and isolate insurgents. However, counterinsurgents supported by

"The individual is enchained in several networks of independent social hierarchies … networks are layered in different associations according to their age, their sex, their profession, and so on."

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foreign aid tend toward top-down structures based on sovereign power.

Saigon's Centralized Failure

During the Vietnam War, the Republic of Vietnam created the opportunity for an insurgency by establishing an overly centralized government that was disassociated from the interests of rural villagers.

For centuries, Vietnam had elected local governments. An old proverb said that "the Emperor's writ stops at the bamboo hedge [of the village]."[12] The French maintained stability by simply adding a colonial administrative layer on top of traditional Vietnamese governance. For most of the Vietnamese, "government" had always meant the village council, and the peasant had little experience of any other.[13]

However, after the French departed, President Ngo Dinh Diem of the Republic of Vietnam created a highly centralized administration resting on a theory of sovereign power that viewed the population as subjects rather than participants in the political system.

In June 1956, Diem replaced all provincial, district, and village leaders with centrally appointed officials. These officials were purposefully not native to the areas they administered. This broke traditional feedback between the government and the 80 percent of the population that lived in villages. Villagers could not participate in the political decision-making process and fell under central arbitrariness, disconnected maladministration, and an explosion of corruption.[14] Do Van Doan, the Long An Province chief in 1955, said that "under the Diem regime, the majority of people were employed because of their loyalty to [his] family rather than their ability or willingness to serve the country … As a result, in the army as well as the civil administration, the majority of the leading officials were opportunists, bootlickers, and incompetent, and the effectiveness and initiative of the army and the administration were destroyed."[15]

After Gen. Nguyen Khanh overthrew Diem in a coup in 1964, the situation worsened. He replaced officials and army leaders at all echelons with those loyal to him. Leaders across Vietnam were preoccupied with either proving their loyalty or conducting intrigue against Khanh. The villagers were forgotten, and the desertion rates rose as the army's morale plummeted.

The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) consistently faced desertion and morale issues due to Saigon's policy of nonlocal service. Vietnamese villagers were tied to their communities and had little interest in serving far from home and leaving their families unprotected and their crops unattended.

Furthering the ARVN's problems, Vietnamese officers largely came from the urban elite.[16] The officers' urban orientation created a divide between them and the rural enlisted: "The peasant army is unwilling to follow a 'Saigon cowboy'; the officer, in turn, generally seeks to avoid the hardships of rural and jungle life."[17] The officers were dissociated from the villages that made up most of the Vietnamese population. They were largely content to secure themselves in outposts separated from the population. They did not tie themselves to the fate of the population as the guard in the panopticon or as the communists did.

The Communist Approach

The communists realized that the power in a revolutionary struggle came from the people. It was an understanding of power based on disciplinary power. In 1956, the Central Committee's "Oath of the Revolution in the South" stated, "We must recognize that everything in a country is accomplished by the people."[18] Violence supported the political struggle in developing forces among society's classes. The party particularly focused on understanding peasants' motivations.

For much of the population mobilized to fight for the Viet Cong, nationalism was not the principal motivating factor. Instead, local issues were the motivating factor. In interviews, communist cadre emphasized that it was seldom sufficient to recruit fighters by declaring the need to "liberate the country from American imperialists."[19] It was critical to explain how the individual would be liberated by gaining land (a critical issue to peasants since 2 percent of feudal landowners held title to 45 percent of the rice land), educational opportunities, and positions of power in the local community.[20]

The communists created a village-centered administrative apparatus. As one communist cadre recognized: "If the village level is weak, then I guarantee you, no matter how strong the central government is, it won't be able to do a thing."[21] The village committee was where most decisions were made. It recruited leadership from the rural poor and provided them opportunities to rise through their ranks.

The communists ensured their fighting forces were "a logical extension of the family and village."[22] One communist general recalled, "We still held dear that notion that service in the army should not destroy family and village life. After all, that is what the war was all about."[23] The Viet Cong recruited locally, and it was rare for guerillas to fight outside their district. They knew the terrain, the population, and each other. Unlike the ARVN, they had high cohesion and dedication to their cause.

Initially, the communists had emphasized nonviolent subversion, but in 1959, the Central Committee initiated coordinated violence with a strategy of severing Saigon from the local government. They began an assassination campaign that killed four thousand officials from April 1960 to April 1961.[24] Those who survived fled to protected outposts, and the government lost its connection with the rural population. Showing the collapse in the government's administrative reach, its tax collections dropped from 81.6 percent of the land in 1959 to 20.9 percent in 1964.[25] The Viet Cong could move and act with impunity. Government forces collapsed. The deteriorating situation led to an escalation in American involvement.

American Intervention in Vietnam

Under Robert McNamara, the Department of Defense pursued a policy of graduated pressure grounded in scientific management and Thomas Schelling's bargaining theory. McNamara and his staff believed in efficiently managing warfare like a Ford automobile plant. It was a view of warfare based on sovereign power that led to centralization and a mirror image understanding of the enemy as a unified actor. They believed with enough pressure, the North Vietnamese Central Committee would reach a negotiated settlement.[26] They hungered for data to support centrally made decisions and measure progress. This management theory enabled military leaders to fall back on the conventional operations in which they felt comfortable.

The author consults with Afghan National Security Forces and local leadership during the clearance of Siah Choy, Zhari, Kandahar, Afghanistan, on 27 March 2012. (Photo by Maj. Robert G. Rose, U.S. Army)

American military leaders discounted the enemy's bottom-up revolutionary apparatus and concentrated on main force units. American commanders sought set-piece battles and conducted large-scale clearing operations to attempt to bring the enemy to battle. In its sovereign power mindset, the American military believed that these units and the support from North Vietnam were the critical capabilities of the war rather than the parallel hierarchy that the communists had built throughout the country. This conventional mentality also applied to advising the ARVN. U.S. advisors assessed the ARVN through a conventional lens of operations and readiness.

America's support had a caustic effect on the ARVN. Writing in 1971, Brian Jenkins observed that the ARVN's reliance on American weaponry "contributed heavily to the South Vietnam army's … alienation from the people. As reliance on foreign technology replaced local support, the army grew indifferent to the people … The indifference is reciprocated."[27]

The ARVN increased its distance from the population as it mimicked America's approach. America's preoccupation with tactical security meant that U.S. forces secluded themselves in outposts, separated from the people. Col. James Herbert, an advisor, remarked that he found it difficult to "demand that the ARVN commanders … deploy their forces so as to protect people and not just be in big mud forts to protect themselves … it is very difficult to get the Vietnamese to do what the U.S. doesn't do."[28] The focus on tactical security led to strategic insecurity.

There were attempts to reconnect with the villages and uproot the communist political apparatus, but America underinvested in them, and Saigon met them with suspicion. The Phoenix Program tried to eradicate the enemy's political apparatus but did not receive adequate support. The Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support Program united civilian and military leaders down to the district level and incorporated village-based regional and popular forces.[29] However, Saigon did not trust these militias and often refused to give them weapons.[30] Saigon had no interest in loosening its centralized control.

With American backing, Saigon reinforced a conceptual blind spot to the problem of revolutionary warfare and never developed the communists' appreciation for disciplinary power. In the latter stages of the war, correspondent Robert Shaplen reported, "We still have no philosophy of government, no fundamental sense of direction in which we are going, and, above all, no system of political organization, which must inevitably begin at the bottom."[31] With overwhelming American aid, Saigon could maintain a corrupt and failing system. Once America withdrew the aid, the contradictions in the society became fully apparent and the state crumbled. Even after so much American investment, most ARVN soldiers, feeling no attachment to the government, simply melted away.

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The Centralized Government of Afghanistan

Even though Afghanistan, like Vietnam, has a tradition of local rule and lacked a national political culture, the international community supported the creation of an incredibly centralized government. It was a government based on sovereign power. Donors led by the United States saw a centralized government as the most efficient means to funnel aid, modernize Afghanistan, and provide stability.[32]

Under the 2004 constitution, the president could largely ignore parliament and appointed provincial and district governors. While the constitution created elected provincial and district councils, these were merely consultative committees with no authority. Ministries in Kabul appointed district chiefs of police, education, etc., which created a dysfunctional, stovepiped system in which local officials were neither accountable to the people nor the unified authority of a governor.

National elections provided the one opportunity for the people of Afghanistan to have a voice, but they did

not bring a government that represented the people's will. The people of Afghanistan did not have a developed sense of national community that would have allowed meaningful political discourse during elections. President Hamid Karzai deliberately muffled the development of public discourse by opposing political parties, which could have developed national platforms and participatory political machinery.

The Afghan people lost their faith in democracy after two decades of increasingly fraudulent and contested elections. In 2019, they displayed their lack of trust in their electoral process when President Ashraf Ghani won with just 923,592 votes out of a population of over thirty million.[33] Each of the last three presidential elections produced contested results because of the country's winner-take-all system. With all power vested in the presidency, losers and their followers had no recourse to alternate means of power and were locked out of access to aid revenue. They could not receive the consolation prize of winning provincial or district elections. Imagine how explosive American politics would be if Donald Trump appointed the mayor of San Francisco or if Joe Biden chose the governor of Texas.

This system froze out those without ties to the Karzai or Ghani administrations. The Bonn Accords also prevented the Taliban from entering government. A decentralized system of government that allowed political parties might have seen the emergence of a peaceful Taliban political party, content to win governorships in Pashtun provinces. The political system precluded this possibility. For those shut out, the only option was conflict.

The Taliban's Approach

The government's corruption and lack of connection with the rural population provided an opportunity for a Taliban reemergence. The pressure on the movement disciplined the Taliban into an effective insurgency that recognized that it must base its power on the population to succeed. At the height of the counterinsurgency surge in 2011, the Taliban was learning from its mistakes and had established a parallel administrative apparatus. Taliban fighters credited Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour with having "totally changed our thinking: about governing, about peace, about everything."[34]

Mansour transformed the insurgency into a shadow state, restructured its institutions to create a parallel administration, created a commission to investigate Taliban-caused civilian casualties, and brought in Tajik and Uzbek leaders to broaden their base. He created a decentralized hierarchy reaching down to villages and field commanders. This autonomy allowed the Taliban to broaden to accommodate different views and keep diverse ethnic and tribal groups within the movement with minimal open dissent.

Through this decentralized structure, Taliban could use their initiative to exploit the government's failings. A Taliban leader explain how the lack of an effective judicial system in the villages gave an opening for Taliban administration: "The government was very corrupt, so justice was the first need. Even people in government-controlled areas were referring to us. These were not people who wanted the Taliban, you see, but they wanted justice. We started there because it was the necessity at the time."[35] Taliban shadow district governors would run courts for villagers' disputes that provided responsive justice nested in the norms of the local community.

The Taliban would gradually impose their rules, recruit the population into a locally based civil service, and co-opt government-financed institutions. The Taliban recognized that there was no need to attack state structures when they could capture them and use them to benefit their own administrative control. Using targeted violence to isolate the government's security apparatus to district centers, the Taliban subverted the lower echelons of the state.

By 2018, the Taliban had established a disciplinary power apparatus across much of the countryside. As one study pointed out, "Most provincial or district-level government health or education officials interviewed said they were in direct contact with their Taliban counterparts, and some have even signed formal memoranda of understanding with the Taliban, outlining the terms of their cooperation."[36] The Taliban would monitor clinics, ensure staff kept their work hours, and inspect medical supplies. In the government's chronically mismanaged schools, the Taliban vetted government teachers, observed curriculum compliance, and ensured attendance. It regulated utilities and communications, collecting the bills from the state electricity company and controlling around a quarter of the country's mobile phone coverage.[37] Its tax system extended into the lives of nearly the entire rural population through the traditional

Afghan Local Police members from Siah Choy pose for a photo on 27 March 2012 in Siah Choy, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. The police had uprooted the Taliban from the village and prevented their influence on the population. (Photo by Maj. Robert G. Rose, U.S. Army)

Islamic zakat that taxed a percentage of crops during harvest season. The Taliban ran this administrative system by recruiting locally to ensure grassroots participation and acceptance of its decision-making.

Disciplinary Power in Zhari

For a period during the surge from 2010 to 2012, America attempted a counterinsurgency strategy that showed acknowledgment of the importance of local power structures. During this period, I participated in operations in Zhari District, Kandahar, which displayed how counterinsurgents could use disciplinary power.

Zhari is a desert that was made into verdant farmland by the canals of the Arghandab River. The population was spread between compounds in village clusters. Their major crop was grapes that grew in century-old "grape rows," which were six- to ten-foot-deep parallel trenches in which grapevines were cultivated. The Taliban made this restricted terrain nearly impassible by seeding the farmland with countless improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These IEDs isolated the population from the counterinsurgents.

Zhari was the birthplace of the Taliban, and after the Taliban's resurgence, it had severed Zhari from government control. The Canadians had pushed back into Zhari in 2006 and had regained control of Highway 1. 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, then expanded control south toward the river. I served with 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, falling under 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division in 2011 and 2012.

Our brigade had a unique advantage. We were the only conventional unit allowed to recruit Afghan Local Police (ALP). Created in 2010, ALP were designed to protect their own villages and were like the Afghan concept of *Arabki*. Everywhere else, Special Forces ran the program. To some, including Karzai, ALP were a

controversial militia that could return Afghanistan to warlordism. The suspicion reflected the distrust for the decentralized empowerment of rural Afghans at the heart of Kabul's problems. The ALP were exactly the locally based force required to cut the Taliban from the villages. It was essential to recruit and vet them through village shuras using traditional Afghan grassroots democracy, which provided meaningful authority to village leadership although the shuras had no legal standing in the government.

During our battalion's decisive operation in the Taliban-controlled village of Siah Choy, we planned the operation to empower local government and tie it to the district government. We threw away operational security and brought in local leaders, the district police chief, and the Afghan National Army (ANA) leadership to plan the operation and select an ideal site for the ALP with a partnered force in the center of Siah Choy.

After destroying dozens of IEDs and encountering sporadic Taliban ambushes, we pushed into the town. I walked side-by-side with Haji Ghulam, the village leader, as we entered the village. After clearing the village, we organized a shura and gathered the town's elders for them to vote on leadership.

We empowered the shura to select ALP members to protect their village and to establish participation in a system of disciplinary power to prevent the Taliban from returning. An American and ANA platoon would partner in the ALP station as they received training and developed confidence. Immediately after the mission, the American company commander withdrew the platoon to a large outpost outside Siah Choy, which could not surveil the population. He was unwilling to act as the guard in the panopticon and tie up his fate with the villagers.

Due to Taliban intimidation, the ALP withdrew, and we had to conduct another clearance of the village and reestablish the ALP station in the center of town. This second time, we held the station. With growing confidence, the ALP patrolled their village and partnered with the ANA. With their lifelong knowledge of Siah Choy, the ALP rooted out the Taliban and its shadow administration.

A few months later, the United States began to withdraw troops from Afghanistan and by the end of 2012, reduced forces in Zhari. The Taliban attempted to move back in, but the empowered local leaders had an "awakening" that kept the birthplace of the Taliban movement largely free from its control. When I was back in Afghanistan in 2018, the Afghan Assessment Group still rated it as government controlled.

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Zhari succeeded despite government policy. The local shuras that vetted ALP did not have any authority or budget from the central government. The ALP worked because of our focus on creating a village-based form of government and security that Kabul did not support. Elsewhere, since there was no formalized local control, warlords captured the ALP program or it fell into corruption.[38] If it had been supported by a decentralized government apparatus, the ALP would have represented an ideal form of disciplinary power to isolate the Taliban from the population. It was a better concept of power than all the others tried over twenty years.

Failed Alternative Strategies in Afghanistan

After 2012, foreign forces began transitioning to an advisory role. Advising reinforced the centralization of Afghan security forces. International forces moved from advising small units to only interacting with battalions, brigades, and corps. During the last few years of the war, ensconced in forward operating bases, few foreign troops ever met an Afghan villager. Limited to interactions at higher echelons, advisors naturally developed a myopic focus on higher-level issues. They

developed capabilities for battalion-and-above clearance operations and did not promote the decentralized security apparatus that the country needed.

Even if advisors approached the Afghan National Security Forces with the right strategy, advisors lacked a forcing function to reform Afghan forces. Advising suffers from the principal-agent problem, in which the principal's (the advisor) and the agent's (the host nation) interests do not align. Without any authority over host-nation forces, advisors could not force them to change their approach to one aligned with the population. Afghan forces were neither accountable to the advisors nor to the population. In the centralized Afghan system, officers' interests were to show loyalty and provide spoils to their superiors.

While advising largely failed, an arguable success was Afghan Special Operation Forces (ANSOF). Though competent, ANSOF represented the pitfalls of centralization. ANSOF stripped talented individuals from the rest of the Afghan security services. Field Marshal William Slim warned of the caustic effects of relying on special operation forces saying that they "lower the quality of the rest of the Army ... Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units."[39]

Instead of developing a locally based security apparatus, the best members of the security services were conducting raids. As Galula said, "Thus is not to say that there is no place in counterinsurgency warfare for small commando-type operations. They cannot, however, represent the main form of the counterinsurgent's warfare."[40] Galula further stated that "static units are obviously those that know best the local situation … It follows that when a mobile unit is sent to operate temporarily in an era, it must come under the territorial command."[41] Throughout the war, we ignored Galula's advice. Special operations fell under their own chain of command that ignored the local considerations of conventional, battlespace-owning units. Rather than locally focused operations dominating American strategy, by the end of the war, raids became the main effort.

Raids dovetailed with airstrikes, which were the ultimate representation of sovereign power. Airstrikes display the weakness of a counterinsurgent that is detached from the population and must rely on a technological solution. They breed contempt in the population. While targeting was extremely selective through much of the war, soaking targets from twenty thousand feet could not prevent travesties such as America's strike that closed the war by killing an aid worker and his family.[42]

Just as with McNamara's approach, there was a hope that these raids and airstrikes would bring the Taliban to a negotiated settlement. Negotiations were a mirage that represented another misbelief in sovereign power. The idea was with enough pressure on the Taliban's higher leadership, America could coerce them to a negotiated settlement. The approach did not recognize the Taliban's decentralized apparatus and take advantage of fractures in the Taliban to break off groups. The negotiators wanted a unitary Taliban to centrally agree to peace. The Taliban, like North Vietnam before, understood that momentum was on its side and was only interested in seeking short-term advantages from negotiations. Even if the momentum had shifted, the winner-take-all Afghan state did not allow for meaningful Taliban participation in politics. Successful negotiations such as with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or Maoists in Nepal work by allowing insurgent participation in local government and policies.[43]

During the period of negotiations, I asked the J-2 (Intelligence Directorate), the Afghan Assessment Group, and the State Department if they knew the government's district tax collection rates. None of them collected that data. It was one of the basic metrics that Fall used to show the collapse of government control in Indochina. Our failure to recognize the extent of the Taliban's administrative control would not have been so embarrassing if the same thing had not happened in Vietnam.

Do Not Lobotomize the Lessons of Counterinsurgency

The U.S. Army has lost its two longest wars and seems desperate to learn nothing from them. Just as after Vietnam, the Army seeks comfort in the simple arithmetic of large-scale combat operations. Counterinsurgency is now the broader "stability operations," which is something handwaved in consolidation areas during training. Lessons from our recent experiences are quickly erased. New officers do not learn about counterinsurgency. At the Command and General Staff College, it is largely ignored. By taking this path, the Army is abdicating its responsibility to

provide options for our government in dealing with the dominant form of conflict since World War II.

America does not have another institution that can conduct counterinsurgency. We cannot rely on the State Department to fully understand the politics of a country. Foreign service officers are too few and are centrally oriented in capitals writing cables to Foggy Bottom. The Army is the only organization with the manpower to be at the local level and have a pulse on a population.

There is another route. In the 1950s, the Portuguese army dedicated itself to understanding counterinsurgency. It studied French and British experiences and developed a doctrine that it inculcated into the lowest levels of its army. With a fraction of the manpower of the United States, a minuscule budget, and in defense of an indefensible empire, it waged three effective counterinsurgency campaigns simultaneously in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.[44]

There is no secret to success in counterinsurgency. In the 1890s, the commander of France's counterinsurgency campaign in Madagascar, Gen. Joseph Gallieni, recognized that the key was to "combine political action to military action" and "enter into intimate contact with the populations … to attach them through persuasion to the new institutions."[45] He understood the importance of decentralized politics in an insurgency. Gallieni showed that officers can excel both in counterinsurgency and conventional warfare. In the First World War, he played a critical role in saving Paris at the Battle of the Marne.

Politics Is the Continuation of War with Other Means

Fall worried that North Vietnam's Gen. Vo Nguyn Giáp "may well be among the new breed of revolutionary warfare generals for who the West may find it difficult to produce a worthy match in the foreseeable future … it is almost impossible within our military system to develop men with both brilliant tactical abilities and wide-ranging political training."[46] Vietnam and Afghanistan showed how American leaders failed to grasp the linkage between politics and power in an insurgency. If we learn the lessons of these wars, we could produce officers like Giáp and Gallieni.

To understand counterinsurgency, officers must comprehend the politics of a society. They must learn how power interacts with the population at the local level. Foucault's disciplinary power provides a lens to conceptualize how power flows through governing apparatuses to the population. During an insurgency, the insurgents have exploited a political opening and are outcompeting the government's administrative apparatus. Counterinsurgents must identify mechanisms to address administrative failings but also recognize when their presence is insulating a host nation from pressure to reform. Understanding political context provides the means to mobilize the population and boil the water that the insurgents swim in. The Army neglected this lesson from Vietnam. We must not fail to learn from our defeat in Afghanistan. ■

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Taliban fighters take control of the Afghan presidential palace in Kabul, Afghanistan, 15 August 2021 after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. (Photo by Zabi Karimi, Associated Press)

Afghanistan

Extract from *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations*

Amy Chua

In Afghanistan, you don't understand yourself solely as an individual ... You understand yourself as a son, a brother, a cousin to somebody, an uncle to somebody. You are part of something bigger than yourself.

—Khaled Hosseini

May God keep you away from the venom of the cobra, the teeth of the tiger, and the revenge of the Afghans.

—Proverb

For most Americans, Afghanistan is a black box. We know that our soldiers have died there, that there are mullahs and caves, and that both may have harbored Osama bin Laden. We're vaguely aware that the war we're fighting in Afghanistan is the longest in our history. We've all heard of the Taliban, an organization that destroys art and bans girls from school, and that wears black or possibly white. Our dim memory is that we beat them once, but now for some reason they

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are back, and we have no idea what's going on, and we just want to forget about the whole country.

Yet we keep hearing ominous warnings from people in the know that things are going badly there and are likely to get worse—that Afghanistan is "a foreign policy disaster," a "neverending war." Or as one congressman recently wrote in the *National Interest*, "Fifteen years, thousands of lives and tens of billions of dollars later, the United States has failed to meet most of its key objectives in Afghanistan. Mission failed."

As in Vietnam, the core reason for America's failures in Afghanistan is that we were oblivious to the most important group identities in the region, which do not fall along national lines, but instead are ethnic, tribal, and clan based. Afghanistan's national anthem mentions fourteen ethnic groups, the largest four being the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. There is a long history of animosity among these groups. For more than two hundred years, the Pashtuns dominated Afghanistan, but during the Cold War their dominance began to decline, and in 1992, a Tajikand Uzbek-led coalition seized control. The Taliban, supported by Pakistan, emerged against this background.

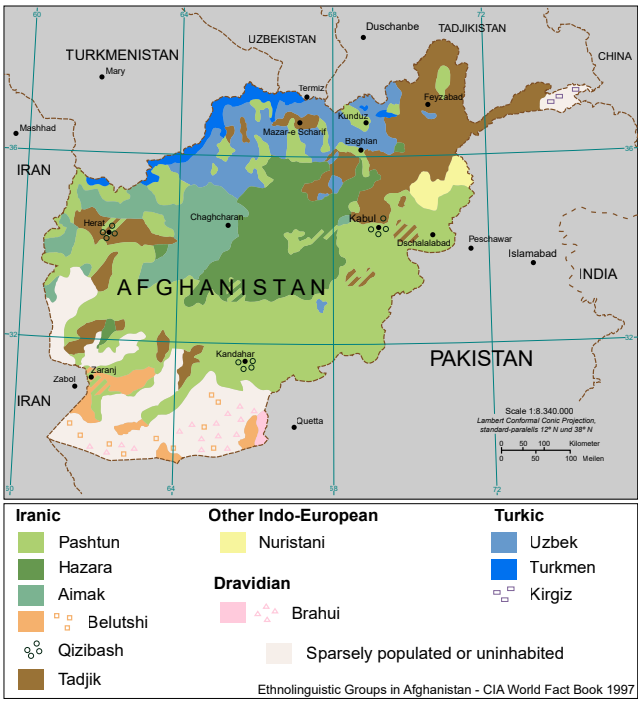
The Taliban is not only an Islamist movement but also an *ethnic* movement. The vast majority of its members are Pashtuns. It was founded by Pashtuns, it is led by Pashtuns, and it arose out of—and derives its staying power because of—threats to Pashtun dominance.

American leaders and policy makers entirely missed these ethnic realities, and the results have been calamitous. Our blindness to tribal politics allowed Pakistan to play us badly, turned large numbers of Afghans against us, and led us inadvertently to help create the Taliban, arming, funding, and training many of its key figures.

