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# Prophets or Praetorians? The Uptonian Paradox and the Powell Corollary

ROBERT M. CASSIDY

“A [military] philosophy grows from the minds and hearts, social mores and customs, traditions and environment of a people. It is the product of national and racial attributes, geography, the nature of a potential enemy threat, standards of living and national traditions, influenced and modified by great military philosophers, like Clausewitz and Mahan, and by great national leaders like Napoleon.”<sup>1</sup>

“The major risk of a big-war predilection is that the US Army will retain the thinking, infrastructure, and forces appropriate for a large-scale war that may not materialize while failing to properly adapt itself to conduct simultaneous smaller engagements of the type that seem to be occurring with increasing frequency.”<sup>2</sup>

Those quotations highlight the salience of military culture as an influence on how military institutions perceive and conduct war. Military culture as an explanation of behavior may be particularly relevant to the US Army now because the Army is transforming, is still engaged in a small counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan, and is currently engaged in stability operations to counter terrorist and subversive paramilitary elements and thugs who use guerrilla hit-and-run tactics against coalition forces in Iraq. In short, military culture comprises the beliefs and attitudes within a military organization that shape its collective preferences toward the use of force. These attitudes can impede or foster innovation and adaptation, and military culture sometimes exhibits preferences for big wars in favor of small wars. This article discusses one characteristic of US military culture that since the end of the 19th century has had a profound influence on how the American military views the nexus between politics and war.

This characteristic is the Uptonian paradox, named so because Emory Upton’s influence on American military thought contributed to the following contradiction: the US Army has embraced Clausewitz as the quintessential oracle

of war, but it has also tended to distance itself from Clausewitz's overarching theme—the linkage of the military instrument to political purposes. To be sure, the propensity of 19th- and early 20th-century Western militaries to divorce the military sphere from the political sphere was not solely Uptonian—this inclination stemmed at first from the widespread influence of Jomini, whose work was more influential than Clausewitz's for most of the 19th century. In Upton's writings, however, he strengthened the tendency to separate the civil and military spheres by advocating minimal civilian control to maximize military effectiveness.<sup>3</sup>

A similar phenomenon, engendering similar tendencies, manifested itself after the Vietnam War. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the US military underwent an intellectual and professional renaissance after hitting its nadir at the end of the Vietnam War. This renaissance displayed an Uptonian character because it refocused the Army exclusively on the big-war paradigm, eschewed several studies that captured the true lessons of Vietnam, and embraced a book sponsored by the Army War College that asserted the US military failed in Vietnam not because it didn't adapt to counterinsurgency, but because it didn't fight that war conventionally enough. Consequently, the big-war-only school was ultimately codified in the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine—a prescription for the use of force that essentially proscribes anything other than conventional war. This article postulates that the Uptonian paradox remains an important influence on the US military and is shown in two tendencies: the inclination to separate the military and political domains after a war begins, and the tendency of the US military to prescribe its preferred paradigm for war to its civilian leadership.

Regular Army officers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries viewed Emory Upton, whose ideas included an unconcealed contempt for civilian control of the military, as a warrior prophet. Likewise, the US military of the 1990s worshiped Colin Powell, because he masterfully managed the 1991 Persian Gulf War by closely adhering to the Weinberger-Powell rules on the use of force. By advocating prescriptive policies that sought to circumscribe how force would be used and to mitigate civilian influence, were Upton and Powell essentially the Praetorian guards of a very Jominian way of looking at war? And if they were, so what? Why is this subject even germane? Simply stated, the Uptonian paradox poses significant challenges for an Army that must be an effective instrument of policy in a security environment that makes asymmetric threats more likely than symmetric ones. In addition, military cultural resistance to change can be an obstacle to the Army's efforts to transform into a more versatile and relevant force.<sup>4</sup>

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## *Upton and the Army*

Before the Civil War and Upton's emergence as a military thinker, the Army's leadership was not looking realistically at how to fight an American war. "They expected society to adapt itself to their mode of war-making; they made little effort to adapt their ideas on warfare to American society."<sup>5</sup> The absolute character of the Civil War would have been anticipated by Clausewitz, but not by the American military's preferred oracle of military strategy before the Civil War—Jomini. In fact, the Civil War, coupled with the victory of the Prussian army over France in 1871 and the translation of Clausewitz's *On War* in 1873, were the precursors to what would become an Uptonian understanding of Clausewitz through Jominian filters. This interpretation, what's more, reflected both the Jominian separation of military affairs from politics and Clausewitz's precept that all wars tend to move toward the absolute. Emory Upton, "the single most influential officer in sealing the commitment of the officer corps to the conservative, professionalist view of war,"<sup>6</sup> was a true-faith apostle of the Prussian system, and he embodied a fusion of Jomini with the newly preeminent theorist of war, Clausewitz.

