

THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN WAY OF WAR ON THE GROUND

Analyzing the Ineffectiveness of U.S. Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan

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Written by
Petros-Marios Katopodis
SRN: 01791217M025
Under the Supervision of
Professor Harry Papasotiriou
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Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude.

To my Family,
which is always by my side supporting my studies

To my friends, Aris and Teresa

To my Professors,
who have been the best mentors I could have

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Abstract

The main purpose of the dissertation is to analyze the ineffectiveness of the U.S. forces in combating the insurgent forces in Iraq and Afghanistan despite having already defeat the superior conventional forces of the Taliban and the Iraqi army. Since the U.S. army does not lack in weaponry and military capabilities, this work focus in analyzing in comparative perspective those cultural, structural and doctrinal swifts in the American thinking that affected the conduct of war and resulted in the ineffectiveness, mentioned above. This dissertation is consisted of four parts. In the first part it is described how the introduction of nuclear weapons created the artificial limited war, which played a crucial role in the abolishment of the U.S. draft, as mentioned in part two. Subsequently, there is an analysis about the importance of the advanced technologies for the American conduct of war traditionally, but especially contemporarily as technology is considered to be a substitute for the limited manpower. The last part focuses on the main argument and tries to explain the gap among the American ineffectiveness against unconventional forces and the stunning victories against conventional forces.

Key Words and Phrases

United States, Contemporary American Way of War, Artificial Limited War, U.S. Army, Nuclear Weapons, Iraq, Afghanistan, Draft, Revolution in the Military Affairs, Drones, All-volunteer Force, Conventional Forces, Unconventional Forces, Insurgents, Network-Centric Doctrine

Literature Review

Right before starting to go through the paper, there will be a very brief introduction of the main literature and its relation with the subjects treated here. The mentioned literature inspired the writer to study this subject, guided him throughout his research, helped him find more sources and ultimately answer the questions posed in this work.

American Empire: A Global History by A. G. Hopkins

The author describes how the United States of America transformed historically and culturally from depended colonies to a global superpower with imperialistic behavior.

The American Culture of War by Adrian R. Lewis

Lewis examines the most important cultural shifts in the American thinking that influenced the conduct of war after the 2nd World War and tries to identify how these changes are depicted through the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The New American Way of War by Benjamin Buley

Explores the cultural history and future prospects of the “Contemporary American Way of War” and tries to determine how this is affected from the American political scene and to foresee how the American will fight in the future.

America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force by Beth Bailey

Bailey goes through the social, political and military developments in the United States that led to the abolishment of the draft and introduced the all-volunteer force. She also refers to the whole debate about the small size of the U.S. army, that took place during the Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Oxford History of Modern War by Charles Townshend

This work examines how the conduct of war has changed nowadays by examining what has changed in the way the politicians, officers and civilians perceive the war, especially addressing the dilemma of military strategy in confronting international terrorism.

Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History by Colin S. Gray

In his work prof. Gray examines the dynamic relationship between the Revolutions in Military Affairs and the strategy in the course of history.

Understanding Modern Warfare by David Jordan, James D. Kiras, David J. Lonsdale, Ian Speller, Christopher Tuck & Dale C. Walton

This book can be used as a useful guide to the issues, ideas, concepts and context necessary to understand the theory and conduct of warfare in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The Post-American World by Fareed Zakaria

The writer questions the future influence of the United States in the world and tries to evaluate how the future balance of power will be shaped.

The Age of War: The United States Confronts the World by Gabriel Kolko

An analysis that criticizes the last five decades of US foreign policy, with emphasis on the period since 2000.

Reassessing the Revolution in Military Affairs: Transformation, Evolution and Lessons Learnt by Jeffrey Collins & Andrew Futter

In the wake of a decade of counterinsurgency operations and irregular warfare, this book explores how the concept of the Revolution in Military Affairs continues to shape the way modern militaries across the globe think about, plan and fight wars.

The Revolution in Strategic Affairs by Lawrence Freedman

Prof. Freedman analyses how the contemporary advanced technologies of war have reshaped the strategical military thinking.

A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East by Lawrence Freedman

Lawrence Freedman teases out the roots of each engagement of U.S. forces in Middle-East over the last thirty years and demonstrates the influence of these conflicts upon each other.

Vietnam and the American Political Tradition by Randall Woods

The writer examines the political balances in the United States that led the U.S. forces in engaging in Vietnam, withdraw some years later and, ultimately, in the abolishment of the draft.

The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World by Rupert Smith

The Utility of Force explains this anomaly at the heart of our current international system by analyzing how over the past fifteen years there has been a steady stream of military interventions that have not delivered on their promise for peace, or even political resolution.

Transforming Military Power Since the Cold War by Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning & Terry Terriff

An analytical account of how the West's main war-fighting armies have transformed since the end of the Cold War.

Technology and the American Way of War by Thomas G. Mahnken

From the atom bomb to the spy satellites of the Cold War, the strategic limitations of the Vietnam War, and the technological triumphs of the Gulf war, Thomas G. Mahnken follows the development and integration of new technologies into the military and emphasizes their influence on the organization, mission, and culture of the armed services.

America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force by Beth Bailey

The writer describes the transition from the U.S. draft pool to the all-volunteer force and underlines the sociological consequences in the American society.

Introduction

“The Unipolar Moment”

An era ended for the world and the world system, when the Soviet Union collapsed on December 31, 1991. After almost 45 years, the most dangerous confrontation in the world’s history, the Cold War, was over. Cold War is considered to be the most dangerous confrontation in the world’s history because for the first time two competitive superpowers, the United States of America (U.S.A) and the Soviet Union, possessed some kind of weapon, specifically nuclear weapons, that due to their destructive power in case of a total war could turn the entire world in ashes. So, after this anxious balance of destructive power came to an end, the United States emerged as the sole superpower in the whole world. This new phase for the world system was declared by the well-known journalist Charles Krauthammer as the “Unipolar Moment”¹.

The United States had quite early the chance to prove their superiority in the battlefield by deciding to respond to the Iraqi offensive against Kuwait. The military capabilities Americans displayed against Iraq in 1991 stunned the world, driving the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in approximately one hundred hours. Ten years later the situation was the same, when the United States launched the War on Terror, as a response to terrorist attacks against them from Al-Qaeda. The U.S. army won quite easily the Taliban forces in Afghanistan and occupied Iraq in three weeks against the quite large Iraqi conventional army. And there the United States were, having proved once again the superiority of the American war machine. One of the main reasons for this superiority in war

¹ Charles Krauthammer, The Unipolar Moment, **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 70, No. 1, America and the World 1990/91 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1990), p. 23-33

was the implementation of modern innovative technologies especially for gathering intelligence and performing precision hits.

But when the Americans found themselves facing insurgency movements in Iraq and Afghanistan the tide turned. The U.S. way of combating insurgents proved ineffective and for a considerable amount of time the U.S. forces were “pinned down” into the safety of their camps couldn’t maintain the order in both countries. The United States, with all its great power, was stretched thin in the type of combat power necessary to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The consequence was that soldiers and marines died and were unnecessarily wounded in an insurgency war that might have been avoided had the Bush White House and the Rumsfeld Pentagon listened to the advice of Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, and deployed sufficient numbers of troops at the outset to win the peace².

This work tries to analyze in a comparative perspective what kind of changes took place in the American thinking of conducting war during the last decades leading to the contemporary American way of conducting war on the ground, which despite all of his mighty capabilities failed to neutralize much weaker insurgent networks and ultimately failing to achieve the U.S. political objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of course, it is probably impossible to analyze the whole contemporary American thinking about conducting a war in a limited number of pages but the goal has to be to provide a well-structured analysis about its main components helping the reader to understand why the United States proved ineffective in Iraq and Afghanistan despite being incomparably superior with their opponent.

Thus, that’s the reason why this work analyses the main cultural tenets, political choices, technological and doctrinal advancements that have affected the American way of war on the

² Peter Boyer, A Different War: Is the Army Becoming Irrelevant? (**The New Yorker**, July 1, 2002)

ground. It is not going to treat the subjects of hybrid warfare, cyber warfare or waging war with other means, like financial or trade wars. Its goal is to explain how certain cultural, doctrinal and structural changes in the way the Americans wage war nowadays have led the U.S. ground forces to fail in defeating an opponent, who was considered to be inferior, and was forced to engage in a long, costly and, ultimately, unsuccessful campaign in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Part 1. From Total War to Forced Limitations

How Nuclear Weapons Transformed the Traditional American Way of War

1.1 The Traditional Principles of the American Way of War

In order for someone to understand how the American way of war has evolved nowadays, it's fundamental to be aware of the main characteristics of the traditional American thinking about the conduct of war. Since the first thirteen States declared their independence from the United Kingdom and until the outbreak of the 2nd World War, USA's fundamental political objectives remained consistent in a great degree and they can be defined by the Manifest Destiny, Capitalism, the Monroe Doctrine and American Individualism.