The problem in Afghanistan is not just radical Islam. It's also an ethnic problem. And it's rooted in a cardinal rule of tribal politics: once in power, groups do not give up their dominance easily.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Afghanistan is landlocked. It shares its western border with Iran (indeed, Afghanistan's Tajiks speak Dari Persian and are often described as "Eastern Iranians"). To its north lie the former Soviet Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. To its east and southeast sits Pakistan, with which it shares a fifteen-hundred-mile-long border, known as the Durand Line.



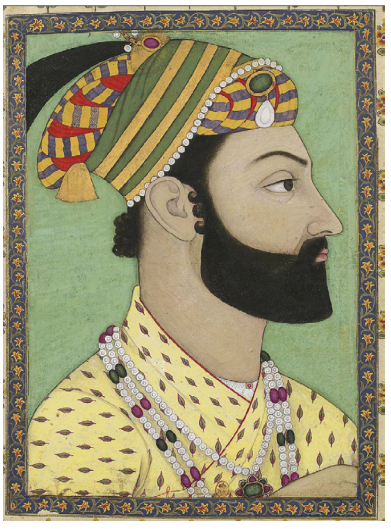
(Map courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan

The state of Afghanistan was established in 1747 by a Pashtun, the celebrated king Ahmad Shah Durrani. From 1747 to 1973, Pashtun leaders ruled Afghanistan almost continuously. Pashtuns pride themselves on being great warriors; Europeans never conquered Afghanistan—although the British and Russians certainly tried. Pashto is the mother tongue of the Pashtuns, who also have their own code of conduct, known as Pashtunwali, which is difficult to translate into Western terms but roughly includes honor, hospitality, reciprocity, and revenge among its key components. Many Pashtuns think of Afghanistan as "their country," and even today, the terms "Afghan" and "Pashtun" are often used interchangeably.

But Pashtuns don't live only in Afghanistan; they also live in Pakistan. Indeed, the name "Pakistan" is an acronym, invented in Cambridge, England, in 1933, denoting the country's major ethnic regions. *P* stands for Punjab, *A* for Afghan (referring to Pashtuns), *K* for Kashmir, *S* for Sindh, and *tan* for Balochistan.

While Pashtuns have politically dominated Afghanistan, Punjabis have politically dominated Pakistan. Representing somewhere around half the population, Punjabis control Pakistan's famous military



Ahmad Shah Abdali Durrani is considered the founder of the modern state of Afghanistan. (Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France via Wikimedia Commons)

as well as most state institutions. Punjabis are also intensely ethnocentric. They speak Punjabi, and they are highly endogamous, typically marrying other Punjabis, often their own cousins. This practice is common even among Punjabis in Great Britain, where first-cousin marriages among Pakistanis are leading to an "appalling" and "absolutely unacceptable" incidence of "disability among children," as a (Lahore-born) member of the House of Lords recently warned.

Ever since independence, the Pakistani government has viewed the Pashtuns as a major threat. This is because there are *a lot* of Pashtuns in Pakistan. In fact, although Pashtuns comprise only 15 percent of Pakistan's total population, there are actually *more* Pashtuns in Pakistan (about 28 million) than in Afghanistan (about 15 million). Worse, most of Pakistan's Pashtuns live clustered near the Afghanistan border, along the Durand Line, which British colonialists drew in 1893 and which Pashtuns scorn as illegitimate. Indeed, Pashtuns on both sides of the border cross the Durand Line at will, which is not difficult given that the "line" runs through rugged terrain practically impossible to police. A common saying among Pashtuns holds that "[y]ou cannot separate water with a stick," and many Pashtuns in Pakistan still identify themselves as Afghan.

Pakistani fear of Pashtun nationalism and irredentism grew even more acute after 1971, when Pakistan's Bengalis broke away in a violent, successful attempt to establish Bangladesh as an independent country. Pakistan's Punjabi elites were determined not to let that happen again with the Pashtuns.

"The Soviet Union's Vietnam"

In 1978, Afghanistan's president was overthrown and brutally murdered in his palace along with most of his family members, their bodies thrown in a ditch. Although pro-Communist rebels led the coup, it took not only the United States but also the Soviet Union by surprise. According to one historian of the Soviet Union, "even the KGB learned about the leftist coup ex post facto." Fortunately for the United States, the Soviet Union was as ethnically blind as we were during the Cold War, similarly viewing world events in terms of a grand battle between communism and capitalism. After the 1978 coup, the Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan tried valiantly to interpret what had happened in orthodox Marxist terms. In a letter to Moscow, he explained that the previous government had accelerated the contradictions of capitalism, leading to a proletariat revolution sooner than anyone had expected. This assessment bore no resemblance to reality. There was no proletariat in Afghanistan. The coup was the culmination of a festering feud between one faction dominated by rural

Afghan Amir Sher Ali Khan (*center with his son*) and his delegation in Ambala, near Lahore, in 1869. (Photo courtesy of the British Library via Wikimedia Commons)

Pashtuns (who were behind the coup) and another dominated by urban Tajiks.

The new government in Afghanistan was a disaster. While its leaders might have been nominally Communist, they were also, first and foremost, Pashtun nationalists who "viewed 'Afghan' as synonymous with 'Pashtun.'" To consolidate power, they embarked on a campaign of terror, hunting down rival religious and tribal leaders, and torturing and executing more than fifty thousand people. The Soviet Union's new "Afghan clients" became totally unmanageable. Moscow feared that the growing turmoil would bring anti-Communist, pro-American forces to power.

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. "It'll be over in three to four weeks," Leonid Brezhnev told the Soviet ambassador to the United States. Nine years later, the Soviets left Afghanistan with their tail between their legs, having been defeated by the U.S.-backed mujahedin. At the time, Washington policy makers were thrilled; we had beaten our rival superpower practically on their own turf. But the Soviet defeat was a Pyrrhic victory for America.

The last Soviet troop column crosses Soviet border 15 September 1989 after leaving Afghanistan. The banner reads "Слава солдатам отечества! Слава сынам родины!" (Glory to the soldiers of the fatherland! Glory to the sons of the motherland!) (Photo courtesy of the RIA Novosti Archive via Wikimedia Commons)

The United States as Pakistan's Geopolitical Pawn

The Soviet invasion of 1979 alarmed the Carter administration. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser, was simultaneously hopeful that Moscow had overreached but fearful of a reprise of 1956, when the Soviets invaded Hungary and crushed the resistance there, or of 1968, when they did the same in Czechoslovakia. At the same time, we were still stinging from Vietnam, and direct military involvement was out of the question. So we opted to covertly arm the anti-Soviet Afghan mujahedin, through Pakistan. All decisions about "who got the most guns, the most money, the most power" were left to Pakistan's anti-Communist dictator, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq.

In other words, we outsourced our Cold War policy in Afghanistan to Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan took us for a ride, making the United States its geopolitical pawn. Pakistan knew exactly how to manipulate ethnic politics in Afghanistan.

Zia's strategy was classic divide-and-conquer. The Pashtun people are not homogeneous. On the contrary, they are notoriously internally fragmented, with a maze of hundreds of smaller tribes and clans, many with longstanding rivalries and conflicts. Indeed, the Pashtuns are the world's largest tribally organized society. Although virtually all Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims, some tribes (often rural) are more religious, while others (typically urban) are more secular. Zia shrewdly favored and empowered Islamist Pashtuns, splitting them off from moderates and allying them with his own Islamist regime. He built madrassas throughout the Pashtun regions. These Islamic schools cultivated an extremist and virulent fundamentalism among young Pashtun men. As former Afghan president Hamid Karzai would later put it, "Pakistan set out to destroy Pashtun nationalism by Islamizing Pakistani Pashtuns and killing Afghan Pashtun nationalists. Pakistan's goal was to have Afghanistan dominated by radical Islam."

U.S. policy makers, focused on the battle against communism, barely knew anything about the Pashtuns. On the contrary, the United States romanticized the

Pakistan-supported Afghan mujahedin as soldiers fighting for the free world. (Congressman Charlie Wilson had floor-to-ceiling framed photographs of mujahedin warriors in heroic pose hung on his office wall.) Even in the face of the stunning upheaval of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and the taking of American hostages there, U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan never saw the potent anti-American, anti-Western group identity fueling the Islamic fundamentalist fighters. Fixated on the Cold War, we were heedless of the monster we were helping to create.

Between 1980 and 1992 we funneled through Pakistan almost $5 billion worth of weapons and ammunition—including heavy machine guns, explosives, antiaircraft cannons, wireless interception equipment, and twenty-three hundred shoulder-fired Stinger missiles—to anti-Soviet mujahedin fighters, paying no attention to whom we were arming. The recipients included the likes of Mullah Mohammed Omar, who would eventually land on America's most-wanted list and become the Taliban's intensely anti-Western supreme commander. It's not an exaggeration to say that the United States was in significant part responsible for the rise of the Taliban and for turning Afghanistan into a hospitality suite for Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda militants.

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After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Afghanistan descended into years of brutal civil war. The U.S. government lost interest in the country, even as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia each continued to aggressively finance and arm their favored Afghan jihadist leaders. In 1996, America was caught completely off guard when a group of barefooted mullahs calling themselves the Taliban captured Kabul and took over two thirds of Afghanistan.

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The Taliban: Playing the Ethnic Card

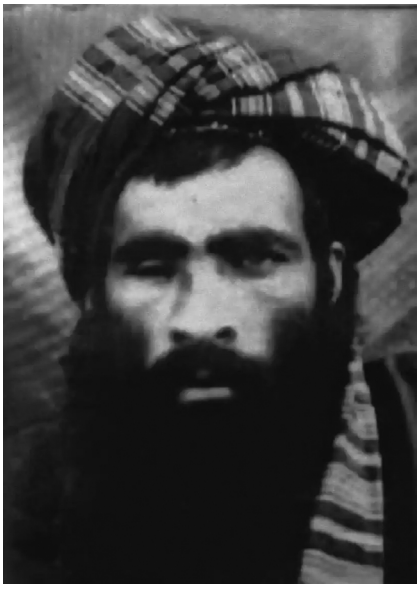
Afghanistan in the early nineties was lawless. Warlords ruled practically every city and town. Racketeers and drug mafias reaped enormous profits. Kidnappings, extortion, and rape—including of young girls—were rampant. One reason so many war-weary Afghans initially supported the Taliban was that it provided security where previously chaos reigned, even if security under the Taliban came with a strict Islamic dress code and bans on television, music, cards, kite flying, and most sports.

But the Taliban was able to provide security—to amass power and popular support broad and deep enough to establish law and order—because of its appeal to Pashtun ethnic identity.

For hundreds of years, the ruler of Afghanistan was always Pashtun. After the fall of the Afghan monarchy in 1973, the Soviet invasion, and years of civil war, Pashtun dominance was suddenly upended. In the early 1990s, much of the country was controlled by members of the Tajik minority. The Pashtuns had lost control of Kabul, the nation's capital, where Burhanuddin Rabbani—a Tajik—was now president. They had lost control of the state bureaucracy, to the extent that it was still functioning. The Pashto language, once dominant in the nation's government-run television, radio, and newspapers, had lost status and declined dramatically. The Pashtuns had even lost control of their core power base, the Afghan military, which had

fragmented, leaving non-Pashtun generals in command over the remaining units. As a result, deep resentment and fear of marginalization, of being eclipsed, had become widespread among Pashtuns of all different clans and tribes. Into this breach stepped the Taliban.

Virtually all of the Taliban leadership, and most of its rank and file, are Pashtuns—typically Ghilzai Pashtuns, from the "lowest socio-economic rung of society." The Taliban uses Pashto as its exclusive language of communication, and "[t]heir Pashtun identity is also obvious from their dress and individual behavior." The promise to restore Pashtun dominance in Afghanistan was a key part of the Taliban's rise to power.



One of the few portraits of Mullah Omar in 1993, just before he founded the Taliban. (Photo by Khalid Hadi)

Going from village to village, clan to clan, Taliban leaders combined their call for a simpler, purer Islam with appeals to Pashtun pride and resentment, offering Pashtuns a chance to reclaim their proper place. As Seth Jones writes:

> The Taliban's strategy was innovative and ruthlessly effective. Unlike the Soviets, they focused their initial efforts on bottom-up efforts in *rural* Afghanistan, especially the Pashtun south. They approached tribal leaders and militia commanders, as well as their rank-and-file supporters, and ... they offered to restore Pashtun control of Kabul, which was run by the Tajik Rabbani ... . It was a strategy accomplished on a very personal level: Taliban leaders who spoke the local dialect traveled to the Pashtun villages and district centers.

This is also why the Taliban was able to take over Afghanistan so quickly, catching the U.S. government unaware. "[T]he Taliban's Pashtun identity allowed them to sweep through the Pashtun areas relatively easily—in many cases without a shot being fired." It was primarily in non-Pashtun areas that the Taliban met with strong resistance. In the words of the influential Pashtun thinker Anwar-ul Haq Ahady (who later became head of Afghanistan's central bank under President Hamid Karzai), for many Pashtuns, fears of Pashtun marginalization were "more significant than the fall of communism. … The rise of the Taliban generated optimism among the Pashtuns about a reversal of their decline."

The Taliban's leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, understood better than anyone the art of Afghan tribal politics. As Steve Coll writes in *Ghost Wars*, the poorly educated, one-eyed cleric from an undistinguished Pashtun clan "was an unlikely heir to Pashtun glory." But Omar was a master at interweaving fundamentalist Islam with Pashtun pride and symbolism. On the day he assumed leadership in the spring of 1996, he convened in Kandahar an audience of more than a thousand Pashtun leaders and religious scholars. There he called them to the tomb of the great Pashtun king Ahmad Shah Durrani, who after unifying the Pashtun tribes in 1747 had gone on to occupy Delhi and extend Afghan rule as far as Tibet. As Omar figuratively wrapped himself in Durrani's mantle, he climbed on the roof of the adjacent mosque and literally wrapped himself in the supposed "Cloak of the Holy Prophet." The crowd exulted and named him "Commander of the Faithful."

Ultimately, the Taliban never succeeded in unifying Afghanistan's Pashtuns. In part, this is because Pakistan's divide-and-conquer policies worked exactly as planned. More moderate, pro-Western Pashtuns found the Taliban's fanaticism increasingly repulsive. The Taliban's close ties with Pakistan also undermined its appeal to ordinary Afghans, who feared the "Pakistanization" of their country. Nevertheless, the Taliban's Pashtun identity and its readiness to exploit Pashtun ethnonationalism have been essential to its appeal, drawing large numbers of Pashtuns into its orbit from a surprising range of tribal, economic, and, to some extent, ideological backgrounds.

The ethnic side of the Taliban was even starker for the country's non-Pashtuns, who were systematically targeted. In 1998, for example, the Taliban massacred 2,000 Uzbeks and Hazaras (who for their part had

massacred Taliban Pashtuns in 1997) and tried to starve another 160,000. The Taliban also persecuted and killed Tajiks, particularly in the country's rural areas.

The United States never saw the ethnic side of the Taliban. In the eighties and early nineties, we saw the mujahedin only as anti-Communist and therefore as friends. Needless to say, we quickly soured on our "freedom fighter" allies—especially after we learned that they weren't allowing girls to attend school, had slaughtered entire communities, and had barbarically destroyed the ancient Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley. Osama bin Laden officially launched al-Qaeda from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, announcing to the world that it was the duty of "every Muslim" to kill Americans "in any country in which it is possible to do it." But when it became clear that the Taliban were not our friends—specifically, when they refused to turn over bin Laden after he took down the World Trade Center—we simply traded in our Cold War lens for an antiterrorist or anti-Islamist one. We recast the Taliban as a bunch of cave-dwelling mullahs and once again failed to see the central importance of ethnicity.

"We simply traded in our Cold War lens for an antiterrorist or anti-Islamist one. We recast the Taliban as a bunch of cave-dwelling mullahs and once again failed to see the central importance of ethnicity."

The U.S. Invasion of Afghanistan

In October 2001, just a few weeks after the 9/11 attacks, on a wave of collective grief and anger, we sent troops to Afghanistan. We continued to make terrible miscalculations, repeatedly underestimating the importance of ethnic and tribal identity.

Impressively, we toppled the Taliban in just seventy-five days. But in doing so, we joined forces with the Northern Alliance, led by Tajik and Uzbek warlords and widely viewed as anti-Pashtun. According to counterterrorism expert Hassan Abbas, the Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, one of the Northern Alliance's commanders, "mercilessly killed thousands of Taliban foot soldiers," even though many had already surrendered. Dostum "was known for such tendencies, but on this occasion he did it on the payroll of the CIA." In another horrific episode, Dostum's soldiers packed thousands of Taliban prisoners in shipping containers for transport, with no food or water. Although Dostum later insisted that the deaths were unintentional, "hundreds suffocated in the containers. More were killed when Dostum's guards shot into the containers. The bodies were buried in a mass grave. … [A]bout 1,500 Taliban prisoners died."

Most Pashtuns—including many who were not sympathetic to the Taliban—saw Dostum's brutality as an act of ethnic revenge. For them, he was an anti-Pashtun mass killer. When Dostum became one of "America's warlords," it didn't exactly endear us to the Pashtuns.

We compounded the problem with the post-Taliban government we helped set up, alienating Pashtuns all over the country by appearing to exclude them while favoring their rival ethnic groups. At a heavily U.S.-influenced postwar conference convened in Bonn to determine the "future of Afghanistan," Afghanistan was represented by a team consisting primarily of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras from the Northern Alliance, along with a smaller number of exiled Pashtuns. American policy in Afghanistan was effectively to exclude almost anyone "remotely associated with the Taliban"—including thousands of more moderate Pashtuns who were connected to the Taliban through clan ties or who had worked with the Taliban without necessarily accepting its jihadist ideology.

Moreover, the United States was seen (to some extent correctly) as turning over the country's key positions of power to the Pashtuns' archrival ethnic group, the Tajiks, many of them known for corruption and patronage. Although President Hamid Karzai was a Pashtun, Tajiks filled most of the top ministry positions, such as army chief of staff, director of military intelligence, army inspector general, and director of counternarcotics forces. Only 24 percent of the population, Tajiks made up 70 percent of the army's corps commanders in the new U.S.-supported Afghan National Army. As Tajiks appeared

to grow wealthy while U.S. airstrikes pounded primarily Pashtun regions, a bitter saying spread among Afghan Pashtuns: "[t]hey get the dollars, and we get the bullets." Many who had initially welcomed the U.S. military intervention in 2001 grew increasingly alienated from the new U.S.-backed regime, which has left Pashtuns at the very bottom of global human development.

After U.S. and coalition troops "defeated" the Taliban—actually just sending many of its foot soldiers into hiding in the mountains—we effectively turned our back on the country. With our eyes set on Iraq, we failed to implement any measures ensuring security or basic services for the Afghan people. This was a grave error. One of the Taliban's main strengths was that it had put a stop to the previously rampant extortions, rapes, gang robberies, and abductions, and after the United States routed the Taliban, corruption and lawlessness surged anew.

In December 2001, Vice President Cheney declared, "The Taliban is out of business, permanently." By 2010, the Taliban had regained control of major swaths of eastern and southern Afghanistan—despite the United States having spent a staggering $650 billion on the war and sacrificed more than 2,200 American lives. In 2016, U.S. Forces Afghanistan reported that about 43 percent of the country's districts were either "contested" or back under insurgent control or influence. In March 2017, the Taliban recaptured a key area in Helmand Province—an area known for opium poppy production that U.S. and British troops had defended at great human cost. According to a CNN security analyst, the Taliban was able to do so in part because "the Taliban have popular support, the government in Kabul [doesn't]. The further away from Kabul you get the worse it becomes." Meanwhile, Afghanistan has once again become an epicenter for terrorism, attracting members of al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Pakistani Taliban (which killed 132 schoolchildren in Peshawar in 2014).

From the Cold War through the present day, our foreign policy in Afghanistan has been a colossal failure. In daunting part, this is because we either failed to understand or chose to ignore the country's complex tribal politics. What General Stanley McChrystal said of the NATO-led security forces in 2009 was surely true of the United States as well: We had "not sufficiently studied Afghanistan's peoples, whose needs, identities and grievances vary from province to province and from valley to valley." Consequently, as with Vietnam, nearly every move we made in Afghanistan was practically designed to turn large segments of the population against us.

Specifically, we never saw and never solved—in fact, never really even tried to solve—the Pashtun problem. The Pashtuns see Afghanistan as *their* country. They founded it and ruled it continuously for more than two hundred years; they defeated two world superpowers—the British and the Russians. However much they loathe the Taliban, Pashtuns are not going to support any regime they view as subordinating the Pashtun people to their deeply resented ethnic rivals.

Today, there are a host of excellent and insightful books and articles with titles like "The Pashtun Dilemma," "The Pashtun Problem," and "The Pashtun Question," which, hopefully, U.S. foreign policy makers are now paying attention to. But, as always, it's a little late. ■

Notes

*The **bold face page numbers** correspond to the original notes as listed for chapter 3 in the book *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018). The ***italicized page numbers*** correspond to the same notes but refer to those pages to which they refer in this extracted version of the chapter printed here.

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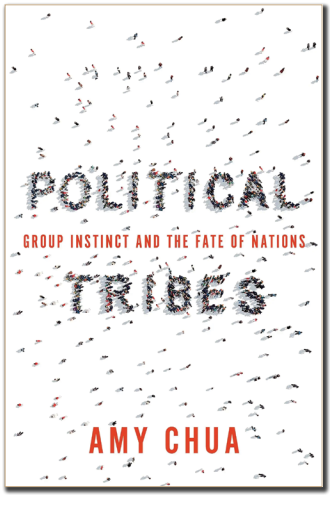
Military Review
WE RECOMMEND



An essential read and primer for any student of international affairs specializing in diplomacy, information and cross-cultural communications, economics, and/or military affairs. *Political Tribes* is a thought-provoking analysis that highlights the vital need for recognizing and appreciating the basic social instincts of human beings that translate into a human sociological imperative to form "tribes" in competition against other competing groups. In doing so, Amy Chua persuasively illuminates how the underlying failures in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq were directly related to an obtuse lack of understanding among planners for the role of tribalism in those societies, which made it difficult for strategists without such understanding of the anthropological forces at work to comprehend and deal with the overall situations. She goes on to apply the same penetrating analysis to the domestic sociopolitical environment of America today in the form of a warning, placing in relief the potential social and political dangers inherent in tribalism if ignored and unmitigated.

Civil Dispute Resolution

An Ignored Winning Strategy for Afghanistan

Col. Cornelia Weiss, U.S. Air Force, Retired

Whoever administers justice will be the state.

—Robert Reilly

The Taliban's success in delivering justice is perhaps its single most effective means of undermining the Karzai government and appropriating legitimacy. . . . By itself, it is enough to establish its control and split the people away from the government, and by doing this one thing well, the Taliban gains allegiance.

—Tom A. Peter

The thinking for this article began over a decade ago, the day I heard a story about Afghan women giving the only thing of value they owned—their jewelry—to the Taliban because of the Taliban's civil dispute resolution services. By "civil dispute resolution," I mean resolving disputes about land and other issues through a nonviolent process in which disputants bring and plead their case to a decision-maker. Given the tension between my understanding of the Taliban's oppressive treatment of women and my background in the rule of law, I initially marveled that the need for civil dispute resolution was so great that it resulted in support given to those who could provide dispute resolution regardless of their treatment of women. But in Afghanistan, after decades of war, resulting in, for example, "destroyed documents" and "land grabs from owners that fled the fighting," civil dispute resolution was a fundamental need.[1] And then I wondered why the United States failed to learn from Che Guevara about the need to provide dispute resolution. According to Guevara, a "central department of justice, revolutionary laws, and administration (the council) is one of the vital features of a guerrilla army fully constituted and with its own territory."[2] In contrast to the United States, the Taliban appears to have understood that the need for civil dispute resolution is so overpowering that it leads to support for whichever entity, government or antigovernment, will provide it, even if that entity is perceived to be antiwomen. Yet the United States, even to the end, clung to a strategy of a "formal legal system" (meaning building courthouses and other countable "tick-the-box" items) that, in its first year in Helmand, heard only five cases, instead of understanding that its strategy created the vacuum for the Taliban to co-opt the "favored informal, community-level traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, where an estimated 80 to 90 percent of civil disputes have always been handled."[3] The result: the Taliban in Afghanistan, despite years of military personnel and funds used to combat it, did not succumb but instead, in stereotyped insurgency fashion, outlasted its opponents as a result of capturing the "civil dispute resolution" market. The failure to recognize the population's need for civil dispute resolution and the Taliban capture of this market was part of the Achilles' heel of the U.S. theory, doctrine, and efforts.[4]

To help prevent similar outcomes in the future, this article examines the strategies, policies, and

practices regarding civil dispute resolution and support for the Taliban because of its civil dispute resolution services. The United States failed to understand, through its lens of resolving disputes by armed force, the need for civil dispute resolution for civilians. The lesson that must be learned for the future—to include in doctrine, policy, and practice—is that whoever provides the population with the better civil dispute resolution services during a conflict will become the rulers, regardless of who they are.