The isolation of the military on the America's western frontier after the Civil War was a key condition for the intellectual and professional awakening of the US Army. Isolated from civilian society and allowed time for introspection, Army officers came under the influence of reformers like William Sherman and Emory Upton. These luminaries looked abroad for most of their ideas. Upton, in particular, focused on the Prussian military system.

Emory Upton was the most influential young officer among the US Army reformers. After the resounding German victory in the Franco-Prussian War, the US Army's reverence for French military institutions diminished and US officers became enamored of the German military system. In sending Upton on his inspection of foreign militaries in 1875-1876, Sherman instructed him to place a particular emphasis on German military institutions. *The Armies of Europe and Asia*, the first study to emerge from Upton's tour, revealed in a comprehensive fashion the degree to which the US Army as a profession was behind its European counterparts. Upton recommended that the Army establish advanced military schools, a general staff, a system of personnel evaluation reports, and promotion by examination.<sup>7</sup>

The development of professional journals allowed Upton and others to share their ideas with the Army's core leadership. In 1878, Major General Winfield Scott Hancock established the Military Service Institution of the United States, with the purpose of promoting "writing and discussion about military science and military history."<sup>8</sup> In 1879, the *United Service Journal* also began publication. Sherman encouraged these institutions to supplement the school system. Moreover, the purpose of the postgraduate school system that Sherman established in 1881 was to provide a "pyramid of institutions through which the

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officer could learn the special skills of his own branch of service and then the attitudes and principles of high command.”<sup>9</sup> The journals and the schools fed ideas to each other, with the journals affording an outlet for ideas and studies nurtured at the schools. Within the same decade Clausewitz’s *On War* was translated into English in 1873 and a host of articles related to the Prussian military began to appear in US professional military journals. American officers tended to accept the German methods unquestioningly, and by the end of the century, American military thinkers fully accepted the German general staff model.<sup>10</sup>

It was Upton’s second work, however, that had the most influence in shaping US Army attitudes during the late 19th century. Anyone interested in US military history considered Upton’s *Military Policy of the United States* as the standard work in the field. In this work Upton argued “that all the defects of the American military system rested upon a fundamental, underlying flaw, excessive civilian control of the military.”<sup>11</sup> As officers became isolated from the rest of the country, they embraced Upton’s ideas in the late 19th century. Articles written in the new professional journals that suggested broad approval of Upton’s ideas became prevalent. One authority on US military history, Russell F. Weigley, asserts that Upton did lasting damage “in setting the main current of American military thought not to the task of shaping military institutions that would serve both military and national purposes, but to the futile task of demanding that the national institutions be adjusted to purely military expediency.”<sup>12</sup>

Published after Upton’s death, *The Military Policy of the United States* argued for a strong regular military force. The US Army subsequently embraced *The Military Policy of the United States* in its disputes with the militia advocates. Upton considered the Prussian model to be excellent because of its general staff system, mass army, and freedom from civilian control. Until the end of his life he endeavored to get Congress to implement reforms based on the German army system. However, many believe that Upton misinterpreted Clausewitz and the nature of a liberal democracy. In *Military Policy*, he argued that officers alone should be entrusted with directing armies in the field. By vilifying the Secretary of War, Upton was advocating a complete independence of the Army from civilian control. Enamored of the German war machine, Upton wanted the US Army to