The "Manifest Destiny" describes the struggle of the first 13 States to expand their territorial dominion and spread the ideas of the newly formed American nation across the entire North America continent³. Based on "Manifest Destiny USA demanded the Oregon territory south of the 49th parallel and started a war with Mexico in which USA territory expanded by approximately 525 thousand square miles by gaining the States of California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming⁴. On the other hand, the Monroe Doctrine was expressed in December 2, 1823 by the president James Monroe in his annual message to Congress and defined the American international policy for more than a century⁵. In this message president Monroe made a fundamental distinction among the "Old World" of the European States in the Eastern Hemisphere

³ Sean Wilentz, **The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln** (New York: Norton Publications, 2005), p. 59

⁴ Wesley K. Clark, **American Military History: From Colonials to Counterinsurgents** (Chantilly, Virginia: The Great Courses, 2018), p. 57

⁵ George C. Herring, **From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 167

and the “New World” which represented the American continent in the Western Hemisphere. And he continued with the statement that the United States would willingly not interfere in the internal affairs of or the wars between European States but at the same time those European States would not interfere or attempt to colonize further the American continent, because such a move would be considered as a direct aggressive action against the United States⁶. Monroe Doctrine played a major role in the American policy of Isolationism⁷.

American Individualism and Capitalism still play crucial roles in the American society⁸. Americans value the person more than anything else, they consider the man the end and not the means for an end. So, they willingly try to secure equal chances for everyone in the “pursuit of happiness” of the “American dream” and hesitate sacrificing human lives for any kind of cause. Judging from what mentioned above, it is obvious that Americans are traditionally against waging wars and they consider their armed forces a “necessary evil” that has to be minimized to the extent possible⁹. Let’s not forget that the two great oceans were a natural defensive barrier for USA that made a big regular army less needed for its defense. It is clear that the American army was always depended on their citizens- soldiers for waging a major war.

The United States might had always been trying not to get involved in wars but, when American forces did get involved in a war, they wanted to strike hard. Traditionally Americans approached waging a war strategically and politically in the following way: wars ought to be fought in a rapid, unrelenting and aggressive manner with superior firepower in order to win those wars as quickly

⁶ A. G. Hopkins, **American Empire: A Global History** (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 209

⁷ Ibid. p. 372

⁸ Seymour M. Lipset, **American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword** (New York: Norton Publications, 1997), p. 33

⁹ Adrian R. Lewis, **The American Culture of War** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2018), p. 26

as possible with the least possible casualties¹⁰. That's why the doctrines of the American army were offensive and wouldn't hesitate to use every means available to secure the victory, even leading to a total war. The aim of the war was the destruction of the enemy's army followed by the occupation of the enemy's country¹¹. The United States didn't aim to occupy enemy's country for an endless amount of time, but for as long as it was necessary to put the defeated nation under a process of transformation politically, economically, socially and in the ultimate level culturally¹². This kind of transformation aimed in creating a nation state that would be more likely to the United States, as a capitalist democracy in order to secure future cooperation and peace.

1.2 The Introduction of Nuclear Weapons

What has been described above as the traditional American thinking about conducting a war was no longer compatible with the America's role as a superpower with enormous destructive strength after the end of the 2nd World War and, even more, after the end of the Cold War. The main reason for this incompatibility is the integration of nuclear weapons in the arsenal of the United States. The nuclear weapons appeared in America's arsenal in two stages¹³. In the first stage¹⁴ there was

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 25

¹¹ The tactic of occupying the enemy's country proved quite effective in the case of Germany and Japan after the 2nd World War but let's not forget, that back then the threat of the Soviet Union was quite capable to make those countries cooperate more willingly with the American occupators. Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning & Terry Terriff, **Transforming Military Power Since the Cold War** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 15

¹² Lewis, *The American Culture of War*, op. cit. p. 25

¹³ Colin S. Gray, **War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2007), p. 207

¹⁴ *"The scientific trail to Hiroshima and Nagasaki is clear enough. The neutron was discovered in 1932, while in 1933 that discovery sparked realization that the neutron could be employed to trigger an explosive chain reaction. An even more significant scientific breakthrough was achieved in January 1939, when Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann managed to achieve nuclear fission, the splitting of uranium atoms. They demonstrated that by means of neutron*

the development in the early 1940s of the atomic bomb, the A-bomb, a weapon that derive its energy from the process of nuclear fission, which can be achieved by breaking up the nuclei of uranium (^{235}U) or plutonium (^{239}Pu) through bombardment by neutrons¹⁵. During this process of breaking up of the atomic nuclei creates a self-sustaining chain reaction that releases explosive energy. The two nuclear bombs that dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had explosive yields of 15 kilotons and 20 kilotons respectively, witch van be translated in 15,000 and 20,000 tons of TNT. Those two nuclear strikes caused the death of 110 thousand Japanese, but let's not forget that the strategic bombing campaign of civilian targets, run by the Allies, with fire and conventional bombs during the spring of 1945 killed almost a million civilians in Japan and left another 22 million of people homeless¹⁶. Those 2 nuclear bombs may have remained in historical memory as extremely destructive but in fact they were just a bit more lethal than the regular bombing campaigns of the time. For sure they were only a “shy” first step of what came next.

bombardment the atom could be split and a self-sustaining process, a chain reaction, of atomic fission might be achieved. But theoretical physics and an isolated experiment were not remotely the same as bomb building. The crucial step towards a practicable bomb was taken when two German émigré physicists, Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls, working at the University of Birmingham in Britain in March 1940, calculated the critical mass of fissile material required for a self-sustaining fission chain reaction. They were amazed to discover that the necessary critical mass of the isotope of uranium (^{235}U) that had to be extracted from natural uranium (^{238}U) was only approximately 11 pounds. Prior to their findings, it was widely believed among nuclear physicists that possibly as much as 30,000 pounds of ^{235}U would be needed. Apart from the impracticality of extracting that much of the isotope from ^{238}U , any bomb that resulted would be so large and heavy that it could be delivered only by ship. In other words, it was thoroughly impractical as a weapon. The calculations of Frisch and Peierls changed all that. Their calculations impressed first the British government and then the American. In theory, at least, the atomic bomb should be technically feasible. Another fissionable element (element 94) was discovered – or rather made, since it did not occur in nature – on 28 March 1941 in the form of plutonium (^{239}Pu). The atomic bomb that devastated Hiroshima 6 August 1945 was made with a critical mass of ^{235}U , while the Nagasaki bomb used ^{239}Pu ”, ibid. p. 208

¹⁵ L. Freedman, **The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy** (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 46

¹⁶ Robert A. Pape, **Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War** (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996) p. 2013

The next stage started in 1952 and 1953, with the development of the hydrogen bomb, the H-bomb, which belongs to the category of thermonuclear weapons. These weapons require the nuclear fusion of two less heavy than ^{235}U or ^{239}Pu elements, usually deuterium and tritium, isotopes of hydrogen, to form helium. A thermonuclear weapon takes advantage of a fission explosion as a trigger to compress the deuterium and tritium together by implosion sufficiently for them to fuse. The vital difference between the A-bomb and the H-bomb is that the first kind of bomb can provide a limited explosive energy yield because of the limitations posed by the nature of its materials and their dynamic interaction¹⁷. But the H-bomb and thermonuclear weapons in general are whole lot of a different story.

There is absolutely no theoretical or practical limit to the explosive yield that can be achieved by such bombs, starting from several hundred kilotons to tens of megatons with a megaton being equivalent to one million tons of TNT. In March 1st 1954, Americans tested their second thermonuclear bomb and they were amazed to discover that it produced 15 megatons instead of the design yield of 5. Seven years later, in 1961, the Head of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev announced the intention to test a new Soviet thermonuclear weapon of 100 megaton. Despite the fact that upon the practical test the yield was restrained to 50.7 megatons, it was a purely destructive weapon producing a massive explosion and the largest test to be carried out during the Cold War¹⁸. It took only about a decade and a half for the nuclear weapons to transform from a weapon that could be used during combat to cause a devastating blow to the enemy to a weapon of monstrous destructive power, that was able to cause an unthinkable amount of damage and turn whole countries to dust.

¹⁷ Freedman, **The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy**, op. cit. p. 62

¹⁸ Gray, **War, Peace and International Relations**, op. cit. p. 212

At the same time, in the mid- to late 1950s, were produced the first tactical nuclear weapons like W-54 warhead¹⁹. These weapons were based again in the method of nuclear fusion but had smaller nuclear warheads and their delivery systems were intended for use on the battlefield or for a limited strike. Their explosive yield varied from 0.1 to 1 kiloton and they were quickly intergraded in both in America's and Soviet Union's arsenal. They were used by artillery, armor, ships and submarines in the context of traditional warfare but in order to deal more damage than the conventional arms. Their use in case the Cold War had led the United States and the Soviet Union in a World War III, wouldn't had made a great difference and this war would have been very similar to World War II but with the addition of precursor bilateral atomic campaigns, which were not expected to conclude the war²⁰. Nevertheless, any escalation from the use of tactical nuclear weapon to the use of strategic nuclear weapons could lead to a worldwide holocaust.