Nonexistent U.S. Strategies and Policies on Civil Dispute Resolution

The U.S. policy on civil dispute resolution appeared to be nonexistent. While the 2010 *National Security Strategy* asserted, "America's commitment to democracy, human rights, and the *rule of law* are essential sources of our strength and influence in the world" (emphasis mine), it failed to define "rule of law" (as did the 2015 and 2017 *National Security Strategies*).[5]

Likewise, while the 2011 *National Military Strategy* maintained, "Military power complements economic development, governance, and the *rule of law—the true bedrocks of counterterrorism efforts*" (emphasis mine), it too failed to define "rule of law."[6] (The 2015 and the 2018 *National Military Strategies* failed as well to define the "rule of law.")[7] And while the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* contended that the United States was "committed to upholding our most cherished values as a nation not just because doing so is right but also because doing so enhances our security" with "adherence to those core values … upholding the *rule of law*—enables us to build broad international coalitions to act against the common threat posed by our adversaries while further delegitimizing, isolating, and weakening their efforts" (emphasis mine), its rule of law definition appeared limited to "maintaining an effective, durable legal framework for CT [counterterrorism] operations and bringing terrorists to justice."[8] That is, it ignored countering terrorism through the affirmative steps of addressing the population's need for civil dispute resolution. And the 2018 counterterrorism strategy does not even mention the rule of law.[9] The State Department did no better. The November 2011 *Status Report: Afghanistan and Pakistan Civilian Engagement* by the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, acknowledged the following:

- Improved rule of law and access to justice are essential for long-term stability in Afghanistan.
- To help the Afghan government provide its people with transparent, affordable, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms, we support rule of law initiatives at the district, provincial, and national levels focused on increasing access to justice, capacity-building, and promoting transparency and accountability.
- We strive to help increase the Afghan government's legitimacy, improve its perception among Afghans, and promote a culture that values rule of law above self-interest.[10]

However, it noted the corrections program, counternarcotic efforts, and the provincial justice centers did not address the population's need for civil dispute resolution.[11] Further, while it asserted, "We will continue to focus our support promoting accountability in the Afghan legal community, and expanding of the formal justice system, with targeted assistance to the informal justice system," it failed to address explicitly how and what.[12] While maintaining that the USAID Rule of Law Program "also supports traditional dispute resolution mechanisms and fosters linkages between the informal and formal justice sectors," it declared it will continue to focus its support on "expanding of the formal justice system" with "targeted assistance to the informal justice system."[13] Instead, it maintained that "the Karzai government" must create "predictable and *fair* dispute resolution mechanisms to eliminate the vacuum that the Taliban

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have exploited with their own brutal form of justice (emphasis mine)."[14] Yet, "despite the $904 million in 'rule of law' funding from the U.S. alone between 2002 and 2010, much of it earmarked to improve the judiciary," notably absent were funds to eliminate "the vacuum."[15] (At the same time, the *Western Hemisphere Defense Policy Statement* of October 2012 acknowledged that "[corruption and] ineffectual judicial systems hamper the ability of governments to earn and keep the trust of citizens.")[16]

> Convention for Civil and Political Rights provide a guide for applicable human rights. The latter provides for derogation from certain rights, however, during a state of emergency. Respect for the full panoply of human rights should be the goal of the host nation; derogation and violation of these rights by HN [host nation] security forces often provides an excuse for insurgent activities.[21]

That is, instead of including the need of the populace of civil dispute resolution within its definition

> "Respect for the full panoply of human rights should be the goal of the host nation; derogation and violation of these rights by HN [host nation] security forces often provides an excuse for insurgent activities."

Nonexistent U.S. Military Operational Thinking on Civil Dispute Resolution

While individuals like Gen. John Allen appeared to understand there was something needed, it appears the U.S. military failed to understand that it must address the need of the population to have civil dispute resolution. He testified: "While the Afghan National Army will battle your nation's foes and, in that context, battle the Taliban, the battle for Afghanistan—the real fight—will be won by righteous law enforcement, a functioning judiciary and an unambiguous commitment to the rule of law."[17]

While the 2014 counterinsurgency manual asserted, "Establishing the rule of law is a key goal and end state in COIN," it failed to define rule of law.[18] However, it did articulate that "key aspects" of rule of law included the following:

- A government that derives its powers from the governed and competently manages, coordinates, and sustains collective security, as well as political, social, and economic development.[19]
- Sustainable security institutions. These include a civilian-controlled military as well as police, court, and penal institutions. The latter should be perceived by the local populace as fair, just, and transparent.[20]
- Fundamental human rights. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the International

of "rule of law," it focused on the penal aspects of "rule of law" (as did Annex F of Gen. Stanley McChrystal's "Commander's Initial Assessment" of 30 August 2009).[22] In contrast to the 2014 counterinsurgency manual, the 2011 *Rule of Law Handbook*, in a section titled "Individuals Have Meaningful Access to an Effective an Impartial Legal System," acknowledges that "people must have practical access" to judicial institutions, stating, "It means little to have laws on the books if there is no mechanism for the enforcement of that law to redress criminal and civil wrongs."[23] Yet the focus was the criminal system.[24] The handbook further acknowledges that "efficacy may be completely compromised by corruption … gender bias … or simple inefficiency," and that a "nation with beautifully constructed courthouses may nevertheless fail to achieve the ROL [rule of law] if the judges in those courthouses are either arbitrary or corrupt."[25] The handbook spells out, for rule of law projects, that the "temptation to set measurable goals pushes [rule of law] projects toward either making physical infrastructure improvements, such as building courthouses or jails, or implementing programs whose completion can be easily monitored, such as establishing training programs and measuring the number of graduates of the program."[26]

Yet arguably, the government of Afghanistan was cognizant of its vacuum of thinking and action. According to Muhammad Ali Ahmadi, the deputy

governor of Ghazni, "Corruption and lack of judicial institutions in districts have led to a vacuum between people and the government, and presented an opportunity that the opposing armed [Taliban] forces have used to the full."[27] While "strengthening the judicial system and the legitimacy of state institutions is one of the main ways to counter the influence of non-state actors," it appears the government failed to fill this vacuum.[28]

Thriving Taliban Strategy, Policy, and Practice on Civil Dispute Resolution

The Taliban, in contrast, understood that to win, to become the rulers of Afghanistan, it needed to attract the support of the population. To answer, "What methods of 'guerrilla governance' are attracting the support of local populations," Patrick Devenny concluded:[29]

- There is no better place to start than the Taliban's court system, staffed by groups of religious scholars who review disputes over land allocation and property rights—issues of vital importance in pastoral Afghanistan.[30]
- Their justice is visible, immediate, and familiar to Afghans who have relied on informal conflict resolution for centuries.[31]
- The courts' attraction is rooted in the absence of effective alternatives, rather than ideological affinity. Afghans, desperate for some measure of order, will often turn to Taliban courts even if they do not support the organization's overall goals.[32]
- The courts are better at gaining local support than dozens of gunmen or bomb-makers ever could.[33]

Thus, "while the Taliban use terrorism to advance their military and political aims, in the areas of Afghanistan that they control, their greatest weapon is not violence, but rather their ability to dispense a form of justice in a manner that is seen as honest and efficient."[34] The reasons articulated as to why Afghans used Taliban courts instead of government courts were access, corruption, efficiency, enforcement, and warnings from the Taliban.

Access

According to the *Rule of Law Handbook*, over 80 percent of the population had no access to the government courts because the government courts were not in rural areas.[35] In contrast, the Taliban provided access. According to a Taliban judge named Ramani, "We are mobile judges. Sometimes we go to the people, and sometimes they come to us. We don't have a courtroom, and we're not official. But we are sanctioned by the Taliban leadership to carry out justice using Islamic law."[36] That is, "Taliban courts provide roving support to remote rural locations in Afghanistan" and were not "fixed to urban areas like many Afghan government facilities."[37]

"While the Taliban use terrorism to advance their military and political aims, in the areas of Afghanistan that they control, their greatest weapon is not violence, but rather their ability to dispense a form of justice in a manner that is seen as honest and efficient."

Corruption

The United States understood that corruption was an issue. Allen, then commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, testified to Congress in April 2014 that corruption was more serious than the insurgency.[38] One saying in Afghanistan was, "Government courts for the rich, Taliban justice for the poor."[39] That is, the government courts were understood to be for the rich because of bribable government judges. And the "monthly cut of the bribes local judges extort" got paid "to the chief justice of the Supreme Court."[40] According to a 2010 Integrity Watch survey of Afghan perceptions of corruption, half the Afghan population saw government courts as the most corrupt government institution in

Afghanistan.[41] According to a February 2013 report from Afghanistan's Tolo TV, more than 50 percent of the populace in Afghanistan used Taliban court systems rather than those of the Afghan government due to corruption.[42] For example, in an agricultural water rights dispute, according to the losing litigant, the winner had paid "lot of money for the lawyers and bribed for [*sic*] judges in the court."[43] A quarter of Afghans said they "felt deprived of justice" because of corruption and a system fed by bribes.[44] This excluded women too as women generally did not have the financial resources to bribe.[45] One tribal elder estimated that 90 percent of people in Helmand sided with the Taliban, labelling the government "corrupt."[46] That is, "No one can trust them. Whenever we have a problem, we go to the Taliban and the Taliban court."[47]

> "However, even with the 'warnings,' it appears that the Taliban civil dispute resolution services were superior to those of the government."

Not all Taliban judges were incorruptible. One elder recounted a case in which the judge "issued a judgment against a person [who] should have won the case. The person complained to the [district] commission. They investigated [and] discovered that the judge had taken bribes. The judge was sentenced to six-months in exile and his work as a judge was terminated."[48] Still, according to one elder, local villagers preferred to use the Taliban court for their cases because Taliban judges were not as corrupt as the government judges.[49]

Efficiency Over Inefficiency

Afghan citizens also cited the expediency, limited cost, and access to Taliban courts as advantages over the government courts to resolve civil legal disputes, to include individuals who lived only a few miles from a government court:[50]

> I don't like our current government at all, and I don't really like the Taliban, either. But I can either spend months in the government court and pay bribes, or I can go to the Taliban and have the matter settled in one day. It's an easy choice to make.[51]
>
> The Taliban courts don't disturb people and tell them to wait for a long time before hearing a case, or demand bribes. When you go to the Taliban and ask them for help, they tell you that they need a certain amount of time to study your case, and then they will tell you to come on a special day.[52]

Enforcement

The Taliban had, and used, its power to enforce its legal judgments served as a source "for building legitimacy" for the Taliban.[53]

> When we referred the case to the Taliban they solved it instantly, and now we don't have any problem. If there is any further disagreement over this land, the Taliban will first warn the objecting party, then give him a beating, and if he still persists, they will kill him.[54]

Taliban enforcement included enforcement on behalf of women too. For example, a woman's husband would not grant her a divorce even though she had a divorce decree from a Pakistani court and a fatwa from a local mufti. When a Taliban court then heard the case and ordered the husband to give a divorce, he did. According to the woman's brother, "Under the Taliban, even the weak have rights."[55] Arguably in contrast, the government courts did not support women in divorce proceedings. According to Afghan parliamentarian Shinkai Korakhail, government courts granted women a divorce in only 1 percent of divorce cases.[56]

Warnings from the Taliban

Of course, Afghans may have used the Taliban courts solely because of "warnings" from the Taliban. According to one Afghan, "The people of the villages are not going to the government courts. The Taliban are warning them that no one can go there."[57]

However, even with the "warnings," it appears that the Taliban civil dispute resolution services were superior to those of the government. Thus, as Swenson explains, "Avoidance of the [government] courts was entirely rational."[58]

Conclusion

And so, it appears that the need for civil dispute resolution is so overpowering that it leads to support for whichever entity, government or insurgency, will provide it, even if that entity is perceived to be antiwomen. In the end, is it a surprise that a woman gave her support to the Taliban rather than to the government? It is my hope that this lesson will be learned and that it will be incorporated into doctrine, strategy, military education, planning, and training. ■

The opinions and views expressed are the author's personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. government or any of its components. This article is a condensed and updated version of a paper I prepared as a student of the William J. Perry Center for Western Hemispheric Defense Studies 2014 Terrorism and Counterinsurgency Course taught by Gen. (ret.) Carlos Ospina Ovalle, former commander of the Colombian Armed Forces, and Dr. David Spencer.

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Preparing for redeployment to the United States, Lt. Col. Michael King is presented with a farewell gift from a former Afghan mujahedin leader whom King had befriended during his deployment as a member of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program (circa 2010–2011). King had spent more than year undergoing Dari language and cultural immersion as part of a Pentagon-led effort to develop a cadre of language-capable and culturally astute personnel capable of returning to Afghanistan to support further stabilization efforts. While deployed to Afghanistan, King had lived in an Afghan Training Center, using his language skills to interact personally with Afghan police instructors, trainees, local contractors, local village elders, and other members of the populace. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Rule of Law and Expanding the Reach of Government

Lessons Learned from an AFPAK Hands Foxhole

Maj. Theresa Ford, JD, U.S. Army, Retired

We were told after the surrender at Bataan that the men were so weakened by malaria caused by a lack of quinine that they were too weak to continue … Has anyone enquired why there was a shortage of quinine on Bataan when that defense was prepared for many long years in advance … Why, when quinine was as important as ammunition and food, was it not provided in comparable quantities?

—Ernest Hemingway

Writing in 1942, Ernest Hemingway was trying to make sense of the surrender at Bataan, involving the surrender of twelve thousand U.S. troops, the largest surrender ever in U.S. history. The surrender in Afghanistan in August 2021 was not due to a lack of medicine or from sickness, it was due to decisions that fell outside the soldiers' purview. As early as 2009, the United States had decided on a timetable for exiting Afghanistan:

> As Commander-in-Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home … these additional American and international troops will … allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011.[1]

Like Hemingway, who traversed the battlefields of World War I and who was trying to make sense of mission failure at Bataan, veterans of the Afghanistan war are similarly trying to make sense of the war and its abrupt end.

Since the withdrawal from Afghanistan, many have discussed the lessons the United States should learn from our years of engagement there.[2] As one of the few soldiers who spoke Dari, my perspective is shaped in large part from my interactions with Afghans over the course of my deployment in 2013. I was a member of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program (AFPAK Hands), a program created in 2009, designed to bolster language and cultural competency to mentor Afghans in critical nodes of government.[3]

Lesson 1: Use Language Skills to Expand the Reach of Government

There is justice for all Afghanistan.

—Afghan Border Police Commander[4]

My experience in Afghanistan taught me that if a mission is to train a foreign military and aid security and governance, we need to have soldiers able to speak the language of those we are training. Army doctrine regarding linguists says to "treat language training with the same priority given to physical fitness training, Soldier common skill training, and MOS training."[5] One of the most important lessons I learned was that language training is as vital to the linguist as it is to the infantryman, and that if more soldiers had been afforded language training over the course of the twenty-year conflict, the outcome might have been different, and we would have more linguists or language-capable soldiers in our ranks and likely fewer "green-on-blue" attacks.[6] Two examples will help illustrate the importance of language training.

The border commander goes to court. On 15 April 2010, an Afghan Border Police commander was driving down the road when something caught his attention. He told his driver to back up the vehicle as another officer got out to inspect the object in the road. As soon as the officer exited the vehicle and touched the object, he was killed by an improvised explosive device (IED). The commander collected his officer's remains and the IED remnants and turned them in to authorities. Three years later, the commander received a phone call

These two uniform patches were worn by AFPAK Hands members so they could be identified by U.S. military personnel in the event they needed assistance during their travels around the country. (Photo courtesy of the author)

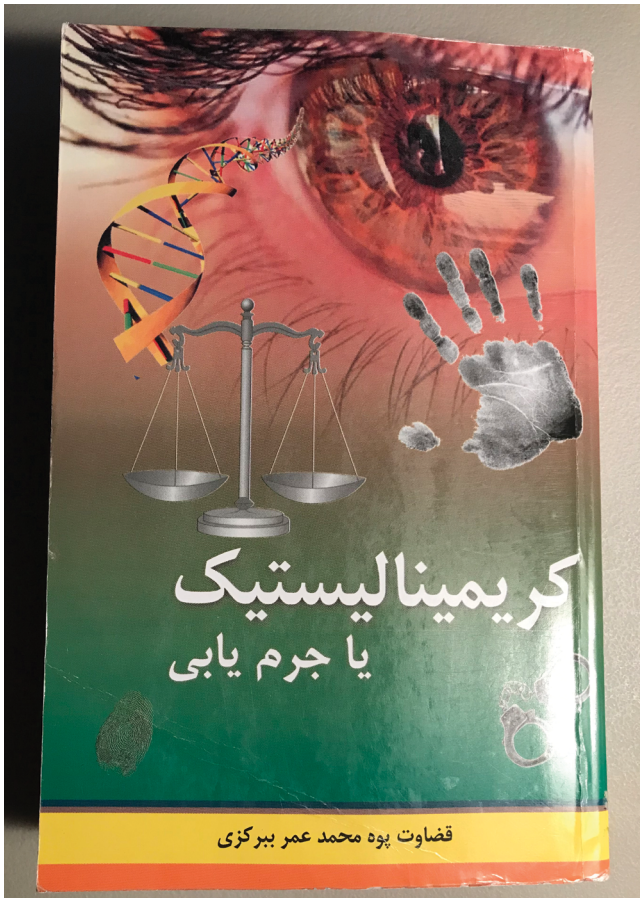
Officers with the "Mustang" Squadron attend Dari language training September 2012 at Fort Stewart, Georgia, in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

informing him that the person that made the IED was standing trial at Afghanistan's National Security Court, referred to here as the Justice Center in Parwan (JCIP). He was asked if he would come testify at the trial and he said that he would.

The above facts are from an actual case at the JCIP. Biometric evidence linked the detainee to the IED, but we knew nothing about the victim except his name.[7] While at the JCIP, I noticed that no Afghan witnesses—elders, villagers, or family members—came to testify. In fact, family members were never informed that a trial had taken place. I thought this was a missed opportunity to spread the word across the country that justice was being delivered for the Afghan people by their government. Prosecutors presented their cases by reading the charges and presented evidence in the form of a weapon or other property seized at the point of capture, along with biometric evidence. They generally did not have the time or inclination to seek out witnesses, which was a cumbersome task.

I decided to use my issued Afghan cell phone to call other AFPAK Hands across the country to find any witnesses that might have known the victim or were familiar with the incident. Through a stroke of luck, I was able to locate the victim's commander and learned the circumstances surrounding the IED blast. When I spoke to him on the telephone and said I was a U.S. soldier, he seemed surprised to hear an American speaking Dari, and equally surprised to learn that the perpetrator had been caught and was standing trial.

The morning of the trial came, and as time went by, the commander was nowhere to be seen. Finally, he appeared at the gate, and I introduced myself, placing my hand on my heart. His words and demeanor reflected a deep sadness and guilt, as he felt responsible for his officer's death. The Afghan court personnel were equally shocked to see him, word spread, and the judges heard of his arrival and invited him to their chambers to have tea as a way of thanking him for coming.[8]



This book, translated as *Crime Investigation*, was written by former Afghan Supreme Court Justice Muhammad Omar Babrakzai. Babrakzai served on the Afghan Supreme Court from August 2006 to July 2013 and promoted the use of fingerprint and DNA evidence. He came to the Justice Center in Parwan and presented a discussion about his book and fingerprint evidence to judges from across the country. (Photo courtesy of the author)

The courtroom was packed, and the commander was calm as he explained what had happened on that tragic day three years earlier when he made the decision to have his officer inspect the object in the road. He calmly said that he did not know the detainee or anything about him, but that he knew what took place that day and was there to tell the court what happened and to get justice for his fallen officer. The detainee became belligerent, and when fingerprint evidence was introduced showing that he had made the IED, said that he "did not believe in fingerprints." The three-judge panel found that the detainee violated the Afghan Law on Combat against Terrorism Offenses and issued a seventeen-year sentence. When the commander exited the courtroom, he said, "There is justice for all Afghanistan." He said that when he returned home, he would tell the victim's family, villagers, and fellow officers about the case and the outcome. In addition, he said morale of his men had been low as they lost many officers to IEDs and did not know that the JCIP was prosecuting perpetrators of the attacks.

This case helped to link Afghan officials in remote parts of the country to each other to achieve a common purpose. After the commander came to testify in the case, the prosecutors took greater pride in their work and felt that their actions were making a difference.

The elders go to court. Unlike most of the other cases I worked on at the JCIP, a case involving the death of an elder in Helmand Province lacked forensic evidence and consisted solely of witness statements. The killing of an elder is a significant injustice and particularly heinous given the standing of elders in the community, especially in the southern Pashtun heartland of Helmand Province. Targeting elders was a tactic used by the Taliban to diminish the traditional roles of the elders as key decision-makers in a community and replace them with the Taliban. Therefore, getting justice for the elder who was killed would show the village that the Afghan government could effectuate a meaningful outcome, despite the large distance between the two.

The court granted a continuance in the case to give the prosecutor time to obtain evidence and said the charges would be dropped if no witness statements or other evidence was obtained. Like the border patrol case, this case had similar difficulties; how would we find witnesses familiar with the death of an elder in one of the most remote villages in the most violent district in Afghanistan?[9]

Nahr-e-Saraj District, located in Helmand Province, was at the opposite end of the country from the JCIP. Once again, I made a call with my Afghan cell phone and called the prosecutor for Nahr-e-Saraj District who I had met a few months earlier when I was stationed in the district of Musa Qala in Helmand Province. The prosecutor at the JCIP did not know or have any contacts with the Nahr-e-Saraj prosecutor, likely because he was from Kabul and had very little dealings with his counterparts in the southern part of the country.

I found that I was able to bridge the gap between the two of them. I also contacted a U.S. Army Special Forces unit that was operating in the area and sought its assistance in locating any elders that might have

known the victim in the case. Local elders were located, and they fully supported the efforts at ensuring the detainee would never harm anyone again. The elders agreed to write sworn statements that contained their thumbprints, as this was the customary method of signing a sworn statement and was the procedure the Afghan judge had specifically requested. The elders said that the detainee was "a very dangerous man" and agreed to make video statements, an idea proposed by the Special Forces team. The elders provided both written and videotaped statements and asked that only the judge and the defense attorney be allowed to see their faces, for fear of retribution.

I informed the prosecutor that the elders had been located, and that they made both written and videotaped statements and asked how he wanted this evidence to get to the court. The prosecutor was clear that the evidence come through Afghan channels. Based on his guidance, the Special Forces team worked with the local National Directorate of Security and handed the evidence to them for forwarding to the JCIP.[10]

Weeks went by until the prosecutor announced on 18 November 2013 that the evidence had arrived. He had a sense of accomplishment that the Afghan process had worked, as I was skeptical it would ever arrive. This was a collaborative effort, as the Special Forces team miraculously found the elders, the elders took great risk in making the statements, and the National Directorate of Security managed to get the evidence to the court. The court sentenced the detainee to a sixteen-year prison sentence.

> "When the United States and international partners were successful in a particular area, such as education, health, or the rule of law, we made 'these gains in the form of "islands" of progress that were largely urban or highly local.'"

As some have correctly concluded, when the United States and international partners were successful in a particular area, such as education, health, or the rule of law, we made "these gains in the form of 'islands' of progress that were largely urban or highly local."[11] I found that the JCIP could go beyond a mere "island" of progress and instead could reach out and touch the Taliban in the remotest corners of the country, delivering justice for the Afghan people, effectively undermining and marginalizing Taliban influence. I could not have accomplished what I did at the JCIP without the extensive language and cultural training that I received as a member of the AFPAK Hands Program.

Evaluation of Rule of Law Programs in Afghanistan

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) conducted numerous inquiries of various aspects of the U.S. government's involvement in Afghanistan. Germane to my work at the JCIP, the SIGAR conducted an audit in 2015 of rule of law programs and came to an interesting conclusion regarding the Rule of Law Field Force-Afghanistan (ROLFF-A), of which I had been a part. The SIGAR found that the "DOD does not have a complete picture of what the program accomplished."[12] Surprised to learn that the Department of Defense was unaware of the progress made at the JCIP, I was even more surprised to

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read the SIGAR's testimony before Congress in 2020, where he stated that the U.S. rule of law strategy for 2013 "contained no performance measures at all. If you have no metrics for success, how can you tell if you are succeeding?"[13]

As I was at the JCIP in 2013 during the period that the SIGAR addressed and saw how the judges braved IEDs on their way to and from Bagram and looked into the eyes of terrorists every day that were successfully prosecuted and removed from the battlefield, the metrics for success seemed rather clear. I reported on the results of the proceedings, and every day discussed cases with the prosecutors, mentored and advised them, and translated documents and exhibits so that they could be used in the proceedings. The number of cases prosecuted at the JCIP was no mystery and had been reported in various reports and speak for themselves.[14]

In a letter to the SIGAR, the U.S. Agency for International Development stated that the JCIP primary court conducted thirty-one trials in 2010, 288 in 2011, 974 in 2012, and 780 in the first four months of 2013.[15] The State Department issued a report in 2016 that provided additional details on progress at the JCIP in the years 2014 and 2015.[16] It was reported in 2015 that "the JCIP successfully conducted over 7,000 primary and appellate trials … maintained an overall conviction rate of over 75% and a conviction rate of 98% if there was DNA or a fingerprint match to an IED."[17] In short, the SIGAR's conclusions are contrary to my own experiences at the JCIP, the publicly available data, as well as the former commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson.[18]

Lesson 2: The Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program Worked

Through what you do, you have a chance to be special here … you can be special if you are that connective tissue that connects people … you get Afghans working with Afghans. And you, by virtue of your skills; by virtue of your language skills; by virtue of your contacts … you become that connective tissue wherever you happen to be assigned.