achieve a similar status. Upton was willing to let the President retain the title of commander in chief, but his remarks about the defects in the Constitution (that encourage the President to assume the character of military commander) bespoke his real intentions. Upton renounced the military policy of the United States as one of imprudence and weakness, largely because uninformed civilians dominated the military. However, Upton was incapable of realizing that one could not simply graft a European-style professional army onto the American liberal system. According to military historian Stephen Ambrose, Upton failed to grasp the interrelationship between the political and military spheres in a democracy.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of the influence that Upton and other military reformers exerted on the US Army's core preferences, the Army developed a very deductive method for understanding warfare based largely on the Prussian "science of war." As one writer notes, "The Army objected to the use of the armed forces as a police force . . . and argued that the Army must always be governed by classic military principles."<sup>14</sup> As a result, the Army developed an approach to war that was biased toward decisive and offensive doctrine, one derived from Europe and primarily suitable for the European theater. Moreover, the efforts of Sherman and Upton helped the Army institutionalize an officer educational system that focused on the principles of war and which cultivated uniformity of thought. The principles of war, as taught in the Army's educational system, led increasingly to a rigid conception of warfare. The American Army came to favor the science of war over the art of war, resulting in a stiff adherence to principles and rules.

It is also perplexing that in the late 19th century the US Army embraced the conventional Prussian military system as a paragon of professionalism at the same time that the American Army was engaged in a frontier war against the Indians—the most unorthodox of the US Army's 19th-century enemies. The frontier employment of the Army against the Indians was itself a paradox: the experience made the Army unsuited for orthodox warfare at the same time that its focus on orthodox war made it unsuited for fighting the Indians. Although most Army officers recognized the American Indian as a master of guerrilla warfare, the Army never institutionalized a counter-guerrilla doctrine—nor were there training programs, military schools, or professional literature on how to fight Indians. In the view of one expert on the Indian wars, "lacking a formal body of doctrine for unconventional war, the Army waged conventional war against the Indians."<sup>15</sup>

In essence, almost every professional Army officer in the late 19th century was convinced that the only way to solve the civil-military relations issue was for the civilian authorities to yield military policy to the military. As Russell Weigley wrote, "Here was still another pernicious fruit of the divorcement which the professional Army had allowed between itself and civilian America."<sup>16</sup> Separated from the civilians and disdainful of them as soldiers, Army officers were not inclined to accept the highest military guidance from citizens whom they perceived to be inept in military matters. As generals in chief, William Sherman and Philip Sheridan had also looked for Uptonian solutions. Moreover, they all

helped proselytize among the American officers the dogma that military policy must be left to military men alone. Weigley offers a cogent summary of this problem: “The officer corps had lost sight of the Clausewitzian dictum that war is but an extension of politics by other means.”<sup>17</sup> As the 19th century drew to a close, the Army’s core elites refused to acknowledge that in war military aims cannot be divorced from political purposes, and that the ultimate decisions rested with the civilian political leaders of the state.<sup>18</sup>

### ***World War II: Paragon of the Paradigm***

Many of Upton’s ideas were implemented under Secretary of War Elihu Root from 1901 to 1903. Root established the War Department Staff—the first high-level coordinating agency responsible for the creation and development of doctrine. The Root reforms also promulgated a system of service schools for the Army, subsequently serving as the principal sources of applied doctrine. However, Root ignored Upton’s notion of eliminating civilian control of the military. Beginning with the establishment of the General Staff by Root in 1903, during the first half of the 20th century the Army exhibited a long-term trend toward the emergence of the “massive armed force.” As Morris Janowitz explained, developments in the US military paralleled those of the other militaries of major industrialized states: these militaries “underwent a continuous and consistent transformation, accelerated during World War I and World War II and arrested to varying degrees during peacetime.”<sup>19</sup> This transformation encompassed the introduction of modern technology and large-scale managerial techniques that created the mass army and led to the notion and reality of total war.<sup>20</sup>

The US Army’s participation in World War I was too brief to change the concept of war that it had developed from the Civil War—one that it subsequently nurtured by the study of Civil War campaigns during the interwar period. A concept of war stemming from the final campaigns and results of the Civil War emerged in 1918 when the American military complained about the incompleteness of the destruction of the German army and the Allied victory. Many American officers who would become senior leaders in World War II concluded from World War I that the advent of mass armies left the frontal assault as the only course of action. As a result, during the years leading up to World War II, America’s military-strategic culture—one manifest in the military school system that it had borrowed from the Prussians, the instructors at those schools, and the scholarly publications associated with those schools—embraced a concept of war based on the Civil War model. America’s strategic aim of completely imposing its political will upon the vanquished, therefore, would be achieved by applying Grant’s method of utilizing overwhelming combat power to destroy the enemy’s armed forces and by following Sherman’s approach of destroying the enemy’s economic resources and will to fight.<sup>21</sup>