Strategic nuclear weapons and specifically thermonuclear weapons came to change strategic doctrines among the nuclear armed states and their enemies, they a new set of strategic ideas and a new policy were required to fit the changed strategic context. First of all, nuclear weapons changed the nexus among between means and ends which is in the core of strategy itself²¹. They might be able to coerce an enemy under certain circumstances but they were too powerful to serve constantly any political ends. Especially for the Americans the use of nuclear weapons seemed to cancel one of their main ideas about waging a war, the pursuit of a rapid, decisive victory at least against another nuclear armed state. Provided a fraction of both nuclear arsenals are secure against attack, nuclear retaliation could, and almost certainly would, follow any nuclear attack²². Even

¹⁹ G. J. DeGroot, **The Bomb: A Life** (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 72

²⁰ Freedman, **The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy**, op. cit. p. 103

²¹ Gray, **War, Peace and International Relations**, op. cit. p. 213

²² Gray, **War, Peace and International Relations**, op. cit. p. 215

decisive military victory in a conventional war, without at first using nuclear weapons, between nuclear-weapon states should be extremely improbable. The belligerent facing such defeat would be strongly motivated to turn to its nuclear arms rather than submit to a conventional defeat²³.

Last but not least, nuclear weapons have the effect of freezing conditions of political confrontation. It is not only war that is too risky to consider as a political option. Even dangerous behavior short of war is likely to be judged by decision makers irresponsibly risky. Nuclear weapons appear to have deprived war of its traditional Clausewitzian logic as an instrument of continuing the political action by “other means”²⁴. No longer can it be regarded as an instrument of policy to solve a problem that cannot be settled in any other way, at least not in conflicts between nuclear-armed rivals.

In a few words, despite the fact nuclear weapons are extremely powerful and maybe quite useful in order to coerce an enemy, thus their use in the battlefield is, at least, very controversial. The presence of nuclear weapons made impossible to use all the means necessary and escalate the war effort into a total war in the pursuit of a rapid victory because if such use of nuclear weapons took place against another possessor of a nuclear arsenal the destructive escalation after a response strike could lead to annihilation of both enemies and skyrocket the cost of war first of all in human lives²⁵. On the other hand, the use of nuclear weapons against a weaker state without a nuclear arsenal could turn the country into dust and led the attacker to win a war where there is nothing left to win. In this way strategic nuclear weapons seemed to become “anti-strategic”²⁶. They deteriorated the possibility of a rapid, decisive victory and were potentially mutually suicidal for

²³ Paul D. Williams, **Security Studies: An Introduction** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2013), p. 196

²⁴ Gray, **War, Peace and International Relations**, op. cit. p. 217

²⁵ Charles Townshend, **The Oxford History of Modern War** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 215

²⁶ Benjamin Buley, **The New American Way of War** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2008), p. 43

the opponents encouraging them to choose an extremely cautious behavior. As the capabilities of the Soviet nuclear arsenal increased, the fear of retaliation and uncontrolled escalation also increased, creating a “balance of terror”.

Carl von Clausewitz in his well-known work “*On War*” supports that “*The bounds of military operations have been extended so far that a return to the old narrow limitations can only occur briefly, sporadically, and under special conditions. The true nature of war will break through again and again with overwhelming force, and must, therefore, be the basis of any permanent military arrangement*”²⁷. Strategic nuclear weapons seem to be exactly this kind of special conditions. So, state leaders in the United States and in the other nuclear powers had to find a way in order to restrain their way of conducting war and adapt in those special conditions.

1.3 The Artificial Limited War

The way they came up with in order to adapt in those new circumstances, defined by this “balance of terror”, was the artificial creation of the modern limited war²⁸. The concept of the modern limited war required major powers to place artificial restraints on their way of waging war to rule out the possibility of an escalation into a total war with the use of nuclear weapons. Artificial limited war required the most powerful states to place limitations on the political and military objectives. Those limitations have to include the weapons and manpower employed, the geographic range of the area of hostilities, the ambitions and the objectives of each State’s military leaders. This kind of limitations brought in the modern conduct of war a sense from the past and specifically from the time before the birth of the contemporary nation state in Europe, the time of

²⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, **On War** (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 315

²⁸ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 204

the Peace of Westphalia²⁹. At that time states also waged limited wars by forced limitations, even though these kinds of limitations were extremely different than the contemporary ones.

Back then a total war seemed to be extremely improbable because the states lacked the social and political legitimacy, political organization and bureaucracy to tax large numbers of people and extract a large number of resources from them. And extracting more resources was not the only problem. An even greater obstacle against the outbreak of a total war was the absence of an extended military organization, the strategic doctrines and also the industrial, logistical and technological capabilities to project power across vast distances and arm, train, and deploy the hugest possible, national armies or navies. All these were made possible only with the establishment of nation states and the industrial revolution. Industrial revolution provided the technology, like the railway and advanced weapons, and the nation state the idea of the national identity, which has the power to inspire people and rally them around the national cause making them willing to contribute in a total war with their lives or resources.

So, since the first decade of the Cold War the United States had to adapt their doctrines in the contemporary way of war, which is the artificial limited war³⁰. This was not an easy adaptation neither for the political and military leaders, nor for the American people themselves. First of all, the problem of limited war could not be understood solely in military terms³¹. It doesn't take just to change from an offensive doctrine to a defensive one. To stop when winning but not being the absolute winner yet, or when falling short but not being defeated yet, was against military logic.

²⁹ Colin S. Gray, **Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History** (London: Frank Cass Publications, 2002), p. 207

³⁰ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 210

³¹ Rupert Smith, **The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World** (New York: Vintage Books Publications, 2008), p. 301

Also, it is debatable which aspect of war should be limited first. It is more important to have limited objectives or limited means to fight and in case the opponent fought bravely and defended their ground denying the attacking forces to achieve their limited objectives, should the attacking forces be more flexible about the means in their disposal and use heavier firepower or stick to limited means and tolerate a war costlier in human lives and resources for them. These are two of many strategic questions of waging a limited war. The United States of America had in their disposal excellent strategists who could adapt the army doctrines to this kind of warfare. But they couldn't make the American people accept those wars. And this failure to make the people "rally around the flag" and support the cause of a limited war, until winning, brought the second most important change in the American way of war after the appearance of the nuclear weapons.

Appendix 1: Officially Confirmed Nuclear Stockpiles During the Cold War³²

<i>Year</i>	<i>USA</i>	<i>USSR</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Total</i>
1945	6					6
1946	11					11
1947	32					32
1948	110					110
1949	235	1				236
1950	369	5				374
1951	640	25				665
1952	1,005	50				1,055
1953	1,436	120	1			1,557
1954	2,063	150	5			2,218
1955	3,057	200	10			3,267
1956	4,618	426	15			5,059
1957	6,444	660	20			7,124
1958	9,822	869	22			10,713
1959	15,468	1,060	25			16,553
1960	20,434	1,605	30			22,069
1961	24,111	2,471	50			26,632
1962	27,297	3,322	205			30,824
1963	29,249	4,238	280			33,767
1964	30,751	5,221	310	4	1	36,287
1965	31,642	6,129	310	32	5	38,118
1966	31,700	7,089	270	36	20	39,115
1967	30,893	8,339	270	36	25	39,563
1968	28,884	9,399	280	36	35	38,634
1969	26,910	10,538	308	36	50	37,842
1970	26,119	11,643	280	36	75	38,153
1971	26,365	13,092	220	45	100	39,822
1972	27,296	14,478	220	70	130	42,194
1973	28,335	15,915	275	116	150	44,791
1974	28,170	17,385	325	145	170	46,195
1975	27,052	19,055	350	188	185	46,830
1976	25,956	21,205	350	212	190	47,913
1977	25,099	23,044	350	228	200	48,921
1978	24,243	25,393	350	235	220	50,441
1979	24,107	27,935	350	235	235	52,862
1980	23,764	30,062	350	250	280	54,706
1981	23,031	32,049	350	274	330	56,034
1982	22,937	33,952	335	274	360	57,858
1983	23,154	35,804	320	279	380	59,937
1984	23,228	37,431	270	280	415	61,624
1985	23,135	39,197	300	360	425	63,417
1986	23,254	40,723	300	355	425	65,057
1987	23,490	38,859	300	420	415	63,484
1988	23,077	37,333	300	410	430	61,550
1989	22,174	35,805	300	410	435	59,124

³² R. S. Norris & H. M. Kristensen, *Global Nuclear Stockpiles: From 1945 to 2002*, (Chicago, IL: **Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists**, Issue 58, 2002), p. 103 & Gray, **War, Peace and International Relations**, op. cit. p. 212

Part 2. Waging War Without People

The End of the U.S. Draft

2.1 The Equality of Sacrifice

As mentioned, some pages back, the United States of America was always depended on their citizens- soldiers in order to wage a major war. Americans have always been unwilling to maintain a great number of professional soldiers in their armed forces due to the idea of individualism, which remains in the core of the American identity. According to American individualism the people are the end, not the means for an end, so they ought to be given equal chances to pursue the “American Dream”, to succeed and gain the biggest possible amount of wealth. So, a businessman was the most prestigious profession for an American but being a soldier was far from a good choice due to the lack of chances for the person to upgrowth. Nowadays in peacetime, even though many things have changed in the composition of armed forces, military service is not considered to be a promising career for talented young men with other options.

Based on this belief the American army in peacetime was consisted by a pity number of professional soldiers and a very capable and well-trained corps of officers³³. The existence of many officers without troops to command, changed only during major conflicts when the American leaders were used to turn to the American citizens in order the to conscript in the army to fight for their country. This process, better known as **the draft**³⁴, took place six times in the American history³⁵. The first time was during the American revolution and the struggle for independence.