—Maj. Gen. William Rapp[19]

The AFPAK Hands Program was modeled after a U.S. program in 1919 with the Military Intelligence Division that sent officers to foreign countries to be immersed in the culture and language.[20] The experience of Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, one of the only American generals fluent in Chinese, tasked with training Chinese forces, was similar in many ways to our mission in Afghanistan. Like Afghanistan, he encountered corruption and a Chinese leader fearful of a Western-trained Army.[21]

Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai Shek and Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, commanding general of the China Expeditionary Forces, in Maymyo, Burma, 19 May 1942. Due to earlier training and experience in China, Stilwell was conversant in Chinese and familiar with Chinese culture. (Photo courtesy of the Department of Defense)

The SIGAR reported on the training that AFPAK Hands members received, quoting officials at Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan: "An individual who is coming here to be an advisor better understand Afghanistan and her culture."[22] Another said, AFPAK Hands members "who frequently have more substantial language training than other advisors, have the most

advisor training among uniformed personnel."[23] I credit the training I received with keeping me and my fellow soldiers and marines safe.[24] For many other soldiers deployed to Afghanistan, the pre-deployment training fell far short of what was required.[25] One soldier, who was preparing to deploy as an advisor to the Afghan army, said that during his cultural awareness training, the trainer said, "All right, when you get to Iraq …"; after being corrected that he was going to Afghanistan, the trainer said, "Oh, Iraq, Afghanistan. It's the same thing."[26]

In my opinion, language and cultural competency should not reside with a limited few but is instead a necessity for all soldiers.[27] Like quinine on Bataan, language and cultural training was just as important as the weapon I carried. The Army needs to create incentives for soldiers to learn foreign languages, whether Dari or Ukrainian, Polish, or Chinese. The Army recently announced changes to the Selective Retention Bonus Program; however, just three of the career fields listed required language ability to receive a bonus.[28] If the Army does not want to give bonuses for learning a foreign language, it should give credit in the form of promotion points, and officers should receive favorable consideration in their promotion boards. The Army needs to understand and cultivate an appreciation, like it did in 1919, for the importance of language and cultural training. Adopting a program like the Air Force's Language Enabled Airmen Program would be a significant step in cultivating a bench of language capable soldiers.[29]

As this article has shown, I expanded the reach of the Afghan government through my work at the JCIP and built an informal network to reduce Taliban influence. I formed relationships with prosecutors, Afghan military, and police personnel in the southern part of the country, and most importantly, enabled them to build connections with their counterparts in the northern part of the country. None of this would have been possible but for the great language instruction that I received, and the insights and cultural nuance that I learned from the Afghans that taught me so well in the AFPAK Hands Program.

The AFPAK Hands Program has ended, but that does not mean that the lessons it taught should end. Just like the linguist, language training should be on the training schedule of every unit, with soldiers rewarded for progress made and scores achieved in language testing. As Hemingway said, "Once a nation has entered into a policy of foreign wars, there is no withdrawing. If you do not go to them then they will come to you. It was April 1917 that ended our isolation—it was not Pearl Harbor."[30] If Hemingway is correct, then we will find ourselves needing the skills of AFPAK Hands again in the future. ■

Notes

Epigraph. Ernest Hemingway, *Men at War* (New York: Crown, 1942), xxii–xxiii.

1. Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan" (speech, West Point, NY, 1 December 2009), accessed 1 September 2022, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan.

2. Anthony Cordesman, *The Lessons of the Afghan War That No One Will Want To Learn* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 15 June 2022), accessed 31 August 2022, https://www.csis.org/analysis/lessons-afghan-war-no-one-will-want-learn; Craig Whitlock, *The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2021); Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, August 2021), accessed 31 August 2022, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf; SIGAR, *Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. Security Assistance Efforts in Afghanistan* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, June 2019), accessed 31 August 2022, https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/divided-responsibility/index.html.

3. Mark W. Lee, "The Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program," Army.mil, 12 February 2014, accessed 31 August 2022, https://www.army.mil/article/115523/the_afghanistan_pakistan_hands_program; also see SIGAR, *Divided Responsibility*. Members of the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) Hands Program received four months of intensive language training in either Dari, Pashto or Urdu, as well as cultural training with numerous Afghan cultural events scheduled during the training. Because many AFPAK Hands would be on their own in remote areas, we were issued two sets of body armor—one outer ballistic vest and one low profile worn underneath the uniform—and two weapons, and we received intensive weapons training by members of the Army marksmanship team, including shooting at close range, shooting with our nondominant hand in case of disability, and familiarity with and firing of the AK-47 was also included. We also learned the pursuit intervention technique maneuver from a race car driver during driver's training. In short, this was the best training that I had ever received in the Army.

4. Statement by Afghan Border Police commander at the Justice Center in Parwan (JCIP), 25 September 2013, after testifying at the trial of a detainee responsible for the death of one of his officers and learning of the sentence.

5. Army Regulation 11-6, *Army Foreign Language Program* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 25 February 2022),

para. 1-20(b), accessed 31 August 2022, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN34930-AR_11-6-001-WEB-2.pdf.

6. Jeffrey Bordin, *A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility: Red Team Study of Mutual Perceptions of Afghan National Security Forces Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide-Murders* (Arlington, VA: U.S. Department of the Army, 12 May 2011), 45, 50, accessed 6 September 2022, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB370/docs/Document%2011.pdf. The study of "green-on-blue" attacks found U.S. personnel "generally were not satisfied with the quality or comprehensiveness of the cultural training they received." AFPAK Hands were not immune to green-on-blue attacks, however, as two members of the program lost their lives in these attacks. See J. P. Lawrence, "U.S. Ends Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Military Advisor Program," *Stars and Stripes* (website), 1 October 2020, accessed 26 October 2022, https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle_east/us-ends-afghanistan-pakistan-hands-military-adviser-program-1.647033. One member of the program, in my same cohort, was wounded in a car bombing attack that killed three U.S. soldiers and U.S. State Department officer Kate Smedinghoff in April 2013. Of note, a retired operations officer with the Central Intelligence Agency reported that "there was never one green on blue incident that CIA ever suffered in Afghanistan." See *The Recruiter*, C-SPAN, video, 33:29, 20 September 2021, accessed 26 October 2022, https://www.c-span.org/video/?514633-1/the-recruiter#.

7. See David Pendall and Cal Sieg, "Biometric-Enabled Intelligence in Regional Command-East," *Joint Force Quarterly* 72 (January 2014, 1st Quarter): 69–74, accessed 31 August 2022, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/577484/biometric-enabled-intelligence-in-regional-command-east/. The use of biometric evidence increased at the JCIP and became a trusted source of evidence by the Afghan prosecutors and judges.

8. As it turned out, the commander had traveled over three hours by taxi, in civilian clothes, from his village, and was dropped off at the wrong gate and walked over a mile to get to the correct gate. The chief prosecutor of the JCIP, moved by the fact that the commander went to such lengths to come testify, personally drove the commander back to Kabul where he spent time visiting family before heading back to his village.

9. See Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, November 2013), 17, accessed 31 August 2022, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf. Nahr-e-Saraj was the most violent district in Afghanistan from April to September 2013.

10. The National Directorate of Security was equivalent to the FBI and had offices in every province.

11. "The U.S. was largely responsible for creating a failed international effort to coordinate the nation-building effort in the form of a UN agency—United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)—that never succeeded in creating an effective ability to coordinate aid and outside support efforts and that maintained a de facto structure of dependence on the United States … This structure did make real progress in areas like education, the rights of women, health, and the formal structure of the rule of law in supporting human rights, but it often did make these gains in the form of 'islands' of progress that were largely urban or highly local." Cordesman, *The Lessons of the Afghan War That No One Will Want To Learn*, 4.

12. SIGAR explained that Rule of Law Field Force-Afghanistan (ROLFF-A) officials "were able to provide anecdotes of program success and failures, but problems with ROLFF-A's performance management system have made it difficult for DOD to determine the extent to which its program activities met their objectives or identify the outcomes and impacts from its efforts. More importantly, DOD does not have a complete picture of what the program actually accomplished." SIGAR, *Rule of Law in Afghanistan: U.S. Agencies Lack a Strategy and Cannot Fully Determine the Effectiveness of Programs Costing More Than $1 Billion*, SIGAR 15-68 Audit Report (Washington, DC: SIGAR, July 2015), 11, accessed 31 August 2022, http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-15-68-AR.pdf.

13. *U.S. Lessons Learned in Afghanistan, Testimony Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs*, 116th Cong. (15 January 2020) (statement of John Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), 5, accessed 1 September 2022, http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-20-19-TY.pdf.

14. U.S. Department of State (DOS), *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015* (Washington, DC: DOS, June 2015), 227, accessed 7 September 2022, https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2015/index.htm; DOS, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016* (Washington, DC: DOS, June 2016), 232, accessed 6 September 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2016/; Patrick Reinert, "The Military Role in Rule of Law Development," *Joint Force Quarterly 77* (2015, 2nd Quarter): 124, accessed 31 August 2022, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-77/jfq-77_120-127_Reinert-Hussey.pdf. I worked on over forty cases during my time at the JCIP. The majority of cases involved Afghan victims, but some involved U.S. military and coalition killed and wounded.

15. *U.S. Lessons Learned in Afghanistan*, Appendix I. In his testimony before Congress on 15 January 2020, the SIGAR, John F. Sopko, referenced an appendix that he had provided, Appendix I, "Correspondence between SIGAR and U.S. Government Agencies Regarding Most and Least Successful Reconstruction Projects and Programs in Afghanistan." In the appendix there is a copy of the response provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to the SIGAR's request for information about the most and least successful reconstruction projects. On page 4 of USAID's response, they cite to the progress made at the JCIP since its inception in 2010: "Coordinated U.S. Government support enables the JCIP to hear thousands of cases and builds both the adjudicative capacity of the court and its personnel … The JCIP tried 31 primary court cases in 2010; 288 in 2011; 974 in 2012; and 780 in just the first four months of 2013. Even with its growing caseload, Afghan defense attorneys who have worked at the JCIP consistently describe the court as providing among the fairest trials in Afghanistan."

16. DOS, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, 232. The report found that 533 primary court trials were held in 2014 and 1,153 appellate trials. The numbers went down in 2015, with 215 primary court trials and 451 appellate trials.

17. Additionally, the article stated: "The JCIP provided a sustainable foundation for Afghanistan to effectively implement Afghan law to criminalize the insurgency and build the people's confidence in the national government and legal system. The effective prosecution at [the] JCIP creates a beacon of hope for the rest of the criminal justice system in the eyes of the Afghan people." Reinert, "The Military Role in Rule of Law Development," 124. Reinert was the ROLFF-A commander during my deployment in 2013.

18. Gen. John Nicholson said about the JCIP: "It will be an essential part of a future counter-terrorism platform in Afghanistan." Paul Tait, "Giant Prison Aims to Avoid Pitfalls of Past," Reuters, 15 April 2016, accessed 31 August 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/fghanistan-security-prison/giant-prison-for-afghan-militants-aims-to-avoid-pitfalls-of-past-idINKCN0XC1YS.

19. William Rapp, U.S. Army Forces Afghanistan–Support deputy commander, quoted in Mark Porter, "Afghan Hands Helping to Reshape Afghanistan," Defense Visual Information Distribution Service, 13 July 2012, accessed 1 September 2022, https://www.dvidshub.net/news/91588/afghan-hands-helping-reshape-afghanistan.

20. "The MID planned to develop a well-chosen, well-trained corps of attachés having, it hopefully prescribed, 'detailed knowledge of the language, military establishments, political conditions and customs of foreign nations.'" Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911-1945* (New York: Grove Press, 1971), 92.

21. Ibid., 22. "To Chiang every unit trained by the Americans was one that loosened his control. He could not reject the program since he was utterly dependent on American aid but he could stall and thwart and divert supplies"; SIGAR, *Collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: An Assessment of the Factors that Led to Its Demise*, SIGAR 22-22-IP Evaluation Report (Washington, DC: SIGAR, May 2022), 2, accessed 1 September 2022, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-22-22-IP.pdf. This report stated that "President Ashraf Ghani frequently changed ANDSF leaders and appointed loyalists, while marginalizing well-trained ANDSF officers aligned with the U.S. … Young, well-trained, educated, and professional ANDSF officers who grew up under U.S. tutelage were marginalized and their ties to the U.S. became a liability."

22. SIGAR, *Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces: DOD Lacks Performance Data to Assess, Monitor and Evaluate Advisors Assigned to Ministries of Defense and Interior*, SIGAR 19-03 Audit Report (Washington, DC: SIGAR, October 2018), 11, accessed 1 September 2022, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1139361.pdf.

23. Ibid.

24. On more than one occasion, while serving at a remote outpost in Helmand Province, my ability to engage with the local police chief, prosecutor, and criminal investigator and to create working relationships with them was vital to our own security. On one occasion, the police chief came to warn us to shut down our front gate, as he heard that a suicide bomber was coming to the district center.

25. Whitlock, *The Afghanistan Papers*, 70.

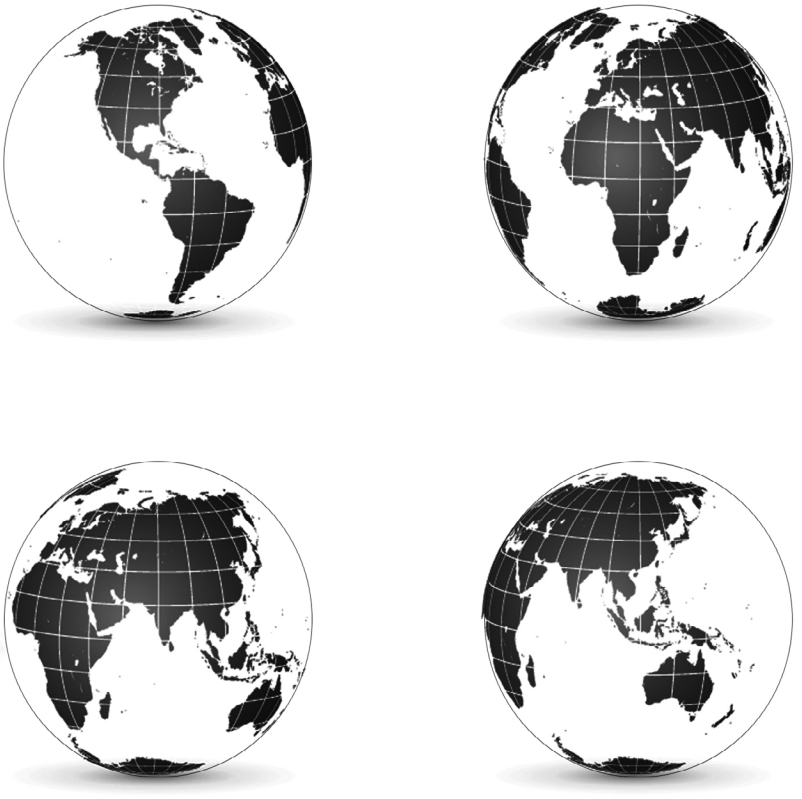
26. The soldier concluded: "Our mission was all about developing personal relationships … so we have legitimacy and credibility with the people we were trying to work with. I'll tell you that was tough. It was a tough job. Were we prepared to go and do that? I'd have to say that at the time, absolutely not." Ibid.

27. The Defense Language Institute, available at http://www.dliflc.com, has a wide range of training aids available on its website that soldiers could use.

28. MILPER Message Number: 22-237, "Selective Retention Bonus (SRB) Program," 23 June 2022, accessed 1 September 2022, https://armyreup.s3.amazonaws.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/23222247/SRB_22_237_20220623.pdf.

29. More information, along with a video explaining the Language Enabled Airmen Program is available at http://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/Language-studies. This program might also assist with recruiting efforts for the Army.

30. Hemingway, *Men at War*, xxiv.



Cracks in the Liberal Edifice

Extract from *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*

John J. Mearsheimer

(Graphic by Michael Lopez, Army University Press)

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Two of political liberalism's most salient features are also its two significant flaws: the prominence it accords individualism, and the weight it places on inalienable rights. Contemporary liberalism, as we saw, is largely synonymous with progressive liberalism, although modus vivendi liberalism still affects the contours of political life. My criticisms of political liberalism in this chapter apply equally to both variants, as there is little daylight between them regarding the importance they ascribe to individualism and rights. In this chapter I am concerned with assessing liberalism as a political ideology. A liberal democracy's foreign policy, and international relations more generally, are reserved for later chapters.

The first problem with liberalism is that it wrongly assumes that humans are fundamentally solitary individuals, when in fact they are social beings at their core. This commitment to far-reaching individualism leads political liberals to downplay nationalism, which is an especially powerful political ideology with profound influence inside every country in the world. Liberalism's fate is therefore bound up with nationalism Although these two isms differ in important ways, they can coexist inside a country's borders. But when they are at odds, nationalism wins almost every time. In short, nationalism places serious limits on liberalism's influence, including its emphasis on natural rights.

Liberalism's second problem is that its story about individual rights is not persuasive. The claim that rights are inalienable and that this is "self evident," that almost everyone should be able to recognize both the universality and importance of rights, is not compelling. The influence of rights in people's daily lives is nowhere near as profound as liberals seem to think, which is not to say rights are of no concern at all. But their impact is limited, even in places like the United States, where liberalism is deeply wired into the culture.

These shortcomings are by no means fatal. Nor do they cripple this ism in any meaningful way, as it still has a number of important virtues. What these flaws show, however, is that liberalism's ability to shape daily life inside any country will encounter limits. And as I will argue in the next chapter, those limits are even more pronounced in the international system. Here I will stay within the nation-state, concluding with a discussion of the possibility that liberal countries might be intrinsically unworkable because the factions within them have strong incentives to capture the state permanently and prevent rival factions from taking the reins of power. While this argument should not be taken lightly, mature liberal democracies have certain features that go a long way toward ameliorating this problem, but they are not foolproof.

The Nationalism Problem

Liberalism's most important shortcoming is its radical individualism. In focusing almost exclusively on individuals and their rights, it pays little attention to the fact that human beings are born into and operate in large collectivities, which help shape their essence and command their loyalties. Most people are at least partially tribal from the start to the finish of their lives, a point that is largely absent from the liberal story.[1]

The nation is the highest-level social group of real significance for the vast majority of people around the world. Nations are large collections of people who have much in common and who also have a powerful allegiance to the group. Individuals live as members of a nation, which fundamentally shapes their identities and behavior. Nations, which privilege self determination and worry about their survival, want their own state.[2] At the same time, states themselves have powerful reasons for wanting their people to be organized into a nation, which leads them to play a critical role in fusing the nation and the state together. Thus it is no surprise that the world is populated with nation-states, the embodiment of nationalism.

If liberalism and nationalism are both powerful forces in our world, what is the relationship between them? Three points are in order. First, nationalism is at play in every country, which is reflected in the fact that we live in a world of nation-states. Liberalism, however, is not a powerful force everywhere. True liberal democracies have never made up a majority of states in the international system. Second, given nationalism's pervasiveness, liberalism must always coexist with nationalism. It is impossible to have a liberal state that is not a nation-state and thus nationalist to its core. Liberalism, in other

words, operates within the confines of nation-states. Finally, liberalism invariably loses when it clashes with nationalism.

What Is Nationalism?

Nationalism is a theory that explains how people around the world are organized socially and politically. It holds that the human population is divided into many different nations composed of people with a strong sense of group loyalty. With the possible exception of the family, allegiance to the nation usually overrides all other forms of an individual's identity. Furthermore, members of a nation are deeply committed to maximizing their nation's autonomy, which means they prefer to have their own state. As Ernest Gellner famously put it, nationalism "holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."[3] This is not to say that every national group can have its own state, but that is the ultimate goal, given their yearning for self-determination. States, meanwhile, have powerful incentives to govern people who are organized into nations, which leads political leaders to work hard to foster nationalism. Nationalism is both a bottom-up and a top-down phenomenon.

In popular discourse, nationalism is sometimes said to reflect "ancient hatreds," which implies it has plagued the planet for most of recorded history. This perception is false: nationalism is a recent phenomenon. It first emerged in Europe, and by extension North America, in the second half of the eighteenth century, although it was incubating in Europe before then.[4] Liberalism actually came onto the European scene roughly a century before nationalism. Moreover, although nationalism can lead to hatred among peoples, that is only one facet of a complicated phenomenon that has positive as well as negative attributes.

The best starting point for understanding nationalism is to describe the basic characteristics of a nation and show how it differs from prior social groups. I will then discuss the essential functions that nations perform for their members, why nations want their own state, and why states want to govern their own nation. These complementary incentives work to fuse the nation and state together, which accounts in good part for why nationalism is such a powerful force. I will also describe how the modern state differs from the political forms that preceded it.

What Is a Nation?

Nations have six fundamental features that, taken together, distinguish them from the other kinds of large groups that inhabited the planet before nations came on the scene.[5]

A Sense of Oneness

A nation is a large community of people with a powerful sense of oneness, even though each member knows only a small number of fellow nationals. Benedict Anderson's famous description of a nation as an "imagined community" nicely captures this feature.[6] A nation is imagined in the sense that no person knows more than a tiny fraction of the other members, and yet almost all of them identify as part of a community. They have a strong sense of loyalty to the community's other members, which means they tend to feel mutually responsible for each other, especially in dealing with the outside world. That the bonds among fellow nationals are tight tends to make the boundaries between different nations clear and firm.[7]

In addition to this sense of solidarity, a nation's members also tend to treat each other as equals.[8] They view themselves as part of a common enterprise, and although the group contains leaders and followers, the people at the top and those at the bottom are ultimately all members of the same community. Anderson captures this point when he notes

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that even though there will always be different kinds of "inequality and exploitation in any society, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."[9]

Before the coming of nations, the bonds among members of the large social groups that populated Europe were not tight. Those earlier groups tended to be quite fluid, which meant that identities were relatively malleable. Consider the historian Patrick Geary's discussion of social life in Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire: "The fourth and fifth centuries saw fundamental changes in the European social and political fabric. In the process, great confederations like those of the Goths disappeared, to reemerge transformed into kingdoms in Italy and Gaul. Others like the Hunnic Empire or the Vandal kingdom seemed to spring from nowhere, only to vanish utterly in a few generations. Still other, previously obscure peoples, such as the Angles and the Franks, emerged to create enduring polities."[10] Such fluidity is unthinkable in the age of nationalism, in which nations tend to be tightly integrated, permanent entities separated by clear boundaries.[11] It is hard to imagine any contemporary nation disappearing or even undergoing the sort of rapid transformation in its identity that Geary describes.

Furthermore, there was no sense of equality within those earlier social groups. While there is not strict equality in a nation, there was a marked reduction in the gap between elites and their people. Pre-national Europe was largely agricultural and comprised two main classes: the aristocracy and the peasantry. The gulf separating them was huge, under the Roman Empire, during the Middle Ages, and in the era of dynastic states that preceded the appearance of nation-states.[12]

But by the late eighteenth century, the chasm had narrowed significantly, in good part because elites and their publics came to communicate in the same language and see themselves as part of a shared enterprise with a common destiny. The historian of France David Bell captures this transformation when he writes that "neither Virgil nor Richelieu or Mazarin envisioned taking entire populations—from elegant courtiers to impoverished sharecroppers, from well-polished intellectuals to urban beggars—and forging them all, in their millions into a single nation, transforming everything from language to manners to the most intimate ideas."[13] This melding of people in a society (which has its limits) inclines them to feel like equals.

"While social class is often a powerful form of identity, it is not in the same league as nationalism, which tends to fuse classes together by providing them with a higher loyalty."

None of this is to deny that individuals have other identities and loyalties besides national allegiance. Everyone has multiple identities: they almost always belong to a variety of organizations and groups, and have multiple interests, friendships, and commitments. Nevertheless, aside from family ties, a person's highest loyalty is almost always to his nation, and that commitment usually overrides others when they conflict. Marxists, for example, emphasize that individuals identify most strongly with their social class, be it capitalists, the bourgeoisie, or the working class, and that this identification surpasses national identity. This thinking, clearly reflected in the *Communist Manifesto*, explains why some Marxists believed the working classes of Europe would not take up arms against each other when their governments went to war in 1914.[14] They discovered that while social class is often a powerful form of identity, it is not in the same league as nationalism, which tends to fuse classes together by providing them with a higher loyalty. As the historian Michael Howard puts it, "The appeals for class unity across international frontiers were scattered to the winds once the bugles began to blow in 1914," and the workers of the world fought with their fellow nationals against rival nation-states.[15] In short, national identity is not the only identity an individual possesses, but it is generally the most powerful.

Nor is it to deny that individuals in a nation sometimes act in selfish ways and take advantage of other

members. We all face situations where there is much to be gained by acting like the proverbial utility maximizer. And selfish behavior sometimes leads to bitter, even deadly, disputes between fellow nationals. Nevertheless, this kind of egoistic behavior takes place within a nation, where individuals have obligations to the wider community and where there are powerful reasons to act in ways that benefit the collective. When those two logics conflict, most people privilege loyalty to their nation over loyalty to themselves.

“Cultures are not fixed because individual identities are not hardwired into people at birth. Instead, they are socially constructed and are more fluid than primordialists recognize.”