World War II had a tremendous impact on the shaping of US military culture because it validated and further embedded the cultural predilections in-

herited from Upton's era. Officers in the American Army had been able to prepare themselves for the transition from a small peacetime Army in 1940 to the Army of World War II in part because they had embraced the traditions of the only grand, European-style war in its history, the American Civil War. One military policy expert noted, "The Civil War had molded the American Army's conceptions of the nature of full-scale war in ways that would profoundly affect its conduct of the Second World War."<sup>22</sup> The remembered memory of the Civil War pointed to massive force as the principal military maxim.

### ***The Postwar and Vietnam: Anathema to the Paradigm***

America emerged from World War II in a position of uncontested military superiority: "The war seemed to have confirmed all traditional American strategic axioms."<sup>23</sup> America had, in concert with its allies, crushed the aggressor, and this victory had been achieved by harnessing and unleashing massive amounts of materiel. However, the onset of the Cold War precipitated a significant and fundamental shift in US strategy and force structure during peacetime. NSC 68, in conjunction with the Korean War, "served as a crucial catalyst for the ultimate implementation of the Army's strategic plans in the early 1950s."<sup>24</sup> Before World War II, the Army had historically been reduced to minimum strength after wars, and immediately after World War II the Army had again been demobilized in favor of a strategy that relied principally on strategic air power. NSC 68 helped the Army fulfill its organizational agenda for the Cold War, "thereby revitalizing more than just its overall force structure, but providing much of the institutional rationale for more men, more money, and more equipment."<sup>25</sup>

If World War II represented the apotheosis of the US military's preferred paradigm of war, Vietnam was anathema to it. A preponderance of US officers derived from Vietnam the determination to never again prosecute a war without the degree of public support more characteristic of a world war than a small war. As one scholar of American political culture observed: "Ironically, Vietnam brought us back more intently to the myth of World War II, to the restatement of the just war, or as Studs Terkel cunningly sensed, *The Good War*, that it represents."<sup>26</sup> Vietnam was America's least successful war of the 20th century, and it was the single most important cause of uncertainty and turbulence for the US Army in the 1970s. Surprisingly, the Army's preference for large conventional wars had not been altered as a result of that paradigm's failure in Southeast Asia. The Army met growing challenges because it tried to force-fit its paradigm for war to Vietnam: "The Army's doctrine, its tactics, its organization, its weapons—its entire repertoire of warfare was designed for conventional war in Europe."<sup>27</sup> In Southeast Asia, "the Army simply performed its repertoire" even though it was frequently irrelevant to the situation.<sup>28</sup> This problem is most pithily captured by the following quote from a senior officer in Saigon: "I'll be damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrine, and its traditions, to be destroyed just to win this lousy war."<sup>29</sup>



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One impediment to changing the approach in Vietnam was the attitude embraced by many Army leaders that the war in Vietnam was irrelevant to the institution. They argued against making drastic organizational changes on the basis of the experience in Vietnam, since the war there was perceived as an aberration. Even still, higher-echelon positions were generally dominated by officers with World War II experience whose concept of future war, the one the US Army had to be prepared for, was a European-style general war: “The war in Vietnam is regarded as an exotic interlude between the wars that really count.”<sup>30</sup> During the Vietnam War, US Army leaders also remained cognizant of the organization’s essence: “Its core competence was defeating conventional armies in frontal combat.”<sup>31</sup> The Army never arrived at a consensus that a change of approach was dictated by the nature of the conflict in Vietnam. “An unshakable belief in the essence of the organization precluded organizational learning and has continued to preclude consensus on the lessons of Vietnam and on required changes in the organization through the present day.”<sup>32</sup>