³³ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p 28

³⁴ Paul D. Williams, **Security Studies: An Introduction** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2013), p. 310

³⁵ Ruud Janssens & Rob Kroes, **Post-Cold War Europe Post-Cold War America** (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2004), p. 97

Back at that time the conscription in the army was only for volunteers. Thus, Americans who believed in the independence from the Great Britain chose to conscript in the American regular army and the militia in order to fight for freedom, without no one forcing them. Those militia groups faced in several times the British regulars during the Struggle for Independence and lost most of the times in the battlefield, but they also won some key battles alongside with some French and American regulars³⁶.

Those key wins and some others during the War of 1812 against Great Britain again, with the most impressive of all being the Battle of New Orleans, created the legend of the “gifted amateurs” as it was expressed by Andrew Jackson after the end of the 1812 War. According to the “gifted amateurs” thesis³⁷, American militia proved during the American Revolution and the War of 1812, that they were better soldiers than the British regulars, even though they were poorly trained in the conduct of war. Although as we will see shortly this thesis was criticized by many well-known military experts back at the time³⁸, it was quite easy to get integrated in the American thinking

³⁶ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 29

³⁷ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 28

³⁸ G. Washington declined the thesis of the “gifted amateurs” angrily: *“Militia, you will find, Sir, will never answer your expectations, no dependence is to be placed upon them. They are obstinate and perverse, they are often egged on by the Officers, who lead them to acts of disobedience, and when they are ordered to certain posts for the security of stores, or the protection of the Inhabitants, will, on a sudden, resolve to leave them, and the united vigilance of their officers cannot prevent them”*. Russell Weigley, **History of the United States Army** (Bloomington, IN: Indian University Press, 1984), p. 16.

Alexander Hamilton, who fought alongside with Washington in several battles added: *“Here I expect we shall be told that the militia of the country is its natural bulwark, and would at all times be equal to the national defence. This doctrine, in substance, had like to have lost us our independence. The facts which, from our own experience, forbid a reliance of this kind, are too recent to permit us to the dupes of such a suggestion. The steady operations of war against a regular and disciplined army can only be successfully conducted by a force of a same kind. Considerations of economy, not less than stability and vigor, confirm this position. The American militia, in course of the later war, have, by their valor on numerous occasions, erected eternal monuments to their fame. But the bravest of them feel and*

supported by the core American idea of equality for all the Americans. The idea of equality was necessary in order to transform Anglo-Saxons, Germans, French, Italians, Poles, Russians, and other European ethnic groups into Americans and to produce a culturally homogeneous national identity³⁹. Equality was so strong⁴⁰ in the American thinking that was quite natural to extend in every aspect of life, even in the battlefield. Thus, the tenet of equality became in the case of war the tenet of equality of sacrifice, according to which all the Americans could serve in combat with relatively equal levels of performance and they should be given the chance to sacrifice their lives for their country⁴¹.

On this tenet was based the idea that American forces, when fully mobilized, there is no task they can't achieve and no war they cannot win. So, the draft was used again in the American Civil War, 1st World War, 2nd World War, the war in Korea and the war in Vietnam⁴². All the men with

know that the liberty of their country could not have been established by their efforts alone, however, great and valuable they were. War, like most other things, is a science to be acquired and perfected by diligence, by perseverance, by time and by practice". *ibid.* p. 20

³⁹ Especially for some certain groups equality of sacrifice became a tool in their hands in order to gain similar levels of equality with other groups. For example, Afro-Americans fought bravely in the 2nd World War in order to get accepted as equals in the American society.

⁴⁰ The importance of equality in the American thinking can be displayed in the words of D. Eisenhower during his inaugural address: "*At such a time in history, we who are free, must proclaim anew our faith. This faith is the abiding creed of our fathers. It is our faith in the deathless dignity of man, governed by eternal moral and natural laws. This faith defines our full view of life. It establishes, beyond debate, those gifts of the Creator that are man's inalienable rights, and that make all men equal in His sight. In the light of this equality we know that the virtues most cherished by free people— love of truth, pride of work, devotion to country— all are treasures equally precious in the lives of the most humble and of the most exalted. The men who mine coal and fire furnaces and balance ledgers and turn lathes and pick cotton and heal the sick and plant corn— all serve as proudly and as profitably, for America as the statesmen who draft treaties or the legislators who enact laws. This faith rules our whole way of life*". President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Inaugural Address, 20 January 1953, **Congressional Record**.

⁴¹ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, *op. cit.* p. 31

⁴² Williams, **Security Studies: An Introduction**, *op. cit.* p. 310

appropriate for fighting age had to register in their closest draft boards. Then, draftees were selected by national lottery in order to serve in the armed forces and fight. This legend of the “gifted amateurs” survived in the American thinking because it was very rarely tested against strong professional armies due to the two huge oceans that protect the United States and the absence of other powerful states in the Western Hemisphere. This gets even clearer to understand if we compare the thesis of the “gifted amateurs” with the situation in Europe, where there were several mighty states with rivalries between each other and visions for territorial expansion⁴³.

The Germans, the French, the Italians and Russians have a much better understanding of the value of well-trained and well-equipped regular combat divisions. Hitler and Stalin understood better than Roosevelt the relationship between the security of the nation-state and the quality and quantity of the divisions that guaranteed it. The mighty American Navy and the Air Force were able to protect the United States’ homeland, so for its defense was not necessary a bloodshed of American lives alongside the American borders in order to fight the invader step by step, as it was the situation, for example, in the Eastern Front during the 2nd World War⁴⁴. This nexus between the existence of a state and the quality and quantity of the divisions, available to protect it, became much clearer to the Americans after the War in Korea, when the existence of South Korea was directly related to the numbers of divisions the United States could immediately put into battle and the presence of the 7th Fleet in the area⁴⁵.

⁴³ Janssens & Kroes, **Post-Cold War Europe Post-Cold War America**, op. cit. p. 33

⁴⁴ Wesley K. Clark, **American Military History: From Colonials to Counterinsurgents** (Chantilly, Virginia: The Great Courses, 2018), p. 202

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 205

2.2 The Inequality of Outcome

What's strange about the fact, that the legend of the "gifted amateurs" survived for such a long time⁴⁶, is that Americans may believe in the equality of opportunity and the equality of sacrifice but they certainly do not believe in the equality of outcome. They passionately support that every person should be given the same opportunities in order to progress with his life but this progress should be depended on the effort and the talents of each and every one American separately because in a capitalist competitive economy there are always winners and losers and not everyone will end up with the same amount of wealth or power⁴⁷. So, it is a bit irrational for people that believe in inequality of outcome to believe also that all the men, in many times poorly trained, could fight equally well and produce similar results in the battlefield.

The answer to this irrationality comes if we take a look in the soldiers that maned the army after the American Civil War. Until then and especially during the Civil War, when both the Union and the Confederacy needed great amounts of soldiers, anyone who was fit enough in order to carry a gun could conscript and fight. But after the Civil War in the other 4 cases, when the United States

⁴⁶ What was published in the American Infantry Journal in 1946, after the end of the 2nd World War demonstrates the acceptance of the "gifted amateurs" thesis in the American thinking: "*Army Ground Forces found him a civilian, a clerk, a mechanic, a student and turned him out a better fighting man than the professional Nazi or the fanatical Japanese. The American ground soldier was rushed to a maturity for which he had not planned or even dreamed. Yet, so strong were his native hardihood, his resourcefulness, his competitive spirit and so skillfully were these American traits fostered and fashioned by Ground Forces leaders, that he conquered, on the ground, face to face and weapon to weapon, those Axis warriors whose military upbringing had been foreseen and unhurried*". US Army Ground Forces, AGF Job: To Build Units Fit to Fight, **Infantry Journal** (Norfolk, VA: U.S. Army) June 1946), p. 17

⁴⁷ Herbert McClosky and John Zaller wrote: "*As the data show, most Americans strongly, even overwhelmingly, support the notion that everyone should have the same chance to "get ahead," but they are uniformly negative toward suggestions that everyone must end up with the same economic rewards. Indeed, the distinction between equal opportunity and equality of outcomes could scarcely be drawn more sharply than it is in these data*". Herbert McClosky & John Zaller, **The American Ethos: Public Attitudes toward Capitalism and Democracy** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 82

decided to turn to their people through the draft in order to wage war, things went differently⁴⁸. That's because in practice, after the American Civil War, there was never a significant quota of the Americans, who were able to fight, engaging directly in combat. Let's examine, as an example, which was the situation in the American forces during the 2nd World War.

In June 1945 the American Army numbered 8.267.958 men of the total of 12.123.455 men in every branch of the American armed forces combined. But the combat power of the Army in the battlefield was only 5.000 men per infantry, marine or armored division. During the whole war Americans deployed in the battlefield 111 divisions in total⁴⁹. This number amounts in 555.000 soldiers, the maximum possible for the whole army at each time, engaging actively in combat. Of course, this number does not represent the whole deployment of the U.S. combat force.

Many soldiers died in combat⁵⁰, others were severely injured and had to be replaced and there was also a number of soldiers who were rotated due to fighting already from the early stages of the war. Throughout the whole American engagement in the 2nd World War a total of 1.644.141⁵¹ combat soldiers were deployed against the enemy. The military leadership of the United States had acquiesced in an extraordinary disproportion between the American population at large and the segment of it that had to do much of the hardest fighting in every front. Additionally, if we consider that in 1940 there were 27.139.138 men in the United States, with the appropriate age to fight,

⁴⁸ Clark, **American Military History: From Colonials to Counterinsurgents**, op. cit. p. 133

⁴⁹ Those 111 Divisions were 89 Infantry Divisions, 16 Armored Divisions and 6 Marine Divisions.