A Distinct Culture

What separates nations from each other is culture. Each nation has a distinct set of beliefs and practices that are shared by its members and that distinguish it from other nations. The practices involve things like language, rituals, codes, music, and symbols, while beliefs involve matters like religion, basic political and social values, and a particular understanding of history. The members of a nation tend to act and think in similar ways in their daily lives, and this helps foster strong bonds among them.

But it would be impracticable for all of the individuals who make up a nation-state to share the same practices and beliefs. There is instead a substantial commonality, which varies from case to case. It makes sense to distinguish between thick and thin cultures, which reflect the amount of cultural diversity a nation has. Thick cultures have significant cultural homogeneity, while thin cultures are more diverse) Nation-states that are largely composed of a single nation, such as Japan and Poland, have thick cultures. Those that have a core nation and minority nations, such as Canada, India, and Spain, have thin cultures.[16] In other words, there is a thin national identity at the level of the state, but the core and minority nations also have their own identities.[17] Most societies’ elites would like to mold a thick national identity, but that is usually not practical in societies containing two or more nations. Nevertheless, research shows that members of thick and thin cultures have roughly the same “degree of strong identity and pride in membership in the state.”[18]

It is impossible to generalize about which cultural features allow us to distinguish one nation from another. Language might seem like a good marker, but different nations often speak the same language. Just think of all the countries in Central and South America that speak Spanish. The same is true of religion. Catholicism, after all, is the dominant religion in Austria, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, just to name a few examples, and Islam dominates throughout the Arab world. Beliefs and practices that cut across cultures show that different cultures’ defining features may overlap substantially. Germany and Austria are a good example. Nevertheless, they have differences as well, seemingly minor to outsiders but which the members of each nation invariably rivet on. Sigmund Freud famously called this phenomenon the “narcissism of minor differences.”[19]

One might also think that culture is synonymous with ethnicity, which is sometimes defined as a set of ancient, fixed characteristics of a group that have been carried forward to the present. According to this primordialist perspective, a nation’s roots are its bloodlines: its common descent from relatives who lived long ago. But large social groups, and nations in particular, have evolved in ways that contradict that definition of ethnicity, which is why I do not employ the term in this book.

Cultures are not fixed because individual identities are not hardwired into people at birth. Instead, they are socially constructed and are more fluid than primordialists recognize. Elites often play a key role in shaping a nation, as reflected in this comment by a prominent Italian leader in 1861, when Italy was being unified: “We have made Italy. Now we have to make Italians.”[20] If I did use the word *ethnicity*, I would use it in Max Weber’s sense, to mean “a subjective belief in ... common descent,” or the belief that a particular people share a common

cultural tradition.[21] Those definitions are consistent with my story.

In essence, the real basis of nationhood is psychological, not biological, which is why Walker Connor says "the essence of a nation is intangible."[22] A nation exists when a large number of people think of themselves as members of the same unique social group with a distinct culture. In other words, a nation is a large group that considers itself a nation[23] and that has tangible beliefs and practices that matter greatly for its common identity. Once nations are formed, they are exceptionally resistant to fundamental change, partly because individuals are heavily socialized into a particular culture from birth, and typically accustomed to and committed to its beliefs and practices.

There is another important reason for the durability of national loyalties: the movement from oral to written traditions. Until the nineteenth century, most people learned about their social group's history by word of mouth. Few people could read, and for them there were few popular history books. It was reasonably easy to change stories about the past to accommodate newcomers as well as shifting circumstances. But once a group's history is written in books, it is difficult to change the story to suit new conditions. As the political scientist James Scott notes, "The key disadvantage of monuments and written texts is precisely their relative permanence."[24] In a literate world, people's identities inside large social groups become more fixed, and boundaries become less fluid. The movement from an oral to a literate culture not only created tighter bonds within Europe's burgeoning nations but also made those communities more robust and resistant to change.

A Sense of Superiority

Regardless of what other nations do, people take pride in their own nation because it is a home to them. But they also think about how their nation compares with other nations, especially those they interact with frequently. Chauvinism usually follows.[25] Most people think their nation is superior to others. It has special qualities that merit its being privileged over other nations. The German nationalist Johann Fichte captures this perspective with his comment that "the German alone … can be patriotic; he alone can for the sake of his nation encompass the whole of mankind; contrasted with him from now on, the patriotism of every other nation must be egoistic, narrow and hostile to the rest of mankind."[26] Lord Palmerston, Britain's liberal foreign secretary in 1848, was no less chauvinistic: "Our duty—our vocation—is not to enslave, but to set free: and I may say, without any vainglorious boast, or without great offence to anyone, that we stand at the head of moral, social and political civilization. Our task is to lead the way and direct the march of other nations."[27]

Unsurprisingly, this sense of specialness leads some nations to think they have been singled out by God. This belief has a rich tradition in the United States, going back to the Puritans, who believed, as many Americans have over time, that there is a special covenant between God and the United States, and that God has given it special attributes that make its people smarter and nobler than other peoples. Of course, one does not have to believe in God to believe in American exceptionalism. Woodrow Wilson, for example, made no reference to God when he said: "The manifest destiny of America is not to rule the world by physical force … The destiny of America and the leadership of America is that she shall do the thinking of the world."[28] Nor did Secretary of State Madeleine Albright appeal to God when she famously said in 1998: "If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation.

We stand tall. We see further into the future."[29] Americans, as Reinhold Niebuhr noted, generally believe they are "tutors of mankind in its pilgrimage to perfection."[30] All of this is to say Americans are nationalists to the core, even though this is not how most of them think of themselves.

Nations sometimes go beyond feeling superior to other nations and end up loathing their competitors. I call this hypernationalism: the belief that other nations are not just inferior but dangerous, and must be dealt with harshly or even brutally. In such cases, contempt and hatred of "the other" suffuses the nation and creates powerful incentives to eliminate that threat with violence.[31] Yet nations do not always loathe each other; sometimes they get along quite well.

A Deep History

History matters greatly for all nations, although they tend to emphasize creating myths rather than getting the facts right. Nations invent heroic stories about themselves to denigrate the achievements of other nations and

buttress their claim that they are special. "Chauvinist mythmaking," as Stephen Van Evera notes, "is a hallmark of nationalism, practiced by nearly all nationalist movements to some degree."[32] Those myths, he argues, come in different varieties. Some are meant to glorify past behavior, while others are invented to whitewash instances where the nation acted foolishly or shamefully. Other myths malign rival nations by making them look inferior or blaming them for the home nation's past or present problems. But even when some myth proves impossible to sell, the usual response is to defend the nation anyway, because "it is my nation, right or wrong."

Nations also employ myths to argue that they have ancient roots, which explains in part why ethnicity is occasionally defined in terms of timeless features. Most people want to believe their nation has a long and rich tradition, even though few do. History is altered or rewritten to remedy the problem. This phenomenon was commonplace in nineteenth-century Europe, when nationalism was sweeping the region and history was becoming a scholarly enterprise. Patrick Geary describes the result: "Modern history was born in the nineteenth century, conceived and developed as an instrument of European nationalism. As a tool of nationalist ideology, the history of Europe's nations was a great success, but it has turned our understanding of the past into a toxic waste dump."[33] Mythmaking and nationalism go hand in hand, which is why Ernest Renan said, "Historical error is an essential factor in the creation of a nation."[34]

Sacred Territory

Nations invariably identify with specific geographical spaces, which they treat as sacred territory.[35] People form a deep emotional attachment with land they perceive as their rightful homeland. The principal aim is to establish sovereignty over that territory, which is inextricably bound up with the nation's identity. And if any part of that imagined homeland is lost, the nation's members are almost always committed to recovering it. A good example is China's attitude toward Taiwan. It is widely and deeply believed among mainland Chinese that Taiwan is a part of China and must eventually be reintegrated, even though the Taiwanese have developed their own identity in recent decades and want Taiwan to be treated as a sovereign nation-state. Successive governments in Beijing have emphasized that they would go to war if Taiwan declared itself an independent country, even though a war would likely do significant damage to China's economy.[36] All nations, not just China, are obsessed with exercising authority over the territory they believe is an integral part of their hallowed homeland.

The large social groups that came before nations also cared about controlling territory, but they rarely viewed it as sacred space. Territory mattered largely for economic and military reasons. Prime real estate, which included much of the land in Europe, contained valuable resources, including manpower, that were essential for building a powerful economy and a formidable military force. Some territory was also strategically important: it provided defensible borders or access to an important waterway or ocean. This instrumental view meant that leaders could treat their territory as divisible under the right circumstances. But a nation's territory holds enormous intrinsic value as part of its cultural heritage, which means it is indivisible.[37]

Sovereignty

Finally, nations aim to maximize their control over their own political fate, which is another way of saying they are deeply concerned about sovereignty, or how political authority is arranged inside a state as well as among states. In domestic terms, sovereignty denotes where supreme political authority lies within a state.[38] The sovereign holds the ultimate authority to formulate and execute domestic as well as foreign policy.[39]

There can be only one sovereign within a state, as sovereignty is indivisible. In the dynastic states that populated Europe between roughly 1500 and 1800, sovereignty rested exclusively with the king or queen and was said to be conferred on the crown by God. Thus it was commonplace during that period to talk about the "divine right of kings." But this perspective on sovereignty is incompatible with nationalism. In a nation-state, supreme authority resides in the people or the nation. The people are not subjects who owe allegiance to a monarch but citizens with the rights and responsibilities that come with being members of a nation. As such, they are all equals.

This notion of popular sovereignty is clearly reflected in the French constitution of 1791, which states: "Sovereignty is one, indivisible, inalienable, and imprescriptible; it belongs to the Nation; no group can attribute sovereignty to itself nor can an individual arrogate it to himself."[40] That challenge to monarchial authority

would have confounded Louis XV, who said, "The rights and interests of the nation, which some dare to regard as a separate body from the monarch, are necessarily united with my rights and interests, and they repose only in my hands."[41] (This is simply a more prolix version of his predecessor's famous outburst, "Tetat, c'est moi!") Before the coming of nationalism, writes the international relations scholar Robert Jackson, "sovereign rulers were preoccupied with territory but were largely indifferent to the peoples that occupied it, provided they accepted their authority."[42] Kings and queens often felt they had more in common with their fellow sovereigns than the populations under their control.

The notion of popular sovereignty must be qualified, though, because it is virtually impossible for a nation to collectively make policy decisions, in an emergency especially, but also in normal times. Speed and efficiency demand that in an existential crisis, supreme authority rests with a single person or at most a few people.[43] In more ordinary circumstances, decisions can be made by either autocrats or democratically elected leaders. The key feature in all of these circumstances, however, is that the decider or deciders have a close bond with their people and believe they are acting on the people's behalf. As the political theorist Bernard Yack writes, "Even authoritarian and totalitarian nationalists invoke popular sovereignty to justify their demands for extreme forms of national assertion."[44] The dynastic sovereigns did not consider themselves servants of the populations they controlled, but instead acted to serve either their own interests or what they perceived to be the state's interests.

Internationally, sovereignty means that the state wants the ability to make its own decisions on both domestic and foreign policy, free from outside interference. That viewpoint applies to both dynastic states and nation-states. Of course, various structural forces in the international system will limit a sovereign state's menu of options, but sovereignty demands that other states not purposely intrude in its politics. States are deeply committed to self-determination, and nations, which are inextricably bound up with the state, care greatly about self-determination, both in dealing with other nation-states and inside their own states.

This emphasis on self-determination, coupled with the sense of oneness integral to nationalism, points us to the democratic impulse embedded in this ism.[45] Robespierre captured the link between democracy and nationalism when he wrote: "It is only under a democracy that the state is the fatherland of all the individuals who compose it and can count as many active defenders of its cause as it has citizens."[46] This is not to say nationalism is the principal cause of democracy, because it is not, but it is an important contributing factor. It is no accident that over the past two centuries, democracy has spread across large portions of the globe at the same time that nationalism was gaining sway around the world. Note, however, that I am talking about nationalism's relationship with democracy, not with liberalism. Liberalism and nationalism sometimes clash in fundamental ways.

"Internationally, sovereignty means that the state wants the ability to make its own decisions on both domestic and foreign policy, free from outside interference. That viewpoint applies to both dynastic states and nation-states."

In sum, nations have six core features that, taken together, distinguish them from the kinds of large social groups that dominated the landscape before nations came on the scene. These features are a powerful sense of oneness, a distinct culture, a marked sense of specialness, a historical narrative that emphasizes timelessness, a deep attachment to territory, and a strong commitment to sovereignty or self-determination.

The Essential Functions of a Nation

Nations serve their members in two critically important ways: they facilitate survival and fulfill

important psychological needs. In this they are no different from their predecessors, although the actual mechanics vary somewhat between them.

Nations are primarily survival vehicles. Their underlying culture allows members to cooperate easily and effectively, which in turn maximizes their chances of securing life's basic necessities. Take language, for example. The fact that a nation's people mostly speak the same language makes it easy for them to communicate and work together to achieve important goals.[47] The same is true of a nation's customs and rituals, and its behavioral norms. Cooperation also facilitates building reliable security forces that can protect individual members if they are threatened by another member or an outsider. A nation's culture and sense of oneness help it create clear boundaries with other nations, which also help identify and protect against outsiders. Finally, nations care greatly about self-determination, in part because it allows them to make the decisions they think are necessary to protect them from rival nations.

But nations are more than survival vehicles. For most people, they also fulfill important emotional needs. We are all social animals and have little choice but to belong to groups, but there are many social groups.[48] What makes a nation so special is that it provides an existential narrative. It gives its members a strong sense that they are part of an exceptional and exclusive community whose history is filled with important traditions as well as remarkable individuals and events. Their culture, in other words, is special. Members want to live together to carry on those traditions, "validate the heritage that has been jointly received,"[49] and share a common destiny.

Furthermore, nations promise their members that they will be there for future generations the way they were there in the past. In this sense, nationalism is much like religion, which also does an excellent job of weaving the past, present, and future into a seamless web that gives members a sense they are part of a long and rich tradition.[50] This veneration of the nation acts as a formidable bonding force that enhances its cohesiveness and boosts its prospects for survival.

Why Nations Want States

So far I have paid little attention to the political dimension of nationhood, but as I explained in chapter 2, all large social groups, including nations, need political institutions from the beginning to survive. For a nation, the best possible situation is to have its own state.

> Nations serve their members in two critically important ways: they facilitate survival and fulfill important psychological needs.

What, then, is a state? Some scholars use the term to describe almost all of the higher political institutions that have existed over time. For example, Charles Tilly writes in his seminal book *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*, "States have been the world's largest and most powerful organizations for more than five thousand years."[51] Such a broad definition, however, fails to capture important differences among the widely varying political forms that have existed in Europe and other regions throughout history. Instead, I restrict the term *state* to the particular political entity that began to take shape in Europe during the early 1500s and eventually spread across the globe. It differs significantly from its many predecessors, which include (to name just a few) city-states, empires, tribes, principalities, duchies, theocracies, and feudal monarchies. The state in my story takes two forms: the dynastic state, which predominated from about 1500 to 1800, and the nation-state, which replaced it.

A state is a political institution that controls a large territory with well defined borders and has the ability to employ force to break or discipline the individuals and groups living within those borders.[52] Within these borders, in other words, the state has "exclusive supreme command, enabling it within this territory, to overrule the lower administrative echelons as well as disregard

private property."[53] Decision making is centralized in a state: power is concentrated at the center. In practical terms, this means a state has a permanent bureaucracy, a system of rules and laws, and the capacity to levy taxes on the people living within its borders. Most importantly, the central administration controls the lawful tools of violence. The state, of course, looks outward as well as inward, and thus engages in diplomacy, economic intercourse, security competition, and war with other states.

One might think that medieval kings had significant political power. But the most powerful political actors were usually the resident nobles and the bishops who ran the local churches. Central authorities were generally no match for these local forces, which had much more influence on an individual's daily life than did monarchs. As the historians Joseph Strayer and Dana Munro note, "Kings were neither especially dignified nor especially important. In most regions of Europe they did not receive the primary allegiance of their peoples and could not determine the political destinies of their countries. … The personal bond between a man and his lord was far stronger than the vague idea of allegiance to the state."[56]

"A state has a permanent bureaucracy, a system of rules and laws, and the capacity to levy taxes on the people living within its borders. Most importantly, the central administration controls the lawful tools of violence."

The concept of sovereignty was conceived just as dynastic states were emerging in Europe, which is why they are sometimes referred to as it sovereign states. Sovereignty was vested in the crown in those dynastic states, but with the coming of the nation-state, it became lodged in the people. Although sovereignty is all about who has supreme political authority, not actual political power, in the real world authority and power are closely linked. Who possessed ultimate authority mattered greatly in the emerging states, because those people could become remarkably powerful, which meant they would have a huge influence on the people who fell under their purview.

Before the dynastic state came on the scene, both political authority and political power in Europe were much more decentralized. It was often difficult to tell where sovereignty resided. During the Middle Ages (roughly 500 to 1500 AD), writes the political sociologist William Sewell, "The social system was both corporate and hierarchical. ... People belonged to a whole range of constituted solidarity units, sharing communities of recognition in a simultaneously negotiated fashion with overlapping collections of other persons."[54] The Catholic Church had some authority, but so did kings, the local nobility, towns, cities, and even guilds. Political authority was, as Robert Jackson puts it, "diverse, dislocated, and disjointed."[55] The difficulty of determining who had supreme authority was abetted by the fact that no political entity in Europe was significantly more powerful than its competitors.

The situation began to change in the early 1500s with the emergence of the dynastic state, which was committed to asserting political control over all people within its borders. This meant weakening the authority of the Catholic Church in Rome as well as that of local authorities. Nevertheless, it took time for the dynastic state to centralize control within its borders, because the technology of the day did not permit easy projection of power by the crown. Road systems across Europe were primitive, communication could travel no faster than a horse or a ship, and the capacity to make multiple copies of documents was just beginning to develop.[57] Not until some three hundred years after the first states began appearing in Europe did it make sense to talk about concentrated power at their centers.

By the late 1700s, however, the state was much better positioned to confront the local authorities inside its borders. Not surprisingly, the newly emerging nations paid this development much attention. Each wanted its own nation-state.

Nations covet a state for two reasons, the first of which is self-determination. Like any large social group, nations prefer to run their own affairs and determine their own fates as much as possible. The best way to achieve those ends is for a nation to control the political

institutions that shape its daily life. In the modern world, that translates into having one's own state. Of course, not every nation can fulfill this ambition, and nations that cannot are not necessarily doomed to disappear. As the political philosopher Yael Tamir notes, "The right to self-determination can be realized in a variety of different ways: cultural autonomies, regional autonomies, federations, and confederations." But she acknowledges that "unquestionably a nation-state can ensure the widest possible degree of national autonomy and the maximum range of possibilities for the enjoyment of national life."[58] Nations push from the bottom up to establish states they can dominate and run.

Nations also want their own states because this is the best way to maximize their survival prospects. Nations face a variety of threats to their existence, starting with the intrusive nature of the modern state. The dynastic state did not interfere much in the daily lives of the people within its borders. It mainly collected taxes and looked for relatively small numbers of young men who might serve in the army. Otherwise, people were pretty much left alone under the purview of local cultural and political institutions. But as the state became more deeply involved in its citizens' lives, that changed drastically. States had a powerful incentive to mold their people into a single culture with a common language and a shared history.[59]

This impulse to homogenize the culture, which is synonymous with nation-building, presents a grave danger for any minority group in a multinational state, simply because the majority is likely to ensure that the emerging common culture is defined by its own language and traditions. Minority cultures are likely to be pushed aside and maybe even disappear. As Walker Connor points out, states that engage in nation-building are invariably in the business of nation-breaking as well.[60] The best way for a nation to avoid that fate is to have its own state. This logic explains why so many multinational states have broken apart over the past two centuries.[61]

Another reason members of minority nations worry about their survival is that they might be killed in a civil war. A good example is the Hutu genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. A murderous campaign against a minority group might happen for a number of reasons. It might be driven by resentment over the minority's disproportionate influence in the economy, or the minority might be seen as a fifth column, like the Armenians in Turkey during World War I.[62] It is always safer to have your own state than to be on the short end of the power balance in a fractious multinational state.

Finally, national survival was a matter of great concern for subject peoples during the age of imperialism, and fear of conquest played an important role in spreading the modem state system beyond Europe.[63] Between the early sixteenth century and the early twentieth, the European great powers created empires covering large portions of the globe. The indigenous people who became subjects of those far-flung empires often saw their cultures badly damaged by the imperial powers, which frequently restricted the natives' education, destroyed their economies, conscripted their young men, confiscated their farmland, and even forced native peoples into virtual (or actual) slavery. Local populations, spurred on by their elites, eventually began to see themselves as nations and to think about self-determination. In most cases, the only way to achieve that end was to break away from the empire and establish an independent nation-state.

These persuasive reasons for a nation to want its own state have contributed greatly to the development of the nation-state. The converse is true as well: dynastic states had compelling reasons to tum themselves into nation-states, as states benefit greatly when their people are organized into nations.

Why States Want Nations

Nationalism is essential for economic as well as military success, both of which matter greatly for a state's survival. Governing elites also foster nationalism through their efforts to make their populations governable—never an easy task.

In the industrial age, states that want to compete economically have no choice but to create a common culture, as Ernest Gellner argues in his classic work *Nations and Nationalism*. Industry requires laborers who are literate and can communicate with each other. This means states need universal education as well as a common language. Industrial societies, in other words, demand a high degree of cultural homogeneity; they require a nation. The state plays the leading role in fostering that shared culture, especially through education, where it plays a central role in determining what is taught in the classroom. "The monopoly of legitimate education," Gellner

writes, "is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence."[64]

There are also compelling national security reasons for states to promote nationalism.[65] As Barry Posen notes, "Any argument that one can make for the economic function of literacy and a shared culture is at least as plausible for a military function, particularly in mass warfare."[66] There is an abundance of evidence showing that educated soldiers perform far better in combat than illiterate ones. And compared with those with different languages and cultures, soldiers who speak the same language and share many of the same practices and beliefs are more easily molded into an effective fighting force.[67]

There is another way in which nationalism is a huge force multiplier. Because nationalism creates tight bonds between a people and their state, leaders in wartime—especially in times of extreme emergency—can usually get their citizens to steadfastly support the war effort and put on a uniform and fight.[68] Nation-states can raise large militaries and sustain them for long periods of time. None of the great powers in World War I, for example, ran out of soldiers. During each year of that unbelievably bloody conflict, the governments routinely replaced their many thousands of lost soldiers with a new crop of eligible males. (In the end, the war killed about nine million in uniform and seven million civilians.) This does not mean armies never collapse after years of deadly fighting, as the Russian army did in the fall of 1917 and the German army did a year later. The French army mutinied in the spring of 1917. Nor is it to deny that public support for a nation-state's war may quickly evaporate.

Nationalism, however, does more than increase the size of a country's military forces. It also makes soldiers, sailors, and airmen more reliable and committed to fighting for their country. In the age of the dynastic state, desertion was a major problem for military commanders both before and during battles. Rulers built their armies with mercenaries and "the criminal, the vagabond, and the destitute" from their own societies, and these soldiers felt little loyalty to the country for which they were fighting.[69] By far a greater motivation was to avoid getting killed. Desertion is much less of a problem when soldiers are drawn from a nationalistic population: they are primed to defend their country by putting themselves in harm's way. Napoleon captured this shift when he proclaimed, "All men who value life more than the glory of the nation and the esteem of their comrades should not be members of the French army."[70]

"Nationalism can have a profound effect on the outcome of a war when one side uses it to build a powerful military while its opponents do not."

Nationalism can have a profound effect on the outcome of a war when one side uses it to build a powerful military while its opponents do not. After French nationalism in the wake of the 1789 Revolution helped Napoleon create the mightiest army in Europe, Carl von Clausewitz, who fought against it as an officer in the Prussian military, described its prowess: "This juggernaut of war, based on the strength of the entire people, began its pulverizing course through Europe. It moved with such confidence and certainty that whenever it was opposed by armies of the traditional type there could never be a moment's doubt as to the result."[71] Other countries could hope to survive only if they built an army like the French army, and the only way to do that was to cultivate a nation-state.[72]

Finally, there is a two-pronged logic behind governing a state that works to promote nationalism. First, leaders of all kinds desire popular allegiance. They want their people to be as united as possible and feel loyal to the state, which is not easy to achieve given that no society can ever reach a thoroughgoing consensus about what constitutes the good life. By fostering a common culture and tight bonds between the people and their state, nationalism can be the glue that holds otherwise disputatious people together.

Consider Britain and France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when states were just emerging as a political form and both countries were riven with conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. In his book *Faith in Nation*, Anthony Marx explains how the ruling monarchs in London and Paris diligently worked to end those conflicts and construct a common culture in their respective countries. Their aim, he notes, was not simply to generate greater cohesion in the populace but also to build loyalty between the people and their rulers.[73] They were largely successful in both cases, although they did not go so far as to create nations, which came later. Nevertheless, their efforts explain why Britain and France were among the earliest dynastic states to evolve into nation-states.