### ***Post-Vietnam: Powell and Upton’s Specter***

The current preference of the US military is captured in the Powell corollary to the Weinberger doctrine: the fast, overwhelming and decisive application of maximum force in the minimum time. Such an approach may produce effective, short-term results. It is irrelevant, probably even counterproductive, when matched against the very difficult internal problems that form the underlying problems in target countries.<sup>33</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, in examining past wars to derive lessons for future conflicts, the US Army generally tended to look at both Vietnam and Korea as unpleasant anomalies. Revisiting World War II and embracing the recent technological developments of the conventional 1973 Yom Kippur War, the American military hoped that the next war would prove to be more like World War II. In fact the principal architect of the first post-Vietnam Army doctrine, General William Depuy, was a product of the US Army’s success in World War II and its failure in Vietnam. In describing him, one study observed: “Depuy was skeptical of the relevance of the Korean and Vietnam experiences, except as they

reinforced his ideas.”<sup>34</sup> Depuy favored armored and combined-arms operations and he was enamored of the German methods of warfare. It was this experience and these ideas that appeared in the post-Vietnam doctrine, and around which Depuy sought to renew the Army. The lessons of the Yom Kippur War helped reinforce the concern of Depuy and his assistants that “Vietnam had been an aberration in the historical trend of warfare, and that the Army had lost a generation’s worth of technological modernization there while gaining a generation’s worth of nearly irrelevant combat experience.”<sup>35</sup>

A 1977 survey of the pages of *Military Review* also testified to the Army’s aversion to models other than the big-war paradigm in general, and to the Vietnam experience in particular. In 1976, the entire year’s volumes included almost no critical appraisal of low-intensity conflicts. In contrast, in 1976 there was a preponderance of articles that examined large-scale conventional wars and World War II. Likewise, in 1981 and 1982, Army professional thought, as reflected in *Military Review* and other professional military journals, pointed to the same conclusion—a focus on World War II-style conflicts with little critical analysis of Indochina and little hint at the possibility of small wars in the future. What’s more, a 1989 survey that examined the 1,400 articles published by *Military Review* between 1975 and 1989 discovered only 43 articles dedicated to low-intensity conflicts.<sup>36</sup>

The Army’s first official comprehensive examination of the Vietnam War criticized its doctrine and conduct of counterinsurgency warfare. Published by the BDM Corporation in June 1980 for the Army War College, this study concluded that the Army still did not know how to do low-intensity conflict because the strategic lesson taken from Vietnam was that intervention was to be avoided. The report also maintained that the US military’s traditional separation between military and political means significantly hindered the effective employment of military force in accomplishing objectives established by the political leadership. It criticized the American paradigm of war that focused on the destruction of enemy forces while ignoring complex and relevant political factors. The BDM report was essentially an indictment of the US Army’s inappropriate conventional approach to Vietnam. However, this study was essentially shelved in favor of an assessment more congruous with and supportive of the Army’s preferred paradigm—the extremely influential work of Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr.<sup>37</sup>

In the late 1970s, the Commandant of the US Army War College arranged for Colonel Summers to be assigned there. Impressed with Summers’ writing ability, the Commandant assigned him to write a book on Vietnam. Summers decided to base his theoretical framework on the new and better 1976 translation of Clausewitz’s *On War*. Consequently, he argued in *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* that the Army failed in Vietnam because it did not focus on conventional warfare. In other words, the Army’s failures in Vietnam stemmed from its deviation from the big-war approach and its temporary and incomplete experiment with counterinsurgency. Not surprisingly, Sum-

mers' book was readily embraced by the mainstream Army culture. *On Strategy* has been on the Command and General Staff College, the Army War College, and the official Army professional reading lists for years.<sup>38</sup>

Summers' "lessons" became the dominant school of thought and evolved into the "never-again school." In the years to come, the never-again school would dominate American military culture: it was articulated in the Weinberger Doctrine in the 1980s, and it was subsequently embodied by General Colin Powell as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) at the end of the decade. The "lessons" of Vietnam, coupled with the lessons from the 1983 bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut, were these: the United States should not commit troops without public support; if America does commit the military, it should have clearly defined political and military objectives; the United States should use force only in an overwhelming manner and with the intent of winning; America should commit force only in defense of vital national interests; and the United States should use military force only as a last resort.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, just as the end of the Cold War was making a conventional war in Europe improbable, the 1991 Persian Gulf War occurred. The Gulf War was subsequently offered as a validation of the American paradigm of war, in contrast to Vietnam:

In the same way that Instant Thunder had served as a counterpoint to the slow escalation of the Rolling Thunder air campaign in Vietnam, so too did this massive buildup of ground forces signal a rejection of gradualism, of limited force, of the perceived strategic shortcomings that led to the quagmire in Southeast Asia. Encouraged by Powell, Bush embraced—in Cheney's infelicitous phrase—"the don't screw around school of military strategy." A force so formidable as to be invincible would mass in the Saudi Desert, a force so huge that inevitably it contributed to the momentum propelling the nation toward war.<sup>40</sup>