⁵⁰ The American forces counted 416.800 casualties during the 2nd World War. Research Starters: Worldwide Deaths in World War II, **WWII History** (New Orleans, LA: The National WWII Museum, available at: <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>), Last accessed in November 15, 2018

⁵¹ Russell Weigley, The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control: From McClellan to Powell (Washington, DC: **The Journal of Military History**, issue 57, October 1993), p. 52

conscripted in the draft catalogs, then we can estimate that just more than 2 percent of the draft-age male population could engage in combat at each time⁵². So, the reality turns out to be quite different from the legend. Few people carried once again the burden of many.

But even those few people had gone through a very tough selection process in order to end up fighting in the battlefield⁵³. For every one of those 1.644.141 men was taking place an elimination process that started before they entered the Army or Marine Corps and continued to their first battle⁵⁴. Especially in the Marine Corps or the Airborne Infantry the elimination process was the strictest of all with only the strongest and healthiest of the men to pass through. Certainly, not every average American male was able to become part of those corps. So, the tenet of equality of sacrifice was a myth that didn't contribute anything in way the United States waged war? Well the answer is negative judging by those numbers just above, someone can figure out a very important aspect of the thesis that all American can serve equally well in combat⁵⁵. This thesis, by being a major part of the American thinking, served well the nation in total wars because it made it possible for the armed forces to gather a large number of men, almost instantly, to train and send to the front.

2.3 The End of the Draft

The last sentence in the paragraph above describes why the wars in Korea and in Vietnam caused the abolishment of the draft and led the United States in the era of all-volunteer armed forces. Those two wars took place in order to restrain the Communist influence around the world under

⁵² Ibid. p. 54

⁵³ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 38

⁵⁴ Weigley, **The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control**, op. cit. p. 57

⁵⁵ Alastair Parker, **The Second World War** (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 112

the new kind of war, the artificial limited war, that was forced by the development of thermonuclear weapons. But Americans do not take war lightly because war damages the most valuable resource of the American nation, people.

An artificial limited war has a very specific trait. It does not threaten the existence of the mightier opponent and that's why this new kind of war does not escalate into a total war. Considering the case in which the existence of a state is under grave threat, then escalating to a total war, by using every means possible to survive, is not an option, it's a certainty. So, no one can expect that American people, who never during their history took lightly the decision to wage a war, will support this kind of war and serve willingly in the armed forces in a conflict that does not threaten the very existence of the United States or, at least, would prevent a major swift of power in favor of the Soviet Union, which will make Communists have a clear advantage against the West. The American military engagement in Vietnam was destined to cause the second greatest swift in the American thinking of waging war after the integration of thermonuclear weapons in its arsenal. The engagement of the United States in Vietnam started in the first years following the end of World War 2. At first their presence aimed only in providing advisory assistance to the French colonial forces in Indochina during the First Indochina War against the communist revolutionary Vietnamese forces under the command of Ho Chi Minh. The first few years of the war involved a low-level rural insurgency against the French. In 1949 the conflict turned into a conventional war between two armies equipped with modern weapons supplied by the United States, China and the Soviet Union⁵⁶. But in France the French public didn't support of the war at all and the French government decided to draw its forces from the are in 1954. The Geneva Conference on July 21 1954, recognized the 17th parallel north as a provisional military demarcation line, temporarily

⁵⁶ Lawrence Freedman, **Strategy: A History** (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 387

dividing the country into two zones, communist North Vietnam and pro-Western South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese didn't accept the separation and kept on fighting and supporting the communist guerrilla front on South Vietnam, the Viet Cong, in the pursuit of a united Vietnam under Communism⁵⁷.

Appendix 2: South Vietnam, US Corps Tactical Zone Boundary⁵⁸



⁵⁷ Jonathan Neale, *The American War: Vietnam, 1960-1975* (London: Bookmarks Publications, 2001), p. 24

⁵⁸ Lewis, *The American Culture of War*, op. cit. p. 242

But the United States were unwilling to accept the possibility of a united Vietnam in the Soviet sphere of influence. So, Americans decided to keep the struggle after the withdrawal of the French, this time with “boots on the ground⁵⁹”, not just as advisors. But even the advanced American weapons could not win the war against Viet Cong’s guerilla tactics. The United States involvement escalated in 1960 under President John F. Kennedy, with troop levels gradually rising from under 1000 men in 1959 to over 23.000 in 1964⁶⁰. President Lindon Johnson sent the biggest number of troops in Vietnam, even though just before got elected he supported that “American young men are not ready to take the responsibility to fight for the Asians”⁶¹. Thus, by 1968, his last year as a President, there were 513.000 Americans fighting in Vietnam. The decline of American troops started only after Richard Nixon got elected as President, with the lest of them leaning Saigon in 1973. With rotations, a total of 2.594.000 Americans served in Vietnam⁶².

All these men, except the officers, were Americans that ended up in Vietnam through the process of draft⁶³. That’s exactly the point, where the problem for the American leadership started. Because they had to drain from the American society a very large number of young men to train and fight a war in the other hemisphere, not to defend some nation that shared any kind of bonds traditionally with the United states, but to sacrifice their lives as a barricade to the Soviet expansionism in a place of the world, were in those young men’s minds was not that important for the security of

⁵⁹ The expression “boots on the ground” depicts the engagement of a state in hostilities with another state with the presence of troops in the area of dispute, not just with use of airpower or other means.

⁶⁰ Neale, **The American War: Vietnam 1960–1975**, op. cit. p. 91

⁶¹ Χαράλαμπος Παπασωτηρίου, **Αμερικανικό Πολιτικό Σύστημα και Εξωτερική Πολιτική: 1945-2002** (Athens, Greece: Εκδόσεις Ποιότητα, 2002), p. 226

⁶² Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 251

⁶³ Freedman, **Strategy: A History**, op. cit. p. 396

their country. And in case the fact that the support of the war among the soldiers was minimal, what made the situation even worse was the growing voices accusing the administration of discriminations during the draft process⁶⁴. The implementation of the Vietnam draft became a source of controversy, anger, and protests that ultimately ended the draft. The charges of class, race, and age discrimination were levied against the Selective Service System. The chasm between the nation and the state grew each year of the Vietnam War.

The eminent professor of international political economy, Michael Shafer, published in 1990 a study that supports the whole talk about those discriminations in the draft process. According to the study⁶⁵, between 1964 and 1973 26,8 million men in the United States reached draft age with approximately 60 percent of them managing to escape military service. Of the remaining 40 percent, only 25 percent, 10 percent of the male age-cohort, served in Vietnam and of these, only approximately 20 percent, or just 2 percent of the male age-cohort, served in combat. As we can understand, its clear that a relatively small number of the total Americans with the appropriate age served in combat, but the draft led many to become reluctant volunteers⁶⁶ in order to control their service assignments and avoid Vietnam, resulting in the reluctant volunteers to be twice as many as the draftees. Of the nearly 16 million young men who did not serve, 15.4 million were exempted or disqualified, 570.000 evaded the draft illegally and 30.000 fled the country⁶⁷.

What's extremely interesting is what Michael Shafer notes about the nexus between education and serving in Vietnam. In his words: "*Between 1962 and 1972, Harvard and M.I.T. graduated 21,593*

⁶⁴ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 271

⁶⁵ Michael Shafer, **The Vietnam Era Draft: Who Went, Who Didn't and Why It Matters** (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990), p. 63

⁶⁶ Randall Woods, **Vietnam and the American Political Tradition** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 162

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 64

and 14 of them died in Vietnam. During the same period, some 2,000 young men came of draft age in South Boston, a working-class neighborhood not far from Harvard and M.I.T. 25 of them died in Vietnam. Coming from South Boston meant being 20 times more likely to die in Vietnam than going to Harvard or M.I.T.”⁶⁸. The study concluded that men from poor neighborhoods were three times as likely to die in Vietnam, as those from rich neighborhoods, while those from neighborhoods with low educational levels were four times more likely to die than those from neighborhoods with high educational levels⁶⁹.

Some other interesting data comes from the fate of the African American in the Vietnam. In 1966 African American soldiers made up 13 percent of the Army and 8 percent of the Marines, but suffered close to 23 percent of the casualties in Vietnam. In 1967 in the 1st Cavalry Division African Americans suffered 26 percent of the casualties, twice the percent of African Americans assigned to the division. In 1968 blacks made up 11 percent of all enlisted men in Vietnam but 22.4 percent of all killed⁷⁰. But in this case the high percentage of casualties of African Americans, compared with their quota in the total number of the army soldiers, does not mean that they were treated discriminately⁷¹. The Army offered African Americans greater access to education,

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 67

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 69

⁷⁰ Charles C. Moskos & John S. Butler, **All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way** (New York: Basic Books Publications, 1996), p. 77

⁷¹ Martin Luther King Jr opposed to the war in Vietnam and the draft in his speech “*The Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam*” in 1967 using the following words: “*Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extra Ordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the young black men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So, we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So,*

healthcare, job security and leadership positions than they could find outside of it, because of the opportunities that African Americans were denied in the civilian world. So, they put on a great try and fought bravely in order not to lose this status of true equality to their fellow with soldiers, resulting in more of them dying in the battlefield⁷².