States also have powerful incentives to shape their societies in ways that make day-to-day governance easier. Political leaders and bureaucrats alike abhor complexity, because it makes it difficult for them to make sense of the world around them and manage it to their state's advantage. They especially dislike trying to run a country where a variety of local cultures have their own boundaries, educational systems, measures, property systems, rules, and languages. To remedy this problem, governing elites engage in social engineering aimed at making it easier to gain knowledge about their country, which, in turn, makes it easier to administer. The key to success is to eliminate heterogeneity, which, according to James Scott, involves complementary processes: simplification and legibility. "A thoroughly legible society," Scott writes, "eliminates local monopolies of information and creates a kind of national transparency through the uniformity of codes, identities, statistics, regulations, and measures." But the "most powerful" of all "state simplifications" is "the imposition of a single, official language."[74] Making a society more homogeneous means transcending local cultures and building a unified nation, even if that is not the intent.

In sum, just as nations have powerful reasons to want their own states, states invariably try to mold their populations into nations. The complementary logics at the root of nationalism work to meld nations and states together into nation-states and have made them the dominant political form in the world. This is one of the realities that liberalism must deal with.

> By fostering a common culture and tight bonds between the people and their state, nationalism can be the glue that holds otherwise disputatious people together.

Living with the Dominator

The best starting point for understanding the relationship between liberalism and nationalism is to list their main differences. There are five key ones. First, liberalism focuses on the individual and pays little attention to social groups. Nationalism does the opposite: it rivets on the social group, which of course is the nation. The individual, while not irrelevant, is subordinate to the nation, which provides him with a powerful sense of participation in an enterprise with a timeless and grand tradition.

Second, natural rights and toleration are central components of liberal theory. Nationalism pays them little attention, although a nation-state can certainly have its own set of rights and preach toleration.

Third, liberalism has a particularist strand, which stems from its assumption that there are no final truths about the good life, and a universal strand, derived from its emphasis on inalienable rights. A certain tension exists between these strands. Nationalism does not have a universalist strand; despite its universal appeal, it is particularist all the way down.

Fourth, although the state is of central importance for both theories, its relationship to the wider public is different in each. With liberalism, the state's main functions are to act as a night watchman, arbitrate disputes, and do significant social engineering for the purposes of promoting individual rights and managing the various problems that attend daily life in a modem society. Modus vivendi liberals are opposed to social engineering, especially for the purpose of fostering positive rights,

but that is a battle they have lost. Liberalism cultivates hardly any emotional attachment to the state among its citizens, even despite their enormous dependence on it. This functional view of the state explains why it is hard to motivate people to fight and die for a purely liberal state. The nationalist state also maintains order and does substantial social engineering, but it inspires powerful allegiance. People are willing to fight and die for it.

Fifth, liberalism and nationalism view territory differently. Nationalists tend to think of the land they live on, or aspire to live on, as sacred. It is their fatherland or motherland, and so worth making great sacrifices to defend. Where the land's borders are located matters greatly. Liberalism has no room for hallowed territory; it pays little attention to where countries draw their borders, which squares with the emphasis liberals place on universal rights. In the liberal story, land is most important as private property that individuals have an inalienable right to own and sell as they see fit.

"There is abundant evidence that these two isms can coexist inside a country. It is important to emphasize, however, that liberalism always operates within the context of a nation-state. Liberalism without nationalism is impossible."

The Potential for Coexistence

Despite these differences, there is abundant evidence that these two isms can coexist inside a country. It is important to emphasize, however, that liberalism always operates within the context of a nation-state. Liberalism without nationalism is impossible. We live in a world of nation-states-a world of omnipresent nationalism. Liberalism, of course, is not omnipresent.

The international system contained few liberal democracies until after World War II.[75] Although their numbers have grown substantially since then, they have never accounted for even half the countries in the world. Freedom House, for example, reports that they represented 34 percent of the total in 1986 and 45 percent in 2017, but that the trend line is moving downward.[76] The key point, however, is that all of them are not simply liberal democracies but liberal nation-states. A purely liberal state is not feasible. Liberalism requires "the non-liberal underbelly of national community."[77]

Stephen Holmes captures this point when he writes: "Liberals have succeeded in realizing some of their ideals ... only because they have compromised with the realities of national sovereignty erected on a preliberal basis. Liberal rights are meaningful only within the confines of pre-existing, territorially-bounded states, and only where there exists a rights-enforcing power."[78] To quote another political theorist, Will Kymlicka: "The freedom which liberals demand for individuals is not primarily the freedom to go beyond one's language and history, but rather the freedom to move around within one's societal culture, to distance oneself from particular cultural roles, to choose which features of the culture are most worth developing, and which are without value."[79]

We can get a good sense of how liberalism relates to nationalism from the literature on American national identity. It was once commonplace for scholars to argue that the United States is a deeply liberal country while paying little attention to American nationalism. This perspective is reflected in Louis Hartz's classic 1955 book *The Liberal Tradition in America*. He maintains that the United States was born a liberal country and never had a feudal tradition, unlike its European counterparts. Lacking a significant political right or left, it has instead veered toward an illiberal liberalism. But Hartz says little about American nationalism. In this he follows in the footsteps of Alexis de Tocqueville and Gunnar Myrdal, who also wrote important books on American identity that largely ignore nationalism.[80]

This was a "misleading orthodoxy," as Rogers Smith points out in his important book *Civic Ideals*.[81] American identity does not revolve only around liberalism, as Hartz seemed to think, but is inextricably bound up with nationalism. Political elites in the United States, Smith argues, "require a population to

lead that imagines itself to be a 'people,'" which is another way of saying a nation.[82] He emphasizes that conceptions of peoplehood, which are particularist at their core, are at odds with liberalism's emphasis on "universal equal human rights."[83] Moreover, Smith notes that it is impossible to have a purely liberal state.[84]

Among modern scholars, it appears that Smith's view of the importance of "peoplehood" has won the day. For example, the importance of nationalism in American political life is clearly reflected in Anatol Lieven's *American Nationalism* and Samuel Huntington's last book, *Who Are We?* Huntington's great concern was that America's national identity is withering away and that eventually it will be left with only its liberal creed, which by itself cannot sustain the United States for long.[85]

Finally, as David Armitage reminds us, the American Declaration of Independence did not just emphasize the universality of individual rights. It also paid much attention to the idea of "one people" establishing sovereignty, which, of course, is what the colonists were doing at the time. He calls the Declaration "the birth certificate of the American nation." (I would modify this slightly and call it the birth certificate of the American nation-state.) Between these "two distinct elements," Armitage maintains, the founders and their successors paid more attention to "the assertion of popular sovereignty to create a new state" than to "ideas of individual rights." He argues that the Declaration's substantial universal appeal is based more on the sovereignty dimension than the rights one.[86]

On a related matter, some scholars make a distinction between civic nationalism and cultural or ethnic nationalism. For them, the word civic is a euphemism for liberal, which essentially means they are talking about fashioning a nation based almost exclusively on liberal values. In other words, they are asserting that one may have a nation without a culture based on a widely accepted package of distinct practices and beliefs. Liberalism alone can do the job. Scholars who make this argument usually hold up the United States and the countries of Western Europe as successful examples of this phenomenon.[87] The notion of civic nationalism captures Hartz's description of the United States.

Civic nationalism is not a useful concept. While liberal values can be a component of a nation's culture, they cannot be the sole basis of national identity. Civic nationalism is not a meaningful notion in good part because social groups like nations invariably have a variety of deeply rooted practices and beliefs that matter greatly in their members' daily lives. It is virtually impossible for a nation to function effectively without a multifaceted culture.[88] This is why most scholars who write about American culture today emphasize nationalism as well as liberalism. The American nation, like all nations, has a rich culture, which includes a variety of practices and beliefs. This makes Americans not simply liberals but liberal nationalists. When someone self-identifies as an American, she is effectively saying she is an American nationalist.

Why Nationalism Dominates

It should be clear by now that nationalism is a more powerful force than liberalism. Nationalism is pervasive, while liberalism is not. Liberalism always has to operate in the context of a nationalist state. Still, it would be wrong to think that liberalism matters for little. Even though it almost always loses in a direct conflict with nationalism, liberalism is a powerful ideology.

The two isms are not always at loggerheads. There should be little conflict between them in a society that largely comprises one nation and has a thick culture. In such cases, which include the United States, nationalism should not get in the way of creating a vibrant civil society with considerable room for individual rights and freedom from state interference. The same logic should apply in multinational states where the core nation and the minority nations respect each other's rights and are tolerant of each other's differences. Present-day Canada and India, with their thin national cultures, fit in this category.

Liberalism and nationalism conflict when there is deep hostility between the different groups in a multinational country. In those circumstances, it is almost impossible for liberalism to take hold in the face of national animosities. When relations between groups are filled with anger and hatred, tolerance and equal rights are extremely difficult to promote. Usually in such instances, the most powerful national group discriminates against the weaker group in an illiberal way. Israel's behavior toward the Palestinians is a good example, and with the rise of Hindu extremism, India is in danger of becoming an illiberal democracy.[89]

These circumstances favor nationalism for two reasons. First, liberals oversell the importance of individual rights, which is at the heart of their theory. Most people care about rights, but it is not a burning issue for them, and its influence in daily political life is much more limited than liberals recognize. It is especially limited when the rights conflict with the passions aroused by nationalist animosities. Second and more importantly, nationalism is more in sync with human nature than liberalism, which mistakenly treats individuals as utility maximizers who worry only about their own welfare, rather than as intensely social beings.[90] Nationalism, which is predicated on the correct belief that individuals invariably have a strong sense of loyalty toward their own group, is better at addressing several critically important human needs.[91] This is why it is a ubiquitous force in the modern world and liberalism is not.[92]

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It is because liberalism fails to provide individuals with a sense of community that it cannot provide the glue to hold a society together. It does not make them feel they are part of a large and vibrant group that is special and worthy of esteem, which is important to people psychologically as well as for keeping a society intact. This problem derives partly from liberalism's particularist strand—that it rivets on atomistic individuals who have rights but few duties and obligations—and partly from its universalist strand: its emphasis on inalienable rights, which apply to all people, not just the members of a particular group.

In fact, liberalism does not simply fail to provide the bonds to keep a society intact; it also has the potential to eat away at those bonds and ultimately damage the society's foundations. The taproot of the problem is liberalism's radical individualism and its emphasis on utility maximization. It places virtually no emphasis on the importance of fostering a sense of community and caring about fellow citizens. Instead, everyone is encouraged to pursue his own self-interest, based on the assumption that the sum of all individuals' selfish behavior will be the common good. This self-regarding behavior is somewhat countered by contemporary liberalism's emphasis on ensuring equal opportunity for everyone, although not all liberals support that goal. In brief, liberalism not only contributes little to building societies but also has features that undermine social cohesion.

Nationalism, in contrast, is all about community and members' responsibilities to the collectivity. Unlike liberalism, it works toward creating a sense of belonging. It satisfies individuals' emotional need to be part of a large group with a rich tradition and a bright future. Moreover, nationalism is well suited to holding a society together, except in multinational states where the constituent nations are hostile to each other.

Liberalism also does a poor job of tying the individual to the state. In the liberal story, the state is the product of a social contract among individuals, and its main task is to protect them from each other and allow each to pursue her own notion of the good life. Although the state works to promote equal opportunity for its citizens, some liberals contest that mission, and the liberal state, by definition, has limited capacity to interfere in its citizens' lives. Individuals in the liberal story are not expected to have a deep emotional attachment to their state, and it is hard to imagine them putting their lives on the line for it.[93] Nationalism, on the other hand, creates strong bonds between individuals and their state. Many people are strongly inclined to fight and die, if necessary, for their nation-state.

Finally, the vast majority of people in the modern world care greatly about territory. Their identity is bound up in land they consider sacred. This perspective, of course, is central to nationalism and accounts for much of its appeal. Liberalism ignores the link between identity and territory. Uday Mehta maintains

that "political theorists in the Anglo-American liberal tradition have, for the most part, not only ignored the links between political identity and territory, but have also conceptualized the former in terms that at least implicitly deny any significance to the latter and the links between the two."[94] Land is important to liberalism as private property, but that is a different matter.

All of this is to say that liberalism can have an important role in shaping daily life, but it almost always plays second fiddle to nationalism.

Overselling Individual Rights

The liberal case for rights rests on two claims. First, the overwhelming majority of people around the world recognize what those rights are and think they are universal and inalienable, meaning they apply equally to everyone in the world and cannot be given or taken away. Second, people across the board believe individual rights are truly important and should be privileged in the political arena. There are good reasons to doubt both of these suppositions. Rights are not insignificant, one can certainly argue that they should be universal and inalienable, and even if that is visibly not true everywhere, they are still of great importance in particular countries, where they form part of a well-established tradition. The 1689 English Bill of Rights, for example, which arose mainly out of the politics of the Glorious Revolution, gained legitimacy by invoking "ancient rights and liberties."[95]

Privileging the concept of inalienable rights creates theoretical as well as evidentiary problems. When you look carefully at the underlying logic, there are three reasons to be skeptical that any widely agreed-upon body of rights can exist; and when you look closely at the historical record, it provides considerable evidence to back up that skepticism.

False Universalism

For starters, liberalism assumes there is no possibility of a worldwide consensus on what constitutes the good life. Particular societies may reach substantial agreement on first principles, but they will never achieve universal agreement, save for the belief that everyone has a basic right to survival. At the same time, however, liberals maintain that there is some objectively correct set of individual rights, and that it is possible to discern what those rights are, how they relate to each other, and that they are inalienable.

How can this be, since individual rights are all about first principles? They are profoundly important for defining how people think about and act toward their fellow humans. Thus it is hard to believe, given the limits of our critical faculties, that there can be anything close to universal agreement on whether rights are inalienable, what they should be, and which ones should take precedence. There is a fundamental disagreement between modus vivendi and progressive liberals over whether individuals have a right to equal opportunity, and over positive rights more generally. Well-informed, well-meaning citizens disagree profoundly over whether there is a right to abortion or to affirmative action. These are matters that deal with the good life, and they show that we should not expect reason to provide collective truths.

To take this a step further, placing rights at the core of any political system is tantamount to saying that the best political order is a liberal one. It is difficult to imagine how it is possible to privilege rights in the absence of a liberal or at least quasi-liberal state. Political liberals are sometimes surprisingly intolerant toward illiberal groups or states, thinking that the only legitimate political order is a liberal one. This belief has long been widespread in the United States, as Louis Hartz makes clear in *The Liberal Tradition in America*. It is also on display in John Rawls's *The Law of Peoples*, where he makes it clear that the best world is one populated solely with liberal democracies.[96] John Locke also emphasized that liberal societies cannot tolerate groups that do not play by liberal rules.

Thus when liberals talk about inalienable rights, they are effectively defining the good life. They make no meaningful distinction between these two subjects. But if it is an axiom of liberalism (backed up by observation) that you cannot get universal agreement on first principles, then it follows that you cannot get a planetary consensus on individual rights.

I noted in the previous chapter that there is a paradox in political liberalism, which stems from the fact that its core holds a particularist as well as a universalist strand. The particularism, of course, comes from the liberal belief that there is no truth regarding the good life, while the universalism is tied to the concept of inalienable rights. These two dimensions, I emphasized,

are in tension with each other. But under my analysis here, that paradox disappears, because liberalism properly understood is particularist all the way down. There can be no universal agreement about individual rights, just as there is no universal agreement about the good life, because there is no meaningful difference between those two realms.

Trumping Rights

There is a second theoretical problem with liberal thinking about rights: other considerations sometimes push them into the background. People will usually privilege political stability, which involves their personal security and welfare, over rights when the two come into conflict. For example, if rights, and liberal democracy generally, lead to disorder, which might mean privation or death, individual rights are unlikely to matter much in practice, even among a public that in principle genuinely favors them.

This logic is likely to apply in multinational states where there are deep-seated animosities among the rival groups. In such instances, many people will prefer an authoritarian leader who can keep the other factions at bay. There will also be cases, however, where a country is in turmoil for some reason and adopting a liberal democratic system would only make the problem worse. Finally, individual rights sometimes take a backseat to concerns about an external threat. Countries facing existential threats over long periods tend to become garrison states—also known as national security states—that often trample on individual rights.[97]

The final theoretical problem regarding rights concerns nationalism. According to the liberal story, rights apply equally to everyone, everywhere. But this flies in the face of nationalism, in which the concept of sovereignty means that each state is free to determine for itself which rights matter and how much they matter. Nation-states are likely to be jealous defenders of their self-determination, and it is hard to imagine them reaching a universal consensus on the correct package of rights.

Furthermore, nationalism is all about privileging one's own group over others. In an international system composed almost wholly of nation-states, most people will favor their fellow nationals over outsiders. In practice, countries are unlikely to accord the "other" the same rights given to their own people, and where nationalism turns ugly, they will have little difficulty trampling on the rights of foreigners they dislike or hate. In brief, nationalism, which is particularist to the core, presents a serious threat to the notion of inalienable rights.

One can make the case that it is dangerous to think in terms of universal rights in a world of nation-states. Doing so risks giving people the impression that there is some higher authority—maybe some international institution—empowered to protect their rights. In fact,

there is no such entity; states protect an individual's rights, not some superior authority. Hannah Arendt saw the problem: "The Rights of Man ... had been defined as 'inalienable' because they were supposed to be independent of all governments; but it turned out that the moment human beings lacked their own government and had to fall back upon their minimum rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution was willing to guarantee them."[98] She maintained that stateless people and unwanted minorities residing inside nation-states live in grave danger, because there is no enforcement mechanism to defend their rights, including the right to life, if they come under attack. "The abstract nakedness of being nothing but human," she argued, "was their greatest danger."[99]

Arendt's solution was to eschew talk of universal rights and instead emphasize "nationally guaranteed rights." In this she aligned herself with Edmund Burke, who "opposed the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man" and instead made the case that rights "spring 'from within the nation.'" For Arendt, as for Burke, "It was much wiser to rely on an 'entailed inheritance' of rights which one transmits to one's children like life itself, and to claim one's rights to be the 'rights of an Englishman' rather than the inalienable rights of man."[100] Her opposition to this universalist strand of liberalism was driven in good part by concerns about survival.

Natural Rights and History

If reason tells us that everyone possesses a set of inalienable rights, as liberals claim, then it seems reasonable to expect that at least some important premodern thinkers would have understood this basic fact of life. That is not the case. Aristotle and Plato, as well as Machiavelli, apparently had no concept of natural rights. Hobbes and Locke did not begin developing the foundations of liberalism until the seventeenth century. Others, such as Benjamin Constant, Kant, and Montesquieu, followed in their footsteps, but many other political philosophers paid little attention to the liberal story about individual rights, and some, such as Burke and Bentham, explicitly challenged it. Thus it is not even possible to make the less sweeping claim that once the leading thinkers recognized the importance of natural rights, a solid consensus emerged. There has never been universal agreement that rights are inalienable or that they are fundamental to political life.[101]

Furthermore, liberals themselves disagree about which rights matter most and how to weigh them when they come into conflict. The problem is especially complicated when promoting equality is thrown into the mix.[102] John Rawls maintains that "applying liberal principles has a certain simplicity," but this is only sometimes true.[103] Think about hate speech. Liberals who are absolutists regarding free speech believe it should be tolerated even if they find it abhorrent. Other liberals, however, want to ban it because it can seriously hurt those who are targeted, who have the right to be protected from verbal abuse just as they have a right to be protected from physical abuse.[104] There is no indisputable way to determine how to rank these different rights. As John Gray notes, "All regimes embody particular settlements among rival liberties."[105]

Hobbes's and Locke's thinking about individual rights was significantly shaped by contingency and history. The hate-filled conflict between Catholics and Protestants that raged in their day, coupled with the deep socioeconomic changes taking place in Britain, deeply influenced the foundational ideas of liberalism. In short, political ideologies are not created by reason alone. They tend to develop at critical points in history, and liberalism is no exception.

Even the staunchest advocates of individual rights are usually willing to limit, even disregard, rights in a supreme emergency. When an individual's or a country's survival is at stake, rights cannot be allowed to get in the way of doing whatever is necessary to endure. John Stuart Mill, for example, maintains that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection."[106] Michael Walzer, who argues that countries should fight wars under a strict moral code of conduct, follows in Mill's footsteps. At the end of his famous tract on just war theory, he writes that all the rules go out the window "when we are face-to-face not merely with defeat but with a defeat likely to bring disaster to a political community."[107] John Rawls too maintains that "political liberalism allows the supreme emergency exemption."[108]

Countries or regions that have experienced great upheaval usually show a yearning for political stability that trumps any desire to create a liberal democracy. For example, a recent survey of Arab youth in the Middle East found that 53 percent of the respondents

believe that "promoting stability in the region is more important than promoting democracy." Only 28 percent disagreed.[109] Consider too the case of President Paul Kagame, an authoritarian leader who seriously limits free speech in Rwanda, which experienced genocide in 1994. His main aim is to limit hostilities between the Hutus, who perpetrated the genocide, and the Tutsis, who were its principal victims. Kagame has enjoyed great success, and not surprisingly he has been elected to three terms as president despite his illiberal policies.[110]

Russia's strong preference for order over rights and democracy today is hardly surprising given what happened there in the 1990s, when its attempt to embrace Western-style democracy failed miserably, creating corruption and disorder on a grand scale. Since the early 2000s, Russia has become steadily more authoritarian, largely restoring order in the process. A March 2014 poll conducted by the All-Russian Public Opinion Center showed that "seventy-one percent of Russians say they are ready to sacrifice civil freedoms to maintain stability, order and personal well-being."[111]

Finally, if individual rights are recognized and highly regarded by almost everyone, it should be reasonably easy to spread liberalism to other countries. But it is not. People are easily persuaded to respect their own rights, but convincing them that others' rights are equally important is a difficult task. It is much easier to advance a bare-bones version of democracy that demands nothing more than free and fair elections in which the winners take office. It took a long time for liberalism to take root throughout the West, which is where it got started and has had the greatest impact.[112] Of course, this is why the United States and its European allies are committed to spreading its values beyond the West.[113]

Even within the West, however, the commitment to individual rights is softer than most people realize. In the United States, leaders have violated individual rights when they thought the country was facing an extreme emergency. Probably the best-known example of this phenomenon is Abraham Lincoln's actions during the Civil War (1861-65) , when, among other things, he suspended habeas corpus, censored the mail, instituted military tribunals, and arrested individuals "who were represented to him as being or about to engage in disloyal and treasonable practices."[114] Moreover, as Clinton Rossiter makes clear in *Constitutional Dictatorship*, the Civil War is not the only time America's political leaders seriously limited rights in circumstances they felt were highly dangerous. One might expect there was a huge outcry, or at least significant protests, from the American people when their rights were curtailed. But they did not protest, mainly because the public's support for individual rights in the United States is sometimes surprisingly soft.

"People are easily persuaded to respect their own rights, but convincing them that others' rights are equally important is a difficult task. It is much easier to advance a bare-bones version of democracy that demands nothing more than free and fair elections in which the winners take office.

The best evidence of the American people's flexible commitment to liberalism is that they tolerated slavery until the Civil War, and then tolerated blatant racism in both the North and the South until the mid-1960s. Racism today is less socially acceptable but has hardly vanished. There was widespread discrimination against immigrants throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. This too rests a few inches underground today. Aristide Zolberg describes U.S. policy toward Chinese immigrants in the latter half of the nineteenth century as the "only successful instance of 'ethnic cleansing' in the history of American immigration."[115] The Europeans who began moving to the United States in large numbers in the 1830s also faced marked discrimination well into the twentieth

century.[116] Probably no group had it worse than the Irish, who were despised by the ruling WASP elites. And there is no greater instance of discrimination against a European ethnic group than what happened to German Americans during World War I.[117] Although America was a thoroughly liberal country in principle from its inception, for most of its history it has hardly been a paragon of liberal virtue in practice.

Fortunately, this illiberal behavior toward African Americans and immigrants has mostly disappeared from public view, and the United States now strives to be a liberal country in practice as well as in theory. But the American public's support for individual rights is not especially deep. While the discourse about rights is pervasive in contemporary America, that has been the case only since the 1950s. Before then, Americans did not pay much attention to individual rights.[118]

The present interest in rights notwithstanding, according to the political scientist Gerald Rosenberg, many Americans understand little about the real meaning of inalienable rights, including that they are supposed to apply universally.[119] Rosenberg shows that most equate rights with their own preferences. They tend to make rights claims that support their own interests but pay little attention to claims that do not. Thus it is unsurprising that Americans are willing to curtail important rights when it suits them. Rosenberg concludes, after examining a variety of public opinion surveys, that "Americans view the right to a free press as meaning only the ability to publish what people prefer to read. If the American public does not like the content, then the press should not be able to publish it." Regarding free speech, he finds that "Americans are both deeply committed to free speech in the abstract and strongly opposed to free speech for unpopular groups." Both cases, he emphasizes, provide "a good deal of empirical support for the notion of rights as preferences."[120] It seems clear that many Americans are not deeply committed to the principle of universal rights. If that is true, it is hard to imagine that a passionate commitment to inalienable rights exists elsewhere, since no country has as rich a liberal tradition as the United States.

The bottom line is that the universal strand of liberalism is nowhere near as powerful as liberals believe. Liberal claims about the importance of individual rights are much less compelling than liberals seem to believe, and might even be dead wrong. This circumscribed view of rights has direct implications for toleration and the state, the other two mechanisms that foster peace and prosperity in a liberal society. The more that citizens respect individual rights, the easier it is to promote tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution, and thus reduce the work the state has to perform to keep order. But if respect for rights is thin, it will be more difficult to promote tolerance, and the state's role in maintaining peace at home will loom larger.