The literature related to the Gulf War is replete with the notion that Desert Storm was fundamentally different from Vietnam and that it represented a complete validation of the lessons-learned. Vietnam has become the central metaphor of American foreign policy. General Powell's words to outgoing President Bush bear consideration also: "Mr. President, you have sent us in harm's way when you had to, but never lightly, never hesitantly, never with our hands tied, never without giving us what we needed to do the job."<sup>41</sup> In another part of his autobiography, after reflecting on a conversation with General Norman Schwarzkopf, Powell wrote of war, "Go in big and end it quickly."<sup>42</sup> Powell regarded the Weinberger Doctrine as a set of useful guidelines, derived from the lessons of Vietnam. While serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the Gulf War, he seemingly saw his task as ensuring that victory would be made inevitable by applying the Weinberger rules.<sup>43</sup>

For those who viewed the American way of war as an innate and unalterable manifestation of our strategic culture and national will, Operation Desert

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Storm served as validation. After Desert Storm, General Powell published a National Military Strategy that included a list of strategic principles which included “Decisive Force.” Decisive force is, essentially, an addendum to Weinberger’s criteria. It is “the concept of applying decisive force to overwhelm our adversaries and thereby terminate conflicts swiftly with a minimum loss of life.”<sup>44</sup> Implicit in decisive force, however, is the notion that long conflicts will cause public dissatisfaction with the military, civilian micromanagement, and a critical media.

In sum, the resurgence of the Uptonian paradox during the US military’s renewal following Vietnam essentially aggregated from a host of events: Depuy’s and the US doctrine writers’ interpretation of the conventional but high-tech Yom Kippur War of 1973; Michael Howard and Peter Paret’s superb 1976 translation of Clausewitz’s *On War*; the dismissal of the BDM study’s findings that the Army’s problems in Vietnam stemmed from its efforts to conventionalize the conflict; Summers’ 1982 *On Strategy*, which argued that the US military failed in Vietnam because it did not fight conventionally enough; and, finally, the 1984 Weinberger-Powell doctrine, which codified in distilled, bumper-sticker form the key components of Summers’ book—perhaps best summarized by the statement, “We don’t do Vietnams.” As a footnote, another indicator that the post-Vietnam military’s intellectual renaissance reembraced Clausewitz, as well as the German military, was the promulgation of maneuver warfare theory and the proliferation of terms such as “schwerpunkt” and “auftragstaktik” in the lexicon of the 1980s US Army. One military historian even commented, “The maneuverists prefer to use the German term *auftragstaktik*, and act like they have found another piece of the True (Iron) Cross.”<sup>45</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Consequent to the Civil War and Upton’s influence came the fusion of Jomini and Clausewitz, the embrace of the Prussian/German military system as the ideal, and a focus on conventional war and massive firepower. Upton and his disciples, as advocates of the conventional Prussian model and of minimum civilian interference in military affairs, imbued these ideas in the profession through institutions and journals. One result was that anything outside the core

paradigm came to be viewed as aberrant and ephemeral. More recent scholarship also points to the US military-strategic cultural tendency to divorce the military from the political: "In the United States, one of the basic assumptions of armed force organization at the national level is that war-fighting is an autonomous sphere."<sup>46</sup> In other words, war is an activity that is to be prosecuted by soldiers without significant interference from politicians. "This is an attitude with deep roots in the organizational culture of the Army."<sup>47</sup> Yet it is somewhat strange that an institution with more aggregate history and experience fighting irregular conflicts of limited intensity would have its core culture so profoundly influenced by Sherman, Upton, and the World War II experience.