Back at that time in United States those data of course were not available, but most of the Americans were feeling the same way and were gradually starting to oppose greatly to the war and the draft. Although Lyndon Johnson was elected as someone that supported peace, he decided to escalate the war in Vietnam and send more soldiers to fight with the Americans supporting his decision in February 1965, when U.S. Army launched a lethal bombing campaign in Vietnam, in a quota of 83 percent. In June 1965 the United States, while bombing, started also engaging in combat with ground forces and the 62 percent of Americans kept approving Johnson's decisions. But some liberal parts of the society, especially students and teachers in universities, started being uncomfortable with war. Gradually this feeling moved to bigger and bigger parts of the society with considerable speed. The result was in 1966 decline of those who supported Johnson's policy in a percentage of 41 percent and one year later 67 percent of the American were firmly against the war in Vietnam⁷³.

we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor". Martin Luther King Jr., Edited by Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, **Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 158

⁷² Masaki Kawasima, **American History, Race and the Struggle for Equality** (Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan Imprint, 2017), p. 119

⁷³ Παπασωτηρίου, **Αμερικανικό Πολιτικό Σύστημα και Εξωτερική Πολιτική: 1945-2002**, op. cit. p. 238

Too many Americans started to accuse the government for violating the cultural tenet equality of opportunity and equality of sacrifice in war⁷⁴. Especially members of the families of those serving in Vietnam, who were exchanging letters with their sons and daughters from the front, knew their complains about the fact that there were just a hand full of wealthy or upper-class men among them serving⁷⁵. And let's not forget that with the American society progressing to a less strict way of life, with the women starting to pursue a career and to claim equal treatment with the men, families started to have less children and became more unwilling than ever to send their sons and daughters to fight.

The fact that the draft was used in order to provide soldiers for a war, whose nature the Americans wouldn't accept, and it was used in a way that seemed discriminative caused this major swift in the American thinking. Americans demonstrated against the draft, a process that they supported warmly until the 2nd World War, 20 to 30 years back. This was exactly the beginning of the end of the citizen-soldier army in the United States⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ Marc Leepson, What It Was Like to Be Drafted (New York: **The New York Times**, Vietnam '67 Series, July 21, 2017)

⁷⁵ The words of the same the soldiers that fought in Vietnam are indicative of what people thought about the war and the draft: *“That fucking draft. How unfair that damn thing was. We young people didn't know any better. We just went on. But I can't believe that older people would let a draft work like that. It was so obvious. If you had money or connections, you could get out or join the National Guard or reserves. I have more respect for the people who went to Canada than I do for the people who went into the reserves. They were the draft- dodgers. At least the people who went to Canada knew they might be punished”* and also *“We were fighting the Communists. But everybody I was with over there out in the field were poor white, black, or Chicano men. Eighteen and nineteen years old. Didn't see any senators' sons or doctors' sons or lawyers' sons or upper-middle-class children”*. Eric M. Bergerud, **Red Thunder Tropic Lightning: The World of a Combat Division in Vietnam** (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 265 & 272 Also see in p. 47, the appendix 4 about examples of what servicemen in Vietnam were engraving on their lighters.

⁷⁶ Sibylle Scheipers, **Heroism and the Changing Character of War: Toward Post-Heroic Warfare?** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publications, 2014), p. 116

During the 1968 presidential election, Richard Nixon had already understood that the American society had enough with the war in Vietnam and the draft and promised to end the conscription by not renewing the existing draft law, which was expiring at the end of June 1971. Nixon won the elections but in 1971 he asked Congress for a two-year extension of the draft, to June 1973. In order to justify this request, he had already started from 1968 to support that the war have to end but the United States cannot leave the people of Vietnam without any kind of terms in order to secure that they won't suffer in the hands of the communist regime of North Vietnam. But Nixon also knew that a direct full withdrawal from Vietnam would damage critically America's reliability as an international actor⁷⁷.

The congress accepted Nixon's request after a very tough debate in the Senate with Senators, who opposed the war, wanted to reduce this extension to a one year, or eliminate the draft altogether,

⁷⁷ Nixon used these words to describe his thoughts for Vietnam in early 1969: *"Abandoning the South Vietnamese people would threaten our long- term hopes for peace in the world. A great nation cannot renege on its pledges. A great nation must be worthy of trust. If we simply abandoned our effort in Vietnam, the cause of peace might not survive the damage that would be done to other nations' confidence in our reliability. If Hanoi were to succeed in taking over South Vietnam by force, even after the power of the United States had been engaged, it would greatly strengthen those leaders who scorn negotiation, who advocate aggression, who minimize the risks of confrontation with the United States. It would bring peace now but it would enormously increase the danger of a bigger war later.... As I saw it, however, this option [unilateral withdrawal] had long since been foreclosed. A precipitate withdrawal would abandon 17 million South Vietnamese, many of whom had worked for us and supported us, to Communist atrocities and domination. When the Communists had taken over North Vietnam in 1954, 50,000 people had been murdered, and hundreds of thousands more died in labor camps. In 1968, during their brief control of Hue, they had shot or clubbed to death or buried alive more than 3,000 civilians whose only crime was to have supported the Saigon government. We simply could not sacrifice an ally in such a way. If we suddenly reneged on our earlier pledges of support, because they had become unpopular at home, we would not be worthy of the trust of other nations and we certainly would not receive it"*. Richard Nixon, **Vietnamization in Vietnam and America**, Edited by Marvin E. Gettleman & Jane Franklin (New York: Grove Press Publications, 1995), p. 434

or tie the draft renewal to a timetable for troop withdrawal from Vietnam⁷⁸. With the conscription extending for another two years, Nixon administration decided to gradually withdraw U.S ground forces from Vietnam and instead to launch a deadly bombing campaign in order to tear apart the Viet Cong's and North Vietnam's military organization. The bombing campaign indeed weakened Communists' military capabilities and it was time for the United States to withdraw.

Direct U.S. military involvement had weakened until 1972 with only 20.000 troops remaining in the country⁷⁹ and ended on 15 August 1973, as a result of the Case–Church Amendment passed by the U.S. Congress⁸⁰. The capture of Saigon by the North Vietnamese Army in April 1975 marked the end of the war, and North and South Vietnam were reunified the following year. In Vietnam, the United States spent an estimated \$200 billion, more than half of which went to the air war⁸¹, and suffered its first defeat. But the fact that people in the United States denounced the draft and caused its termination marked an enormous cultural, political and social pivot in the American way of war, that played crucial role in the contemporary American way of war.

⁷⁸ Charles A. Stevenson, **Congress at War: The Politics of Conflict Since 1789** (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2009), p. 112

⁷⁹ Παπασωτηρίου, **Αμερικανικό Πολιτικό Σύστημα και Εξωτερική Πολιτική: 1945-2002**, op. cit. p. 264

⁸⁰ The Case–Church Amendment was legislation attached to a bill funding the U.S. State Department. prohibited further U.S. military activity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia unless the president secured Congressional approval in advance. This ended direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War, although the U.S. continued to provide military equipment and economic support to the South Vietnamese government until the fall of Saigon in 1975. Stevenson, **Congress at War: The Politics of Conflict Since 1789**, op. cit. p. 115

⁸¹ The anti-air defenses of America's opponents manage to bring down the unbelievable amount of over 8000 U.S. aircrafts and helicopters. Παπασωτηρίου, **Αμερικανικό Πολιτικό Σύστημα και Εξωτερική Πολιτική: 1945-2002**, op. cit. p. 242

2.4 The All-Volunteer Force

With American people removed from the conduct of war, the era of all-volunteer, mercenary armed forces got underway. This new kind of force seemed actually to be more compatible with the new strategic challenges of the artificial limited war that America had to wage. Mass armies of citizen-soldiers are best suited to desperate struggles and wars of mass mobilization⁸². But from 1973 and on, civilians have involved in the armed forces only as engineers or as employees in the various departments of civil affairs. The army budget grew, in order to cover the salaries of those volunteers, but its amount of combat soldiers decreased, because a career in the army was still not a first choice for the average American. In contrast, the smaller numbers of troops boosted the professionalism of U.S. forces.

In the context of all-volunteer force, Americans who decided to join the army, did it in a long-term vision, not briefly as was the case with the draft. In Vietnam a draftee had to go through a basic training lasting from three to six months, depending on his specialization, and then he had to serve in Vietnam for a year⁸³. But those new volunteers had to serve for at least three or five years in the armed forces with the option to extend their service for many years in the future. This resulted in fewer but better trained professional soldiers capable of producing much better results in the battlefield and execute more sophisticated kinds of missions. Also, the advancements in weaponry systems required soldiers with special training as operators of those complex new weapons and

⁸² J. Bacevich & Eliot Cohen, **War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age** (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 52

⁸³ Marc Leepson, What It Was Like to Be Drafted (New York: The New York Times, Vietnam '67 Series, July 21, 2017)

the army tried usually to convince those volunteers-soldiers, who already had gone through this kind of training, to remain in the army with financial benefits⁸⁴.