"Although America was a thoroughly liberal country in principle from its inception, for most of its history it has hardly been a paragon of liberal virtue in practice."

The Authoritarian Temptation

There is a potentially devastating argument against liberalism that needs to be addressed. James Madison identified it long ago, in *Federalist No. 10*.[121] I do not think this argument ultimately reveals a fatal flaw in the theory, but it surely explains why it is often difficult to establish and maintain a liberal political order.

The taproot of the problem is that because there are always some sharp differences over first principles in every country, there will always be factions competing for power. As we saw, it matters greatly who governs the state because the faction in charge gets to write the rules, and in any society, whoever writes the rules gets to determine in part what constitutes the good life. There is no such thing as a neutral state that merely acts as an umpire among rival factions. One faction, or some combination of factions, has to run the government, and in the process it will shape society in important ways.

Thus each faction in a liberal democracy has a strong incentive to take over the state and not relinquish power to a rival faction. In the Middle East, this phenomenon is commonly referred to as "one man, one vote, one time."[122] Two motivating logics are at play here. Obviously, the faction that seized control would get to write the rules and not have to worry about losing a future election to a rival faction that might rewrite the rules. Additionally, each faction has good reason to think that every other faction understands this logic, and thus any faction that trusts another faction risks being played for a sucker. It is better to move first and capture the state for the long term before another faction beats you to the punch. This kind of behavior, which might seem unavoidable, would destroy a liberal democracy, even if the rival factions have no animus toward liberalism per se.

Still, liberal democracy is not doomed to fail because of this incentive structure. A well-ordered liberal state has specific features that help insulate it from collapse, although it may remain an uneasy standoff between factions. Five key considerations work together to attenuate the problem.

The first feature is balance-of-power behavior among various factions. If no single faction is especially powerful, it makes little sense for any faction to try to capture the state, because that move would almost certainly lead to a civil war. And if one faction is especially powerful, it can afford to play by the rules, get elected, and run the state over the long term in ways that it sees fit. It has no need to take control permanently. The one potentially dangerous situation is where there is an especially powerful faction that thinks it will lose its power over time. This creates incentives to undermine liberal democracy before the decline happens. The logic of this situation resembles that of preventive war. But even in this case, the rival factions will surely balance against the powerful, albeit declining, faction.

The second consideration is the presence of cross-cutting cleavages, which are common in liberal states. Most people have multiple interests that contribute to their political views. At the same time, there is a diverse array of issues that can motivate a faction, which means that not every faction in a society is concerned with the same issue.[123] These two facts, when put together, mean that different individuals will sometimes find themselves in competing factions on one issue but on the same side on another. This outcome complicates the problem for any faction that might try to capture the state and put an end to liberal democracy.

The third factor is organic solidarity, to borrow Durkheim's term.[124] The divisions of labor within a liberal society create extensive economic interdependence. People are intertwined at the economic level in profound ways. They depend on their fellow citizens in order to make a living and prosper, and most importantly, to survive. A civil war, which might ensue if one faction tried to conquer the state, would undermine that solidarity and gravely harm the entire society.

The fourth consideration is nationalism. Liberal democracies are ultimately nation-states with deeply rooted cultures. Their citizens share certain practices and beliefs, and this works to ameliorate differences among them. One of those key beliefs, at least for most people, is sure to be a deep-seated faith in the virtues of liberal democracy in general and their own liberal democratic state in particular. Being liberal, in other words, is part of one's national identity. Citizens will still have fundamental differences over first principles, which means there will always be factions. Still, the *fact* of liberal democracy as an element of national identity can serve as a kind of glue, even if the theory cannot provide this glue.

The fifth feature is the deep state.[125] A liberal democracy, like any modern state, is highly bureaucratized, meaning it contains a good number of large institutions populated by career civil servants. Some of those bureaucracies are principally concerned with protecting the nation and the state against threats from within and without, which invariably means they have significant power to safeguard the existing political order. These institutions tend to operate autonomously, largely insulated from politics, which means that they usually do not identify with any particular faction. British civil servants, for example, devotedly serve both Conservative and Labor governments. Sometimes, however, a faction can capture a bureaucratic state, as the Nazis did in Germany during the 1930s.

Finally, at least three of these attenuating factors generally get stronger with time, which suggests that mature liberal democracies should be more resilient than fledgling ones. The more time passes, the more interdependent a society's members become; the more they will be exposed to nationbuilding; and the stronger the deep state will become. In sum, the presence of

competing internal factions does not mean that liberal states are doomed to fall apart.

On the international stage, however, things may be quite different. ■

Notes

1. Communitarians have been arch critics of liberalism's assumption that humans are naturally "unencumbered" individuals, to use Michael Sandel's wording. For a sampling of the debate between communitarians and liberals on this and other matters, see Shlomo Avineri and Avner de-Shalit, *Communitarianism and Individualism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 20n). The Sandel quote is from p. 18.

2. A *nation* is an abstract concept and cannot act, but I use the term as a shorthand reference for its members, especially its elites, who do have agency and are capable of acting to advance their political goals, such as statehood. The same logic applies when I use the term *state*, in which case it is the political leaders who have agency.

3. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1. My definition of nationalism is similar to that of many scholars. See, for example, John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 1–3; Ernst B. Haas, "What Is Nationalism and Why Should We Study It?," *International Organization* 40, no. 3 (Summer 1986): 726; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 9; Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 55, 150.

4. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1990); David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); William H. Sewell Jr., "The French Revolution and the Emergence of the Nation Form," in *Revolutionary Currents: Nation Building in the Transatlantic World*, ed. Michael A. Morrison and Melinda Zook (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 91–125.

5. Some of the large groups that preceded the nation were rather well defined and quite easily morphed into nations. For example, the Dutch, the English, the French, the Poles, and the Russians had developed a distinct identity before each group became a nation, which made the transition to nationhood relatively straightforward. To put the matter in Ronald Suny's language, they went from "cultural or ethnic awareness" to "full-blown political nationalism—that is, an active commitment to realizing a national agenda." Ronald G. Suny, T*he Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 48. There are other cases, however, where the links between the nations that eventually emerged and their predecessors are more tenuous. Examples include Azerbaijanis, Belorussians, Italians, and Lithuanians, who did not have that particular identity before they became nations. Other local and social identities were key for them, which invariably meant that the state had to go to great lengths to fashion them into nations. Some key works dealing with the links between nations and their predecessors include John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Philip S. Gorski, "The Mosaic Moment: An Early Modernist Critique of Modernist Theories of Nationalism," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 5 (March 2000): 1428–68; Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation, trans. Karolina Graham* (New York: Verso, 2015), chap. 3; Philip G. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

6. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

7. On how boundaries between social groups have become less fluid and harder to penetrate with the coming of nationalism, see Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998). James Scott writes about the "utter plasticity of social structure" outside nation-states. In that world, "group boundaries are porous and identities are flexible." James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 219, 249.

8. For a discussion of the close links between nationalism and "claims for the equality and liberty of all citizens," see Dominique Schnapper, "Citizenship and National Identity in Europe," *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 1 (January 2002): 1–14. The quote is from p. 2.

9. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 16.

10. Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, p. 118. He also writes: "With the constant shifting of allegiances, intermarriages, transformations, and appropriations, it appears that all that remained constant were names, and these were vessels that could hold different contents at different times" (ibid.). Also see Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The Rise and Fall of States and Nations* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), especially chaps. 1–6.

11. One might think the Roman Empire contradicts my claim, but this would be wrong. The Roman Empire was a sprawling political entity that was home to numerous social groups. It was hardly a unified culture. "Roman," as Geary notes, was not a "primary self-identifier for the millions of people who inhabited, permanently or temporarily, the Roman Empire. Rather than sharing a national or ethnic identity, individuals were more likely to feel a primary attachment to class, occupation, or city." Indeed, "in the pluralistic religious and cultural tradition of Rome, the central state had never demanded exclusive adherence to Roman values." Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, pp. 64, 67. The primary loyalty of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire was to their particular social group, which invariably occupied a particular slice of territory within the empire. Thus, it is no surprise that the concept of "Roman identity" virtually disappeared from Europe in the Middle Ages, save for the inhabitants of the city of Rome. Of course, there was a Holy Roman Empire from 962 to 1806, but like its predecessor, it comprised numerous social groups, and hardly any of the people who came under its sway identified themselves as Romans. It is worth noting that nationalism played the key role in destroying what remained of that loosely knit empire in the early nineteenth century.

12. Patrick Geary writes, for example, "Among the free citizens of the [Roman] Empire, the gulfs separating the elite and the masses of the population were enormous," a situation that did not change after the collapse of the empire. Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, p. 66. In addition to the two dominant classes in pre-nationalist Europe—the

aristocracy and the peasantry—there was a small bourgeoisie and a small working class, although they were largely concentrated in England and France. Neither the peasantry nor the aristocracy had a powerful sense it was part of a large social group, much less a distinct nation. Peasants tended to think in local terms and not conceive of themselves as part of an extended family that spread across a large expanse of territory. They usually spoke in local dialects and knew little about other peasants who lived a few days' travel from them. A peasant living in Prussia, for example, was not likely to think of himself as a Prussian peasant and compare himself with French or Polish peasants. His identity was more likely to be wrapped up in comparisons with his immediate neighbors. Aristocrats were remarkably cosmopolitan and had nothing like a national identity. This point is illustrated by looking at marriages among the European nobility, which were often between individuals from different countries. And consider that Frederick the Great of Prussia greatly admired French culture and preferred speaking French rather than German. Tim Blanning, *Frederick the Great: King of Prussia* (New York: Random House, 2016), pp. 3421–46, 352–53, 357–61, 444. In short, "the idea that the aristocracy belonged to the same culture as the peasants must have seemed abominable to the former and incomprehensible to the latter before nationalism." Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, 3rd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2010), p. 123.

13. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, p. 6.

14. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Ticker (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 331–62. Marx and Engels write, "working men have no country," that industrialization and the attendant exploitation of the average worker "has stripped him of every trace of national character," and thus workers "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole" (pp. 344–45, 350).

15. Michael Howard, *War in European History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 110.

16. The terms *core nation* and *minority* nation are from Harris Mylonas, *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-nationals, Refugees, and Minorities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

17. There is always the danger with multinational states that one or more of the minor nations will be committed to breaking away and forming their own nation-states. In such unstable states, it makes little sense to talk about a common national identity at the level of the state.

18. Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz, and Yogendra Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) , p. 38. Stepan, Linz, and Yadav do not employ the terms thick and thin cultures, but instead use the terms *state-nation* and *nation-state*, respectively. Also see Sener Akturk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

19. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 61.

20. Quoted in Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From*, p. 29.

21. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 389.

22. Walker Connor, "A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group Is a. …" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1, no. 4 (October 1978): 379.

23. Hobsbawrn writes, "Any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a 'nation,' will be treated as such." Hobsbawrn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 8. Hugh Seton-Watson writes, "A nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one." Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), p. 5.

24. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 227. Also see Keith A. Darden, *Resisting Occupation in Eurasia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

25. This chauvinism is in good part a consequence of the sense of oneness that characterizes nations. In particular, the tight bonds among nationals and the firm boundaries between nations promote narrow-mindedness. Chauvinism is less likely in a world where identities are more flexible and people can envision themselves moving rather easily across the boundaries that separate social groups. Greater social fluidity, in short, tends to enhance tolerance. This is not to say, however, that the large social groups that existed before the coming of nations were paragons of tolerance, because they were not. But they were more tolerant and less chauvinistic than nations, where the bonds among members are tight and identities are difficult to change, considerations that lend themselves to seeing the "other" as alien and inferior, and even evil. Polish-Jewish relations provide a good example of this phenomenon at work. Poland, which was a tolerant place by European standards before the rise of nationalism, was a haven for Jews during the Middle Ages. Some estimate that roughly 80 percent of world Jewry lived in Poland by the middle of the sixteenth century, and those Jews did well for themselves by the standards of the time. This situation changed dramatically in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as nationalism swept across Europe, and Poland became one of the most anti-Semitic countries in that region. See Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modem Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). This general pattern was not restricted to Poland. See *Shmuel Almog, Nationalism and Antisemitism in Modem Europe, 1815–1945* (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1990); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

26. Quoted in Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 34.

27. Quoted in Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 89.

28. Quoted in Joan Beaumont and Matthew Jordan, *Australia and the World: A Festschrift for Neville Meaney* (Sydney, Australia: Sydney University Press, 2013), p. 276.

29. Albright made this statement on NBC's *Today* show on February 19, 1998.

30. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 71.

31. This is surely why the political philosopher John Dunn described nationalism as "the starkest political shame of the twentieth century, the deepest, most intractable and yet most unanticipated blot on the history of the world since the year 1900." John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 59.

32. Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1994): 27.

33. Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, p. 15. Two other useful sources on this phenomenon are Christopher B. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book:*

Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich (New York: Norton, 2011); and Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, trans. Yael Lotan (London: Verso, 2009).

34. Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?," in *On the Nation and the "Jewish People,"* ed. Shlomo Sand, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2010), p. 45.

35. C. Burak Kadercan, "Politics of Survival, Nationalism, and War for Territory: 1648–2003" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 20n); Tamar Meisels, *Territorial Rights*, 2nd ed. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2009); David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005); Margaret Moore, *The Ethics of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

36. During the 2017 dispute between China and India over thirty-four square miles of land in the Himalayan Mountains, China's president, Xi Jinping, said: "We will never permit anybody, any organization, any political party to split off any piece of Chinese territory from China at any time or in any form. … Nobody should nurse any hope that we will swallow the bitter fruit of harm to our national sovereignty, security and development interests." Quoted in Chris Buckley and Ellen Barry, "China Tells India That It Won't Back Down in Border Dispute," *New York Times*, August 4, 2017. This is not to say that all the territory a nation occupies or seeks to conquer is holy land. There are exceptions. China, for example, has settled a number of territorial disputes with its neighbors, and in each case China made compromises that involved surrendering territory to other countries. See M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). There are large swaths of territory, however, that China would never surrender willingly, because they are considered sacred lands that rightfully belong to the Chinese nation.

37. Kadercan, "Politics of Survival, Nationalism, and War for Territory." Of course, nations still care about territory for practical reasons, although controlling territory is not as important today for economic and security reasons as it was before the coming of the Industrial Revolution and nuclear weapons. But ironically, people in the age of nationalism appear to care more about territory than did their predecessors, because they care greatly about their homeland at a deep emotional level (p. 21).

38. As Mariya Grinberg notes, although the concept of sovereignty is invariably linked with the state, it can be applied to other political forms as well. The key is that it can be applied only to the highest-level forms of political organization in the international system, be they empires, city-states, or whatever. The discussion here, however, is limited to states, because the focus is on nationalism, which is identified with nation-states. Grinberg, "Indivisible Sovereignty: Delegation of Authority and Exit Option" (unpublished paper, University of Chicago, April 24, 2017).

39. Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty: Evolution of an Idea* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), p. 6.

40. Jackson, *Sovereignty*, p. 93.

41. Quoted in Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, p. 59.

42. Jackson, *Sovereignty*, p. 104.

43. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 5–15.

44. Bernard Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," *Political Theory* 29, no. 4 (August 2001): 518.

45. This democratic impulse built into nationalism is reflected in Renan's famous comment: "The existence of a nation is, if you will pardon me the metaphor, a daily plebiscite." Renan, "What Is a Nation?," p. 64. Also see Schnapper, "Citizenship and National Identity in Europe"; Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism." Greenfield writes on p. 10: "The location of sovereignty within the people and the recognition of the fundamental equality among its various strata, which constitute the essence of the modern national idea, are at the same time the basic tenets of democracy. Democracy was born with the sense of nationality. The two are inherently linked, and neither can be fully understood apart from this connection. Nationalism was the form in which democracy appeared in the world, contained in the idea of the nation as a butterfly in a cocoon. Originally, nationalism developed as democracy; where the conditions of such original development persisted, the identity between the two was maintained."

46. Maximilien Robespierre, "Report on the Principles of Political Morality," *French Revolution and Napoleon*, http://www.indiana.edu/~b356/texts/polit-moral.html.

47. Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Mark Pagel, *Wired for Culture: Origins of the Human Social Mind* (New York: Norton, 2012).

48. Bernard Yack, *Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

49. Renan, "What Is a Nation?," p. 63.

50. Nationalism is sometimes said to be a substitute for religion, which began losing influence in Europe after the Thirty Years' War ended in 1648. This process has accelerated over the ensuing centuries. This perspective is wrong, however. Although religion's influence has waned over this long period, it certainly has not disappeared. More importantly, religion is effectively an element of national culture, where it has the potential to act as a powerful unifying force for group members. Ernest Barker, *Christianity and Nationality: Being the Burge Memorial Lecture for the Year 1927* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 31. Other works that show how religion can act as a force multiplier for nationalism include Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to American National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005); and Marx, *Faith in Nation*.

51. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), p. 1.

52. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 20.

53. Andreas Osiander, *Before the State: Systemic Political Change in the West from the Greeks to the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 5.

54. Sewell, "The French Revolution and the Emergence of the Nation Form," p. 98.

55. Jackson, *Sovereignty*, p. 32.

56. Joseph R. Strayer and Dana C. Munro, *The Middle Ages: 395–1500* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1942), pp. 113, 270.

57. On the limits of power projection over long distances, see Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, chaps. 1–2; and David Stasavage, "When Distance Mattered: Geographic Scale and the Development of European Representative Assemblies," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 4 (November 2010): 625–43.

58. Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. xiv, 74.

59. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

60. Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?," *World Politics* 24, no. 3 (April 1972): 319–55.

61. It is clear from Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* that a similar logic applies to groups that live outside states and are trying to avoid being incorporated into them. He writes: "Where they could ... all states in the region have tried to bring such peoples under their routine administration, to encourage and, more rarely, to insist upon linguistic, cultural, and religious alignment with the majority population at the state core" (p. 12). The state's reach is so great today that very few groups continue to live outside a state.

62. Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 157–66.

63. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

64. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 34.

65. The economic logic described in the previous paragraph has important military consequences. Since wealth is one of the two main building blocks of military power, any measures taken to grow the economy contribute to building a more powerful military. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated ed. (New York: Norton, 2014), chap. 3.

66. Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 85.

67. The negative consequences that flow from having a multinational state in which the constituent groups are poorly integrated are reflected in the performance of the Austro-Hungarian military in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1998), p. 108; Spencer C. Tucker, T*he European Powers in the First World War: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), p. 86. Also see Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

68. David Bell explains how nationalism made it much easier for French leaders to mobilize their populations during the Seven Years' War (1756–63) and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815) than was the case in wars fought during the pre-national era. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, chap. 3; David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Knew It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), chaps. 4, 6, 7. Also see Michael Howard, War in European History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 6.

69. Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770–1870* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1982), p. 30.

70. Quoted in J. F. C. Fuller, *Conduct of War: 1789–1961* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), p. 46. Also see Peter Paret, "Nationalism and the Sense of Military Obligation," in *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 39–52.

71. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 592.

72. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

73. Marx, *Faith in Nation*, p. 9.

74. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 72, 78.

75. Judith N. Shklar, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. Stanley Hoffmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 4. Also see Markus Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects" (BCSIA Discussion Paper 2000-07, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, April 2000), pp. 22–27, 56.

76. Arch Puddington and Tyler Roylance, "Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy," in *Freedom in the World, 2017* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2017), p. 4.

77. Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 208.

78. Stephen Holmes, *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 39.

79. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 90–91.

80. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955); Gunner Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995, 1996); Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, ed. Isaac Kramnick, trans. Gerald Bevan (New York: Penguin, 2003). For a discussion of the parallels between these two books and Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*, see Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), introduction and chap. 1.

81. Smith, *Civic Ideals*, p. 14.

82. Smith, *Civic Ideals*, p. 6.

83. Smith, *Civic Ideals*, p. 9.

84. Smith, *Civic Ideals*, pp. 9–12, 38–39.

85. Huntington, *Who Are We?*; Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*.

86. All the quotes in this paragraph are from David Armitage, "The Declaration of Independence: The Words Heard around the World," *Wall Street Journal*, July 3, 2014. For an elaboration on these points, see David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

87. This perspective is captured in Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1945); and John Plamenatz, "Two Types of Nationalism," in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), pp. 22–36.

88. See Gregory Jusdanis, *The Necessary Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), chap. 5; Taras Kuzio, "The Myth of the Civic State: A Critical Survey of Hans Kohn's Framework for Understanding Nationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2002): 20–39; Marx, *Faith in Nation*, pp. 113–17; Smith, *Civic Ideals*; Ken Wolf, "Hans Kahn's Liberal Nationalism: The Historian as Prophet," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 4 (October-December 1976): 651–72; Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation," *Critical Review* 10 , no. 2 (Spring 1996): 193–211.

89. On Israel, see Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley, "Israeli Practices toward the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid," *Palestine and the Israeli Occupation*, Issue No. 1 (Beirut: United Nations, 2017); Yitzhak Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism* (New York: Verso, 2009); Gideon Levy, "Israel's Minister of Truth," Haaretz, September 2, 2017; Yakov M. Rabkin, *What Is Modern Israel?*, trans. Fred A. Reed (London: Pluto Press, 2016). Regarding India, see Sumit Ganguly and Rajan Menon, "Democracy a la Modi," *National Interest*, no. 153 (January/February 2018), pp. 12–24; Christopher Jaffrelot, *The Hindu*

Nationalist Movement in India (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Pankaj Mishra, "Narendra Modi and the New Face ofIndia," *Guardian*, May 16, 2014; Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

90. For a good example of the extent to which liberalism treats individuals as utility maximizers, see S. M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

91. Although they are not concerned with nationalism per se, Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels make an argument about the workings of American politics that dovetails with my claims about the relationship between liberalism and nationalism. Specifically, they argue in *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016) that the voting behavior of Americans can best be explained by their social and group identities, not by how each individual assesses a politician's position on the issues he cares about most.

92. Most liberal theorists acknowledge that individuals have important social ties. John Rawls, for example, writes: "Each person finds himself placed at birth in some particular position in some particular society, and the nature of his position materially affects his life prospects." John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 13. Moreover, in *The Law of Peoples: With "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), Rawls focuses directly on peoples, which is a synonym for nations. Still, much of the analysis in *The Law of Peoples* focuses on the individual, which is certainly the focus of attention in his other two seminal book, *A Theory of Justice and Political Liberalism*, expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Nevertheless, a theory based on individualism cannot at the same time emphasize that people are profoundly social, because the two perspectives are at odds with each other. In fact, Rawls has been criticized on this point. For example, see Andrew Kuper, "Rawlsian Global Justice: Beyond the Law of Peoples to a Cosmopolitan Law of Persons," *Political Theory* 28, no. 5 (October 2000): 640–74; Thomas W. Pogge, "The Incoherence between Rawls's Theories of Justice," *Fordham Law Review* 72, no. 5 (April 2004): 1739–59. For an overview of the debate between Rawls's critics and defenders, see Gillian Brock, *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 2.

93. See Paul W. Kahn, *Putting Liberalism in Its Place* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

94. Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 117–18.

95. It reads: "The rights and liberties asserted and claimed in the said declaration are the true, ancient and indubitable rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom." "English Bill of Rights 1689," The Avalon Project at the Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/england.asp.

96. Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*; Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*.

97. See Otto Hintze, "The Formation of States and Constitutional Development: A Study in History and Politics," and "Military Organization and the Organization of the State," in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Felix Gilbert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 157–215; Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (January 1941): 455–68.

98. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1973), pp. 291–92.

99. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 300.

100. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 269, 299.

101. Lynn Hunt calls this "the Paradox of Self-Evidence." She writes, "If equality of rights is so self-evident, then why did this assertion have to [be] made and why was it only made in specific times and places? How can human rights be universal if they are not universally recognized?" Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007), pp. 19–20.

102. H. L.A. Hart, "Rawls on Liberty and Its Priority," in *Essays in Jurisprudence and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 223-47.

103. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 162.

104. Contrast the views of Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) with Michael W. McConnell's review of that book: "You Can't Say That: A Legal Philosopher Urges Americans to Punish Hate Speech," *New York Times*, June 24, 2012; and John Paul Stevens's review of the book: "Should Hate Speech Be Outlawed?," *New York Review of Books*, June 7, 2012, pp. 18–22.

105. John Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism* (New York: New Press, 2000), p. 82.

106. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 13.

107. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 268.

108. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, p. 105. Also see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Carl J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy: Theory and Practice in Europe and America* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1946), chap. 13; Clinton L. Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship: Crisis Government in the Modern Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1948); Fredrick M. Watkins, "The Problem of Constitutional Dictatorship," in *Public Policy: A Yearbook of the Graduate School of Public Administration, Harvard University*, ed. C. J. Friedrich and Edward S. Mason (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940).

109. "Inside the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth," 8th Annual ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, 2016, p. 26.

110. Stephen Kinzer, "Rwanda and the Dangers of Democracy," *Boston Globe*, July 22, 2017. Also see Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008).

111. "Stability and Comfort over Democracy: Russians Share Preferences in Poll," *RT News*, April 3, 2014.

112. The difficulty of spreading liberal rights in the West is a central theme in two recent books dealing with the history of human rights: Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*; and Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Both authors make it clear that the concept of inalienable rights first gained widespread attention in the latter part of the eighteenth century with the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). But for roughly the next 150 years, individual rights were not paid great attention within the West. Hunt argues they once again became a subject of marked importance in 1948, while Moyn maintains that this did not happen until 1977. Also see Markus Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects" (BCSIA Discussion Paper 2000-07, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, April 2000), pp. 20–22. It is worth noting that contingency is at the core of both Hunt's and Moyn's stories. Hunt writes, for example: "Yet even naturalness,

equality, and universality are not quite enough. Human rights only become meaningful when they gain political content. They are not the rights of humans in a state of nature; they are the rights of humans in society" (p. 21). In other words, she is arguing against natural rights. For Moyn, human rights were "only one appealing ideology among others" (p. 5).