The US military-strategic culture that emerged at the end of the 20th century is one that ostensibly embraces the Clausewitzian axiom of subordinating the military instrument to political ends, but, in all actuality, it is truly Jominian. Once war breaks out, the US military prefers to fight big conventional wars without limitations and without constraints imposed by its political masters.<sup>48</sup> The most significant feature of the United States' 12-year effort in Vietnam may be what little impact it has had on strategic thinking in the US Army. The United States was as unprepared in the 1980s as it was in the 1960s to fight a protracted counterinsurgency campaign. For the Army, whose focus had been on the Central Front in Europe and the prospect of defending against a Soviet assault, Vietnam was but a large bump in the road. Many officers say that Vietnam remained unstudied because senior officers felt that in doctrinal terms the Asian experience was irrelevant to Europe.<sup>49</sup>

Since the US military ostensibly worships Clausewitz as the principal prophet of war, it should adhere to the central Clausewitzian dictum that the military is an instrument of policy. But while the US military's core culture in no way argues for usurping civilian control of the military, it does exhibit a tendency to influence or reshape its political masters' views in order to make those views on war congruent with the military's preferred paradigm for war. This tendency to prescribe and circumscribe what wars it will fight and not fight was first manifested by Upton after the Civil War and the first translation of Clausewitz. It was reinforced by the World Wars, Vietnam, the 1976 translation of Clausewitz, and Colonel Summers' book. The Weinberger Doctrine and the Powell Corollary have helped perpetuate and exacerbate this tendency of the military to prescribe to the civilian elite what kind of wars the military does and does not fight.

Finally, an insistence on a preferred conventional paradigm in the context of civil-military relations also creates an anomalous and unhealthy situation in which the military is prescribing to its legitimate civilian leadership what kind of instrument it will be and not be. This has become even more problematic after the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act's effects were realized in the 1990s. That legislation, coupled with a diminishing depth of military expertise among civilian leaders and staff, may have actually increased the organizational salience of the military. In other words, it may have conferred upon the military more leverage

when civilian leaders make policy decisions on when and how to use force. As one expert on civil-military relations noted, “Individual military decisionmakers are better prepared to deal with current and future decision-making than are their civilian counterparts.”<sup>50</sup> They are better prepared because they are more pertinently educated and have had more relevant experience.

#### NOTES

1. Hanson W. Baldwin, *The New York Times*, magazine section, 3 November 1957, p. 13, quoted in Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 278.
2. James Dewar, et al. *Army Culture and Planning in a Time of Great Change* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996), p. 28.
3. For a discussion of Jomini’s pervasive influence on Western and US military thought, see John Shy, “Jomini,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 161, 164, 177-80, and 184-85.
4. Russell F. Weigley’s, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962) does a superb job of tracing the influence of Emory Upton on American military thought. See pages 110-13 for a discussion of Upton’s aversion to civilian control over the military.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
7. John Winthrop Hackett, *The Profession of Arms* (London: The Times Publishing House, 1962), p. 38; and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1957), pp. 232-35.
8. Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 274.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-75; Huntington, p. 235.
11. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, p. 279.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
13. Huntington, pp. 232-34; Stephen F. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 96, 122; Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (Washington: GPO, 1904), pp. 305, 318; and Alvin Brown, *The Armor of Organization* (New York: Hibbert, 1953), pp. 191-92, in Ambrose, pp. 131-32.
14. Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), p. 26.
15. Robert M. Utley, *The Contribution of the Frontier to the American Military Tradition*, The Harmon Memorial Lecture Series Number 19 (Colorado Springs, Colo.: US Air Force Academy, 1977), pp. 3-5.
16. Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, p. 168.
17. *Ibid.*
18. One notable exception was Schofield, who as commanding general of the Army beginning in 1888 eschewed Uptonian prescriptions for civilian subordination to the military and reasserted civilian supremacy by deferring to the Secretary of War. For a full account, see Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, pp. 167-71.
19. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. viii.
20. John L. Romjue, *American Army Doctrine for the Post-Cold War* (Fort Monroe, Va.: US Training and Doctrine Command, Military History Office, 1997), p. 13; Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, pp. 149-50; and Ambrose, p. 156.
21. Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower’s Lieutenants, Volume I* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 4, 7.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
23. Henry Kissinger, “American Strategic Doctrine and Diplomacy,” in *The Theory and Practice of War*, ed. Michael Howard (New York: Praeger, 1966.), p. 279.
24. David T. Fautua, “The Long Pull Army: NSC 68, the Korean War, and the Creation of the Cold War U.S. Army,” *The Journal of Military History*, 61 (January 1997), 95.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
26. Michael Vlahos, “The End of America’s Post-War Ethos,” *Foreign Affairs*, 66 (Summer 1988), 1101-02.
27. Brian M. Jenkins, *The Unchangeable War*, RM-6278-2-ARPA (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1970), p. 6.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, p. 3. Speaker not identified by name.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