This decline in total numbers of personnel is obvious through the years starting from the war in Korea until nowadays⁸⁵. Army and the Marine Corps are the two branches of the armed forces with the capability to deploy “boots on the ground”. In the beginning of the Korean War, during the summer of 1950, the Army had in total 593.167 soldiers and the Marine Corps 74.279. Due to the quick mobilization provided by the draft in January 1951 the army counted a total of 1.531.774 soldiers and the Marine Corps 192.620. Those numbers grew even more during the war and declined only after the cease of fire but didn’t decline to reach the pre-war levels. The army soldiers remained around one million and the Marine Corps had enlisted approximately 200.000 until the war in Vietnam, when their numbers grew again⁸⁶, at least until the Nixon administration⁸⁷.

With the end of the War in Vietnam and the abolishment of the draft, the armed forces of the United States shrunk in numbers and remained accordingly shrunk in the next artificial limited war the United States decided to wage. In fact, when a multinational task force was formed in the end of 1990 in order to answer the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq, the numbers of the United States army never grew more than 732.403 soldiers, even though America led the operation “Desert Storm”.

⁸⁴ Williams, **Security Studies: An Introduction**, op. cit. p. 205

⁸⁵ There is no use in taking under consideration the numbers of the U.S. armed forces in the 2nd World War because America’s enemies were mighty enough and this war tended to be a total war in many of its aspects and the U.S. armed forces needed a massive number of troops, incomparable to those needed for an artificial limited war, in order to defeat Axis.

⁸⁶ See p. 44

⁸⁷ David Coleman, U.S. Military Personnel 1950-2014 (**History in Pieces**, Research Website by David Coleman available at: <https://historyinpieces.com/research/us-military-personnel-1954-2014>)

Furthermore, following the defeat of Iraq and the restoration of Kuwait many soldiers left the army in order to pursue other kinds of careers so the number of soldiers in the armed forces declined more. This decline was not temporary because in the War on Terror started in 2001, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States engaged actively with ground forces in Afghanistan and Iraq but from 2001 until 2014 the army reached a peak of 566.045 soldiers in 2010 and the numbers in the Marine Corps peaked in 2009 with 202.786 Marines enlisted⁸⁸. Of course, only a small portion of them were soldiers that engaged actively in combat.

The absence of the American people from the conduct of war leaves a space in the armed forces that the administration hasn't manage to fill yet. However, this "space" opened the way for several private military firms⁸⁹ (PMFs) to get actively involved in the American conduct of war. Those PMFs provided to the army mainly security, logistical support, maintenance, training and battlefield mobilization and less often proper combat soldiers⁹⁰. Especially in the two long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan the United States had to rely on PMFs, by offering them rich contracts⁹¹, to reinforce the services⁹². But private military firms were destined to substitute the missing soldiers and marines, but they are not a state army so promoted their own agenda and worked on the profit incentive. They were not committed to the mission, to achieving the objectives of the American

⁸⁸ David Coleman, U.S. Military Personnel 1950-2014 (**History in Pieces**, Research Website by David Coleman, available at: <https://historyinpieces.com/research/us-military-personnel-1954-2014>)

Also see appendix 3, p. 44, in the end of this chapter for an extensive entry of the numbers in the United States Armed Forces from 1950 to 2014.

⁸⁹ Such private military firms are Blackwater, Global Risks, DynCorp International, MPRI and several others.

⁹⁰ Peter W. Singer, **Corporate Warriors: The Rise of Privatized Military Industry** (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 240

⁹¹ Especially Buss administration relied greatly on PMFs, in contrast with Obama administration, which tried to cut down on PMFs contracts. Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 447

⁹² Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 1

doctrines, or to helping the Iraqi people. They just came to grab the opportunity to make huge profits. And they did⁹³.

The developments in the American way of conducting war after the introduction of the artificial limited war, the abolishment of the draft and the engagement of PMFs in the U.S. armed forces seem to have broken down the three-peak war nexus, presented by Clausewitz and consisted by the dynamics developed among the people⁹⁴, the government and the armed forces. The government doesn't have to justify the war to the people in order to convince them to conscript and fight bravely and willingly the enemy. With a regular, no matter its size, professional force can take more lightly the decision to fight abroad, than in the case it had to depend on the draft. For example, there was very little protest Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) because most Americans were detached from it⁹⁵. But even if there were considerable protests the administration would be less sensitive to them due to not using draftees in combat. Additionally, the armed forces can mobilize the biggest part of their human force in a very short amount of time and engage in combat. The armed forces don't have to depend on civilians to draw their plans can perfect their tactics by exercising even in peace time. On the other hand, the abolishment of the draft canceled a major

⁹³ About the role of PMFs in Iraq, Peter Singer notes: *"It is more a "coalition of the billing" than the "willing". Iraq is where the history books will note that the private military firm industry took full flight. Iraq is not just the biggest U.S. military commitment in a generation but also the biggest marketplace in the short history of the privatized military industry. In Iraq, private actors play a pivotal role in great- power warfare to an extent not seen since the advent of the mass nation- state armies in the Napoleonic Age..... PMFs were extremely useful because they diminish the need for the President to explain the war and seek the support of the American people. PMFs are, in fact, a new form of mercenaries. Patriotism does not matter. PMFs have no obligation to maintain operational security, to not reveal intelligence, to not change sides, or to not act selfishly. They can be easily employed by the very same enemies of the United States"*. Peter Singer, **Warriors for Hire in Iraq** (Washington DC: Defense by the Brookings Institution, 15 April 2004)

⁹⁴ Clausewitz, **On War**, op. cit. p. 39

⁹⁵ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 372

mechanism for bridging the gap between cultural, racial, ethnic and other kind of groups in the American society and transported the burden of the war in a very small numbers of the American households⁹⁶.

During the two long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. government has used reenlistment bonuses and serious financial incentives to keep soldiers and marines on active duty or to recruit new ones. Gradually, with many marines or army soldiers reenlisting due to beneficial bonuses, there was created in America a military cluster of people who incite their children to join the army and tend to be conservatives and fell alienated by their country⁹⁷.

To sum up, the next major swift in the American thinking of conducting war, after the introduction of thermonuclear weapons, was a cultural one and played a crucial role in the contemporary American way of war by resulting in strategical changes in the very same wage of war in the battlefield, in political changes in the process of the U.S. engagement in a new war and in sociological changes in the composition of the armed forces and the pool, from where the volunteers came.

⁹⁶ This stands for approximately the 0,5 percent of the American households. Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 366

⁹⁷ Buley, **The New American Way of War**, op. cit. p. 29

**Appendix 3. Extensive entry of the numbers in the United States Armed Forces from 1950
to 2014**

Source: David Coleman, U.S. Military Personnel 1950-2014 (**History in Pieces**, Research Website by David Coleman, available at: <https://historyinpieces.com/research/us-military-personnel-1954-2014>)

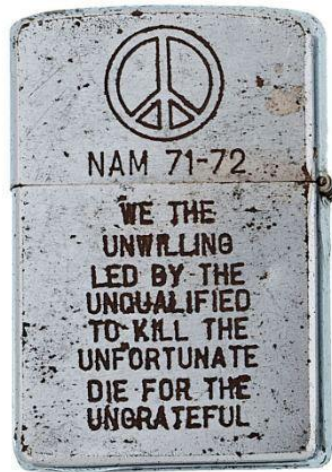
Year	Army	Navy	Marines	Air Force	Total
1950	593,167	380,739	74,279	411,277	1,459,462
1951	1,531,774	736,596	192,620	788,381	3,249,371
1952	1,596,419	824,265	231,967	983,261	3,635,912
1953	1,533,815	794,440	249,219	977,593	3,555,067
1954	1,404,598	725,720	223,868	947,918	3,302,104
1955	1,109,296	660,695	205,170	959,946	2,935,107
1956	1,025,778	669,925	200,780	909,958	2,806,441
1957	997,994	677,108	200,861	919,835	2,795,798
1958	898,925	641,005	189,495	871,156	2,600,581
1959	861,964	626,340	175,571	840,435	2,504,310
1960	873,078	617,984	170,621	814,752	2,476,435
1961	858,622	627,089	176,909	821,151	2,483,771
1962	1,066,404	666,428	190,962	884,025	2,807,819

1963	975,916	664,647	189,683	869,431	2,699,677
1964	973,238	667,596	189,777	856,798	2,687,409
1965	969,066	671,448	190,213	824,662	2,655,389
1966	1,199,784	745,205	261,716	887,353	3,094,058
1967	1,442,498	751,619	285,269	897,494	3,376,880
1968	1,570,343	765,457	307,252	904,850	3,547,902
1969	1,512,169	775,869	309,771	862,353	3,460,162
1970	1,322,548	692,660	259,737	791,349	3,066,294
1971	1,123,810	623,248	212,369	755,300	2,714,727
1972	810,960	588,043	198,238	725,838	2,323,079
1973	800,973	564,534	196,098	691,182	2,252,787
1974	783,330	545,903	188,802	643,970	2,162,005
1975	784,333	535,085	195,951	612,751	2,128,120
1976	779,417	524,678	192,399	585,416	2,081,910
1977	782,246	529,895	191,707	570,695	2,074,543
1978	771,624	530,253	190,815	569,712	2,062,404
1979	758,852	523,937	185,250	559,455	2,027,494
1980	777,036	527,153	188,469	557,969	2,050,627