113. An indication of how difficult it is to spread liberalism is the trouble Britain had exporting that ideology to its colonial empire, especially India. See Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2010); Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

114. Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship*, p. 228. For a more detailed discussion of Lincoln's actions, see pp. 223–39.

115. Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 192.

116. This discrimination against European immigrants is reflected in the titles of these three books: Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 2008); David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

117. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), chap. 1; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974); Carl Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1936).

118. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence*, p. 18; Gerald N. Rosenberg, "Much Ado about Nothing? The Emptiness of Rights' Claims in the Twenty-First Century United States," in "Revisiting Rights," ed. Austin Sarat, special issue, *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2009), pp. 1–41.

119. Rosenberg, "Much Ado about Nothing?," pp. 20, 23–28. Also see George Klosko, "Rawls's ' Political' Philosophy and American Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 2 (June 1993): 348–59; George Klosko, *Democratic Procedures and Liberal Consensus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. vii; Shaun P. Young, "Rawlsian Reasonableness: A Problematic Presumption?," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (March 2006): 159–80.

120. All three quotes are from Rosenberg, "Much Ado about Nothing?," p. 33.

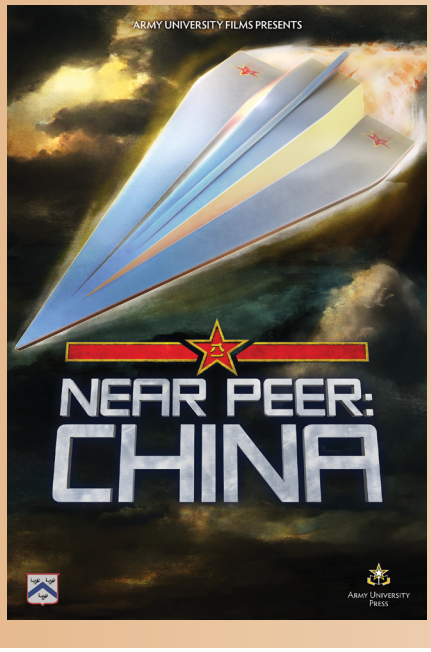
121. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin, 1987), pp. 122–28.

122. Lisa Blaydes and James Lo, "One Man, One Vote, One Time? A Model of Democratization in the Middle East," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 24, no. 1 (January 2012): 110–46; Paul Pillar, "One Person, One Vote, One Time," *National Interest Blog*, October 3, 2017, http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/one-person-one-vote-one-time-22583.

123. There is worrisome evidence that the various cleavages in the American public are beginning to line up. Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation and the Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018). Not surprisingly, there is good reason to worry about the authoritarian temptation in the United States today. See Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018).

124. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

125. Michael J. Glennon, *National Security and Double Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Also see Michael Lofgren, *The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government* (New York: Penguin, 2016).



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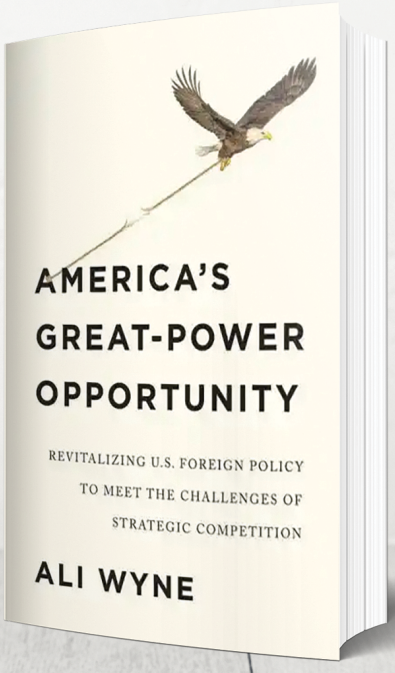
America's Great-Power Opportunity

Revitalizing U.S. Foreign Policy to Meet the Challenges of Strategic Competition



Ali Wyne, Polity, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2022, 224 pages

Ambassador Douglas Lute, Retired

Lt. Col. Jordan Becker, PhD, U.S. Army

Order, Guglielmo Ferrero contended as he watched it disintegrate in mid-twentieth-century Europe, is "the set of rules that man must respect in order not to live in the permanent terror of his fellow men, of the innate madness of men and its unpredictable explosions—a set of rules that man calls freedom."[1] In modern practice, this means predictable, transparent, norms-based interactions among states seeking to pursue their own interests as they relate to others, with reduced risk of unpredictable outcomes or violent coercion. Modern scholars Rebecca Friedman Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper define this as "the governing arrangements among states that establish fundamental rules, principles, and institutions … the basic framework that creates rules and settles expectations among states."[2]

The current international order is under strain, and consequent concerns about living in one or another variety of permanent terror abound. While arguments about history "accelerating" may just be artifacts of cognitive biases or implicit theories of commentators writing current history, the current international order is, at a minimum, undergoing change, and change implies risk.[3] If a bipolar rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States defined the post-World War II order, and American hegemony defined the post-Cold

War order, then a putative "exit" from U.S. hegemony suggests that significant changes are inevitable, whether or not the current order is in fact "unravelling," as Alexander Cooley and Dan Nexon have argued.[4]

Ferrero made his observations about order while examining the Concert of Europe, a defining example of a security regime—*the* defining example according to Bob Jervis.[5] An Italian writing in French while exiled to Switzerland for antagonizing Mussolini, he could be forgiven for having grave concerns about the future (and present) of international order. He contended that orders are generally constructed in the wake of disastrous events upending previous orders once humans have had enough of terror and wished to again curtail their "innate madness." Bear Braumoeller argued, analogously (and far more recently), that "war makes orders and orders make war."[6] Braumoeller's formulation borrows consciously from Charles Tilly's famous aphorism that "war made the state, and the state made war."[7]

So, while it is not a foregone conclusion, shifts in hegemonic systems and more broadly in international ordering are likely to be fraught, if not downright dangerous.[8] Recognizing that the shift of relative economic power globally toward the Indo-Pacific, combined with Chinese and Russian authoritarian revanchism, is likely to lead to some form of great power rivalry, scholars and strategists around the world have considered ways to anticipate and adapt to shifts to benefit their constituencies.

A "near-consensus that the liberal international order led by the United States since World War II is fraying" has created an impetus to think about "reconstructing" international order as if we were living in a "post war" period, while averting the war itself. Navigating a "safe passage" into a posthegemonic period will likely be the central challenge of the coming decade—and it is far from guaranteed.[9] The key strategic challenge of our time is reconstructing a strained international order while avoiding the kinds of catastrophes that often precede such reconstructions.

In Washington and many allied capitals, strategists have struggled to identify themes around which to build national consensus on how—even in the most general sense—to think about international ordering, what needs to be reconstructed, and what needs to be jettisoned. The Trump administration's 2017 *National Security Strategy* recognized shifts in the distribution of power internationally and sought to address them by "mak[ing] America great again" internationally, focusing more unilaterally on American power than previous approaches had, with a particular emphasis on competition with China.[10] The Biden administration's interim *National Security Strategic Guidance* and *National Defense Strategy* have similarly focused on challenges to the current international order.[11] NATO's *2022 Strategic Concept* likewise identifies threats from Russia and competition with China as key factors structuring the international system.[12]

> The key strategic challenge of our time is reconstructing a strained international order while avoiding the kinds of catastrophes that often precede such reconstructions.

In a period in which domestic consensus is elusive (to say nothing of multilateral consensus), the idea that "great power competition" is an accurate descriptor of the international security environment seems to be one area in which political actors across countries and ideologies agree.

It is into the debate about how to reconstruct the existing international order in the shadow of great power competition that Ali Wyne steps with his new book, *America's Great-Power Opportunity: Revitalizing U.S. Foreign Policy to Meet the Challenges of Strategic Competition*.[13]

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Wyne acknowledges that great power competition is, in fact, a reasonable descriptor of the international security environment. He argues convincingly, however, that it is less reasonable, and potentially harmful, as foreign policy prescription. The United States is less influential, in relative terms, than it was at the height of the post-Cold War "unipolar moment"; whenever one dates that peak, it

is not occurring in 2022.[14] Wyne introduces his arguments by acknowledging the need for what he calls a "unifying construct" for American foreign policy, and he identifies challenges that are almost psychological in nature (both at the individual and collective levels) to thinking about foreign policy without "ballast" or an "anchor" provided by a clear adversary.

At the same time, he introduces his case that the United States should "articulate a forward-looking conception of its role in the world, identifying cases where circumscribed competition with China and Russia might further that vision."[15] This case for circumscription is based on three risks of focusing excessively on rivalry with China and Russia: the risk of stumbling into an "expansive, yet poorly specified struggle against two formidable powers"; the risk of eliciting defensive responses and driving Russia and China together; and the risk of making it more difficult to manage transnational challenges that require international cooperation. He contends that the United States' role in international affairs depends primarily on its ability to "restore the appeal of its domestic example."

Wyne criticizes commentators' and practitioners' tendency to reach for analogies—the two he identifies as both facile and troublesome are the 1930s and the Cold War. The key difference between now and the 1930s, he contends, is that there is a robust international order to update today, despite the many challenges associated with doing so. He identifies nine major differences between the current period and the Cold War, leading him to argue that "on balance, contemporary contrasts between today's disorder and the apparent stability of the Cold War reflect a misplaced nostalgia."[16] He nonetheless concludes that we can extract three key lessons from the 1930s and the Cold War era: first, ideologies affect behavior; second, early years of protracted competitions can be the most dangerous because of high levels of uncertainty; and third, uncertainty plays a larger role than policy makers often acknowledge.

Wyne concludes that while neither Russia nor China constitutes an existential threat to the United States in the way the Soviet Union did, complacency is dangerous, and the risks of nuclear confrontation should remain front of mind for strategists. In fact, he suggests, fear in the minds of officials regarding the dangers of confrontation can play a constructive role in establishing a stable relationship between great powers in an emerging international order. Paradoxically, Wyne argues that the simmering anxiety of great power competition among nuclear-armed powers combined with the "quiet confidence" of a strong and domestically stable United States can open opportunities for a relatively stable international order in which rivals can simultaneously compete and cooperate, depending on the issues and stakes.

This argument brings Wyne and his readers back to the fundamentally psychologically oriented aspect of his overall case: the competitive challenge facing the United States hinges on the extent to which the United States is confident enough in itself to focus on renewing the fundamental sources of its own power, maintaining awareness of its rivals without allowing their actions to determine its own.

What, then, are the implications of Wyne's general argument that "centering America's role in the world around" competition with China and Russia "risks subordinating affirmative planning to defensive reactions"?

America's Great-Power Opportunity is an ambitious work, and its implications are legion. Here, we focus on three that are likely to coincide with major foreign policy debates among U.S. actors and with allies and partners around the world as they grapple with changes in the relative distribution of power in the international system, ordering, and alliance structures.[17]

First, if not great power competition, then what? If great power competition is not the appropriate overarching conceptual framework for U.S. foreign policy, and particularly if it

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is an inaccurate description of the current international system, what three-word alternatives are available?[18] Brevity and pithiness are important here—an organizing principle that can't be generally defined in a few words is unlikely to capture the lasting attention of foreign policy elites or the wider population. Wyne offers "eight principles to inform U.S. foreign policy," which is a start.[19] What, however, should we "name" a foreign policy approach for the coming decades that aligns with those principles?

Second, what are the practical policy implications of Wyne's findings and the eight principles he articulates? What, for example, do Wyne's principles suggest the United States and its allies do about the Russo-Ukrainian War? There are surely large segments of electorates and elites across the United States and its allies to whom Wyne's approach will appeal and who will likely want to understand such practical implications. What does renewal of America's domestic sources of strength look like in practice, and how do America's diplomats communicate that abroad? What precisely *are* the "limits to America's unilateral influence," and how can America best exercise influence within them? What does international cooperation, including with rivals, look like, particularly if the United States is able, as Wyne prescribes, to truly focus on its vocation in the Indo-Pacific?

Third, there are also likely large segments of both electorates and foreign-policy elites (such as U.S. primacists who also see the United States as in decline), who will find Wyne's arguments so counterintuitive as to have difficulty dealing with them seriously.[20] This segment of American society, in particular, is not limited to a fringe; a venerable current of international relations scholarship holds that "alliances are against and only derivatively for, someone or something."[21] More recently, Kyle Lascurettes argues that rather than being inclusive, orders are deliberately constructed by leading powers to "exclude particular actors and entities in world politics" and that international orders originate, in fact, from "the logic of competition and exclusion."[22]

The policy implications that Lascurettes draws from his analysis are not so different from Wyne's: a recognition of the fact that "the United States does not control the future shape of order and can instead only push it in a 'least bad' direction," which, for Lascurettes, is likely to lead to a near-term accommodation with China.

On the other hand, Lascurettes acknowledges that such a recognition would be difficult for U.S. elites. We assess that it will be difficult for a significant proportion of the American electorate as well, which raises a third question: How likely is it that the United States and its allies will be able to forge some type of domestic and multilateral consensus around Wyne's positive, but somewhat nebulous, vision of a foreign policy approach? The principles Wyne convincingly argues for seem to demand some sort of minimal domestic consensus in the United States and, by implication, its allies, on the basic contours of an affirmative foreign policy approach. Is such a consensus foreseeable now, or in two, four, or twelve years?

To return to the Ukraine example mentioned above, Russia's strategic theory of victory in the Russo-Ukrainian war appears to center the idea of maintaining pressure on Ukraine long enough to exhaust Ukraine and its Western allies' collective ability to maintain a common sense of purpose, enabling them to continue to resource and prosecute their side of the war. Conversely, Ukraine and the West's theory of victory seems to center on the idea of waiting for Russia's army to break apart on the shoals of an unsuccessful military campaign in Ukraine before Russia's hope for Western disunity and failure is attained.

Each side's theory of victory seems, then, to rely in part on a breakdown of domestic consensus (in whatever form it takes according to the different parties' regime types) on the part of the other side. Thus, in both the near- and the long-term, strategic success for the United States and its allies depends on achieving minimal consensus on broad aims. Those aims may involve excluding autocracies from international order, and there is some question as to the United States' ability to do that as the limitations of its power become more apparent. A consensus on the extent to which an emerging order is inclusive as opposed to exclusive, and on which entities to include or exclude, could be the floor for a workable strategic approach.

America's Great-Power Opportunity offers affirmative motivation and general direction to achieve such a consensus but leaves much to be determined. This is natural—in reality, strategy is most often developed on the fly rather than as the product of a grand vision from on high. How the United States and its allies navigate the domestic and intra-alliance politics of the

Russo-Ukrainian war will offer some initial contours of what such an approach might look like. The incorporation of that approach into a broader understanding of emerging international systemic factors will point toward what a reconstructed international order might look like—or if such a (semi) peaceful reconstruction is even possible.

How, then, should U.S. policy makers consider shaping the emerging international order? Wyne is correct that "great power competition" is an accurate description of the current dynamic, but a poor prescription for policy. Ferrero's notion of reconstruction is helpful, but rests on the observation that orders are mostly reconstructed after catastrophe. The foreign policy challenge of our time, however, is to prevent such a catastrophe.

We contend, therefore, that *reaffirmation* of a transparent, open, and nonexpansionary international order is an appropriate guiding theme for leaders in the United States and its allies. Reaffirmation entails an acknowledgement that the order the United States and its allies have constructed and tended to since the end of the Cold War was always international, but never a "world order." It also entails an acknowledgement that order building (and order maintenance) are in large part about exclusion—or determining which entities are part of an order and which are not. The U.S. approach to ordering should support the sovereign right of each state to choose how it positions itself internationally—thereby clarifying that it is not interested in coercively expanding the current order but will not accept coercive attempts to shrink it either.

Together, these acknowledgements imply that rather than actively seeking to extend the breadth of the current order that includes the United States and its allies and partners, leaders should focus on deepening the institutional anchors of that order and defending them assiduously. In Europe, the major question is whether Ukraine is inside or outside this order. Battlefield developments in the Russo-Ukrainian war will be the key determinant here, and Ukraine's Western allies have an interest in ensuring that this decision is made by a sovereign Ukraine, not imposed by Russia. However, the nature of the international order will continue to affect those battlefield developments as well. For instance, the fact that countries sanctioning Russia comprise over 60 percent of global GDP but only 16 percent of global population suggests that much of the "Global South" has chosen nonalignment.[23]

The question is a bit murkier in Asia, but a similar dynamic exists. China appears uninterested in supporting a U.S.-led order there, and there is contestation about the frontiers of that order. First among those appears to be the future status of Taiwan. So, as rivals seek to limit the breadth of U.S.-led regional orders in the West and the Far East of Eurasia, Braumoeller's insights about the peace-inducing nature of orders for those within them, coupled with the dangers associated with establishing their boundaries, are especially important.[24]

By acknowledging limitations in its ability to order the entire planet, the United States can enable itself to focus on reconsolidating the existing order to seize its great power opportunity. Doing so requires strengthening and deepening the institutions that make up that order—from alliances and international organizations to domestic institutions safeguarding liberal democracies. ■

Notes

1. Guglielmo Ferrero, *Ricostruzione: Talleyrand a Vienna (1814-1815)* (Garzanti, 1948).

2. Rebecca Friedman Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "The Day after Trump: American Strategy for a New International Order," *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (January 2018): 7–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1445353.

3. Kyle Harper, "The Coronavirus Is Accelerating History Past the Breaking Point," *Foreign Policy* (website), 6 April 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/06/coronavirus-is-accelerating-history-past-the-breaking-point/; Andrew Ehrhardt, "Everyman His Own Philosopher of History: Notions of Historical Process in the Study and Practice of Foreign Policy," *Texas National Security Review* 5, no. 3 (March 2022), https://tnsr.org/2022/03/everyman-his-own-philosopher-of-history-notions-of-historical-process-in-the-study-and-practice-of-foreign-policy/.

4. William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 91–129, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539080; G. John Ikenberry and Daniel H. Nexon, "Hegemony Studies 3.0: The Dynamics of Hegemonic Orders," *Security Studies* 28, no. 3 (May 2019): 395–421, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2019.1604981; Alexander Cooley and Daniel H. Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

5. Robert Jervis, "Security Regimes," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 357–78.

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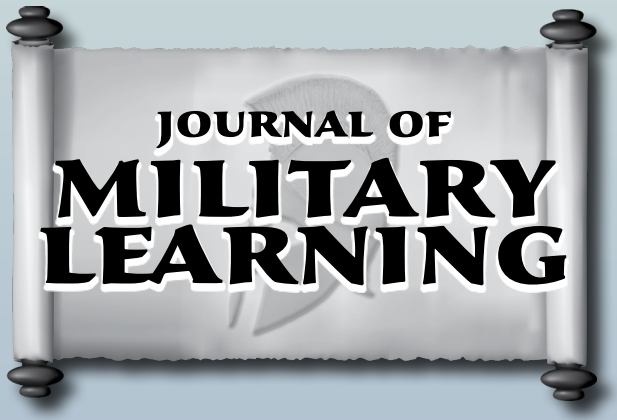

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Medal of Honor

Spc. 5 Dennis M. Fujii

Adapted from a Department of Defense News article by Katie Lange

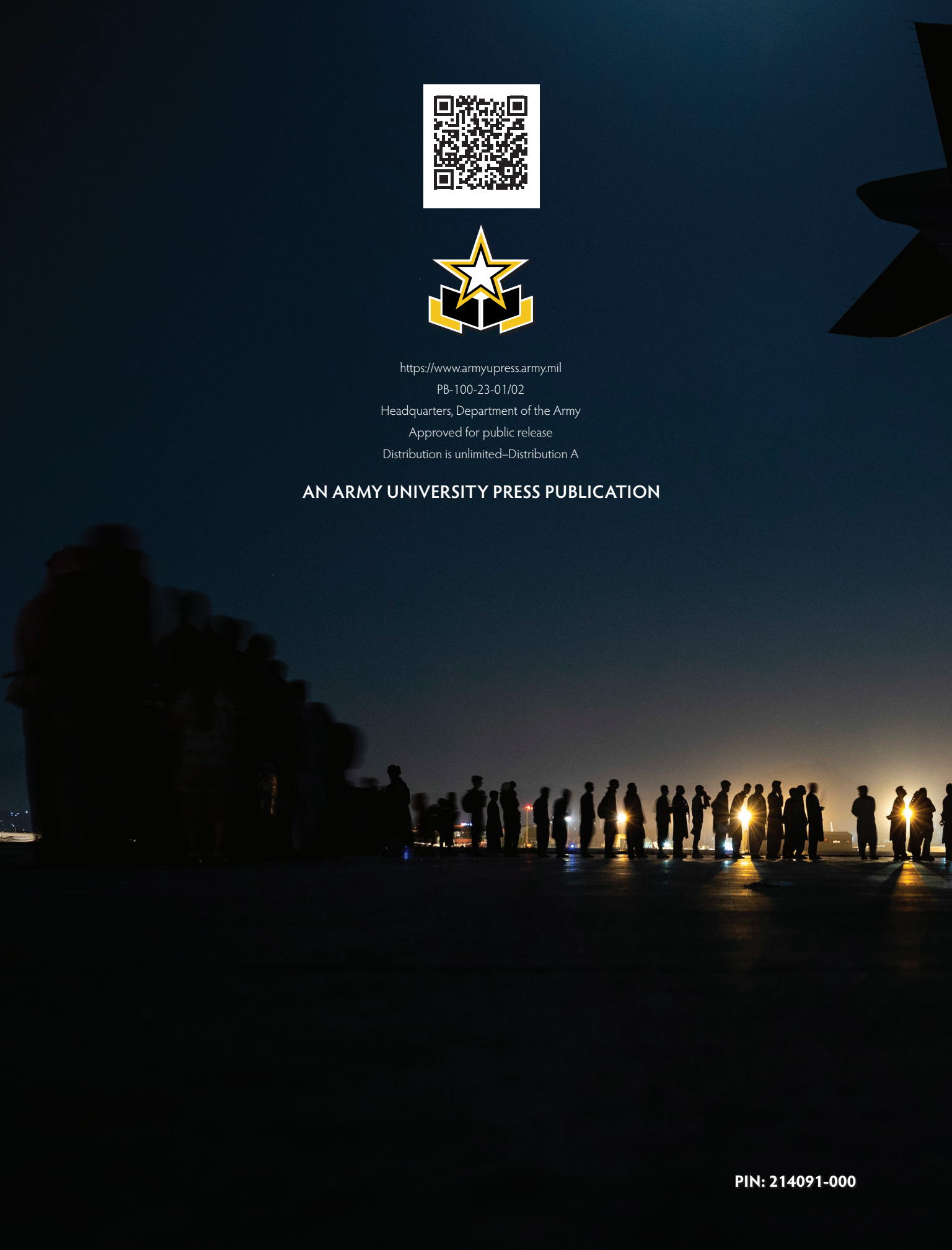
President Joseph R. Biden awards the Medal of Honor to former Army Spc. 5 Dennis M. Fujii for his actions on 18–20 February 1971 during the Vietnam War, at a ceremony in the White House, 5 July 2022. (Photo by Sgt. Henry Villarama, U.S. Army)

Spc. 5 Dennis M. Fujii received the Nation's highest honor for valor from President Joseph R. Biden during a 5 July 2022 White House ceremony for his actions following a failed medical evacuation on 18–20 February 1971.

Fujii was serving as the crew chief aboard a medevac helicopter that was sent to evacuate seriously wounded South Vietnamese soldiers from a raging battle in Laos against North Vietnamese troops who had been using what was known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail to infiltrate into South Vietnam. Under heavy fire at the landing zone, Fujii's helicopter was hit by a mortar round as it attempted to take off, causing it to crash. Fujii ran with other survivors to a nearby bunker but was hit by mortar shrapnel in his shoulder. He was hit again by shrapnel forty-five minutes later, this time in the eye, when attempting to reach a second aircraft. Drawing intense enemy fire and knowing he could not reach the aircraft, he waved the helicopter off. The only remaining American, Fujii radioed other U.S. aircraft to call off all subsequent evacuation attempts due to the intensity of the enemy fire. For the next two days, he administered aid to wounded South Vietnamese troops while ignoring his own injuries.

Army Spc. 5 Dennis Fujii returns home to Hawaii from Vietnam in 1971 with a hero's welcome. (Photo courtesy of the Department of Defense)

In the evening of the nineteenth, a reinforced enemy regiment supported by artillery fire assaulted the unit. Although he had never directed air strikes before, he was the only English speaker on the ground, so he had to learn fast. He continued to direct fires for seventeen hours, often from exposed positions and during intense fighting. Fujii was finally evacuated on 20 February, but that aircraft was also shot and had to crash land at another South Vietnamese encampment. He was finally evacuated to safety on 22 February. Originally awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his actions, along with two Purple Hearts, Fujii's award was upgraded after a military review of awards made to minorities. To read the complete Department of Defense article on Fujii's exploits, visit https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/Story/Article/3122476/medal-of-honor-monday-army-spc-5-dennis-m-fujii/. ■



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