31. John Nagl, "Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife," *World Affairs*, 161 (Spring 1999), 195.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Donald M. Snow and Dennis M. Drew, *From Lexington to Desert Storm: War and Politics in the American Experience* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 325-26.
34. Paul H. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations*, Leavenworth Paper No. 16 (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), p. 21.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
36. Russell F. Weigley, "Reflections on Lessons from Vietnam," in *Vietnam as History*, ed. Peter Braestrup (Washington: University Press of America, 1984), p. 115; and Michael J. Brady, "The Army and the Strategic Military Legacy of Vietnam," master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, Kans., 1990, p. 110.
37. Richard Duncan Downie, *Learning From Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), pp. 71-73, does an excellent job of recapitulating the findings of several post-Vietnam studies. In sum, these studies reported that the US Army never learned how to fight small wars or counterinsurgencies. In addition to Jenkins, *The Unchangeable War*, see also the BDM Corporation, *A Study of the Strategic Lessons in Vietnam, Volume III, Results of the War* (Washington: Defense Technical Information Center, 1981), Executive Summary, pp. 4-3 to 4-14, 4-22; and Robert H. Kupperman and Associates, Inc., *Low Intensity Conflict, Vol. 1, Main Report*, AD-A 137260 (Fort Monroe, Va.: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1983).
38. The BDM study concluded that the Army still did not know how to do low-intensity conflict because the principal strategic lesson the United States learned from Vietnam was that intervention was to be avoided. The report also maintained that the US military's traditional separation between military and political means significantly hindered the effective employment of military force in accomplishing objectives established by the political leadership. Also see Downie, p. 73; Brady, pp. 250-91; and US Military Academy, Department of History, *Officer's Professional Reading Guide* (West Point, N.Y.: US Military Academy, 1996), p. 28.
39. Stephen J. Mariano, "Peacekeepers Attend the Never Again School," unpublished master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1995, pp. 2, 6, 50-51; and Caspar Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," News Release 609-84, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., November 1984. The "never-again school" was the core of the post-Vietnam Army culture, although it stems from the Korean War experience. It describes the actions that political and military leaders should never again take in the conduct of war and foreign policy—essentially those actions that prevent the military from using overwhelming force in the pursuit of decisive victory, in other words, it advocates the World War II model.
40. Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), p. 113.
41. Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 567-68.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 487.
43. Cori Dauber, "Poisoning the Well: The Weinberger Doctrine and Public Argument Over Military Intervention," unpublished manuscript, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1998, pp. 7, 23; Powell, *My American Journey*, passim; Atkinson, p. 122.
44. Colin Powell, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington: US Department of Defense, 1992), p. 10.
45. For a discussion of how the 1980s US Army was enamored of the World War II Wehrmacht, see Daniel P. Bolger, "Maneuver Warfare Reconsidered," in *Maneuver Warfare: An Anthology*, ed. Richard D. Hooker, Jr. (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1993), pp. 26-28. The quotation is on p. 34. See also, re this paragraph, Dauber, pp. 7, 23; Powell, *My American Journey*, pp. 487, 567-68; Atkinson, p. 122; and F. G. Hoffman, *Decisive Force: The New American Way of War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), p. xii.
46. Thomas K. Adams, "Military Doctrine and the Organization Culture of the U.S. Army," Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, New York, 1990, p. 27.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 10; and Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, and Jomini* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1992), p. 161. According to Handel, a Jominian approach separates politics and strategy, which are viewed as independent fields of activity.
49. Peter M. Dunn, "The American Army: The Vietnam War, 1965-1973," in *Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency*, ed. Ian F. W. Beckett and John Pimlott (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 99.
50. Don Snider, "U.S. Civil-Military Relations and Operations Other Than War, in *Civil-Military Relations and the Not-Quite Wars of the Present and Future*, ed. Vincent Davis (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1996), p. 1; see also, re this paragraph, James R. Locher, 3d, "The Goldwater-Nichols Act: Ten Years Later," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 13 (Autumn 1996), 14-15. The decreasing familiarity with the military among the civilian leadership partly accounts for this disparity in expertise. For example, the 104th Congress represented the first time a majority of the members of Congress have had no military experience.