1981	781,419	540,219	190,620	570,302	2,082,560
1982	780,391	552,996	192,380	582,845	2,108,612
1983	779,643	557,573	194,089	592,044	2,123,349
1984	780,180	564,638	196,214	597,125	2,138,157
1985	780,787	570,705	198,025	601,515	2,151,032
1986	780,980	581,119	198,814	608,199	2,169,112
1987	780,815	586,842	199,525	607,035	2,174,217
1988	771,847	592,570	197,350	576,446	2,138,213
1989	769,741	592,652	196,956	570,880	2,130,229
1990	732,403	579,417	196,652	535,233	2,043,705
1991	710,821	570,262	194,040	510,432	1,985,555
1992	610,450	541,883	184,529	470,315	1,807,177
1993	572,423	509,950	178,379	444,351	1,704,103
1994	541,343	468,662	174,158	426,327	1,610,490
1995	508,559	434,617	174,639	400,409	1,518,224
1996	491,103	416,735	174,883	389,001	1,471,722
1997	491,707	395,564	173,906	377,385	1,438,562
1998	483,880	382,338	173,142	367,470	1,406,830

1999	479,426	373,046	172,641	360,590	1,385,703
2000	482,170	373,193	173,321	355,654	1,384,338
2001	480,801	377,810	172,934	353,571	1,385,116
2002	486,542	383,108	173,733	368,251	1,411,634
2003	499,301	382,235	177,779	375,062	1,434,377
2004	499,543	373,197	177,480	376,616	1,426,836
2005	492,728	362,941	180,029	353,696	1,389,394
2006	505,402	350,197	180,416	348,953	1,384,968
2007	522,017	337,547	186,492	333,495	1,379,551
2008	543,645	332,228	198,505	327,379	1,401,757
2009	553,044	329,304	202,786	333,408	1,418,542
2010	566,045	328,303	202,441	334,196	1,430,985
2011	565,463	325,123	201,157	333,370	1,425,113
2012	550,064	318,406	198,193	332,959	1,399,622
2013	528,070	319,838	195,848	326,573	1,370,329
2014	515,888	319,120	192,787	326,259	1,354,054

Appendix 4: Inscribed lighters of draftees that served in Vietnam



Part 3. The Pursuit of Innovative War Technologies

3.1 The Cultural Origins of the Technological Struggle

Americans are defined by an overwhelm passion for introducing and taking advantage of new technologies and that's not something new, nor it is only present in their way of conducting war. For example, the "pursuit of happiness" or the American dream, in an economic environment defined by capitalism, urges the people to work hard and gather as much as possible wealth in order to consume more goods⁹⁸. In this context, the possession of advanced technological equipment in the everyday life of Americans is considered to be a sign of success. That's why many people struggle to buy a new smartphone, which is extremely expensive and has only one or two better features compared to their last smartphone. Because, when using this new smartphone in front of everyone, they think that makes them immediately look successful and wealthy. And this is not restricted only in the everyday life of civilians. For the very same the State technological advancements are considered to be in the core of its greatness⁹⁹. On the other hand, the American struggle for more advanced technologies in the conduct of war, can be explained by taking under consideration one of the main ideas of the American thinking.

⁹⁸ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 33

⁹⁹ Consider these words written already by 1835: "Equality begets in man the desire of judging of everything for himself; it gives him in all things a taste for the tangible and the real, contempt for tradition and for forms. To minds thus predisposed, every new method that leads by a shorter road to wealth, every machine that spares labor, every instrument that diminishes the cost of production, every discovery that facilitates pleasures or augments them, seems to be the grandest effort of the human intellect. It is chiefly from these motives that a democratic people addicts itself to scientific pursuits, that it understands and respects them. You may be sure that the more democratic, enlightened, and free a nation is, the greater will be the number of these interested promoters of scientific genius and the more will discoveries immediately applicable to productive industry confer on their authors gain, fame, and even power". Alexis de Tocqueville, **Democracy in America** (New York: The Modern Library Publications, 1981), p. 338

One of the most important resources for the American nation are its people. For the Americans, people should be considered the end and in no case the means for some end. That's why traditionally the United States hesitated to engage in any kind of war and preferred to turn towards isolationism. So, the struggle for technological breakthroughs in the conduct of war should not be interpreted solely as a way for the American forces to rule in the battlefield, but also as a tool in order to reduce as much as possible the human casualties and the participation of the people in a conflict.

Even during the second world war, when the United States gathered a very big number of soldiers in order to confront the forces of Axis, quite a few analysts of the war and officers believed that gathering a massive army won't be necessary because the modern war machines in land, air and sea would be capable to take over the fight with no special need for infantry forces. What's written in the U.S army Infantry Journal shortly after the end of the 2nd World War describes this belief, but also acknowledges the fact that in the end the infantry proved essential for the conduct of the 2nd World War: *“What the Infantryman has done in this war has come as a development, unexpected not only by most of the American people, but also by some of our commanders. The people thought, back in 1940, 1941 and 1942, that there could be no need of a “mass Army.” They believed that men in planes and men in tanks could do practically all the hard combat work there would be to do. Back of this belief was the hope that we could win without great cost, that American sons and husbands could fight from within machines with far more safety than they could by fighting on the open fields of battle. And there were commanders, too, who believed at first that men in machines could handle the heaviest parts of the task. But by 1944 it was clear to all that*

*the Infantryman would have to be there in the center of battle, in large numbers, taking the worst of it as he fought*¹⁰⁰.

3.2 Technology as a Way to Superiority

Despite the disappointment, caused by the necessity of the Infantry in the 2nd World War, Americans continued to believe that they have to do whatever is possible in order to gradually substitute manpower with technology. The need for this substitution to start taking place became more urge, when the United States started engaging in artificial limited wars, because there was fewer support from the people to fight and die in this kind of wars. But this time, with the Cold War underway, the United States had to face a worthy adversary, Soviet Union, in their race for technological superiority in the conduct of war. This became clear already from the war in Korea, when the Americans were stunned by the capabilities of the Soviet made MiG fighter planes, used by North Koreans and Chinese operators¹⁰¹. Less than five years after the end of the war in Korea, in 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik and the United States found themselves once again one step behind their rivals.

The American administration had enough end decided to enhance their effort in order to take the lead in every aspect of technology and especially in warfare with the American people supporting this race¹⁰². As a result, since the second half of the twentieth century the United States has spent more than any other state around the world in search of the most advanced technologies for war

¹⁰⁰ US Army Ground Forces, *Once Again* (Norfolk, VA: **Infantry Journal**, October 1945), p. 6

¹⁰¹ Pape, **Bombing to Win**, op. cit. p. 141

¹⁰² Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 49

and in many cases the American administration¹⁰³ ended up in spending billions of dollars to replace the most advanced technologies in the world with others, only barely more advanced¹⁰⁴. The United States indeed gained the technological advantage in the conduct of war and tried to keep ahead in an arm race that played a part in the fall of the Soviet Union.

The main mission for the army during the Cold War was to provide a forward-installed and credible deterrent force in Europe against the forces of the Warsaw Pact and to confront them in the battlefield¹⁰⁵ in case the Soviets decided to move aggressively towards Western Europe. In order to strengthen its combat force, the U.S. army focused in the development and production of five war machines and weapon systems, more widely known as “Big Five¹⁰⁶”, a state-of-the-art tank, an infantry fighting vehicle, an advanced attack helicopter, a troop-carrying helicopter, and an air-defense system¹⁰⁷. An enormous amount of money was spent in research in order to perfect these

¹⁰³ “*The U.S. must modernize its military forces, both nuclear and conventional, so that Soviet leaders perceive that the U.S. is determined never to accept a second place or a deteriorating military posture. Soviet calculations of possible war outcomes under any contingency must always result in outcomes so unfavorable to the USSR that there would be no incentive or Soviet leaders to initiate an attack. The future strength of U.S. military capabilities must be assured. U.S. military technology advances must be exploited, while controls over transfer of military related, dual-use technology, products, and services must be tightened*”. **National Security Decision Directive 75**, U.S. Relations with the USSR (Washington DC: The White House, January 17, 1983, available at: <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf> Last accessed in November 15, 2018), p. 2

¹⁰⁴ Armin Krishnan, **War as Business: Technological Change and Military Service Contracting** (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 17

¹⁰⁵ More specifically Americans had in mind to create a force that would conduct major combat operations in Germany. Ingo Trauschweizer, **The Cold War U.S. Army: Building Deterrence for Limited War** (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), p. 49

¹⁰⁶ Thomas G. Mahnken, **Technology and the American Way of War** (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p.131

¹⁰⁷ The state-of-the-art tank the Army chose to produce eventually was the M1 Abrams and the infantry fighting vehicle was the M2 and M3 Armored Bradley Fighting Vehicle, which made mechanized infantry quicker in its response and movement without letting the infantrymen exposed to the enemy shots. As for the troop-carrying helicopter the design of the Black Hawk won the race and the Apache got to be the mighty attack helicopter of the

weapon systems, to make them become more advanced, more destructive, deadly and capable to face the Soviet divisions but, in the end, they never had to.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact the main mission for the army for over forty years ceased to exist in a moment. There was no need for the regular presence of a great number of American forces in Europe since the Soviet threat evaporated. And right at the time, when the American forces had to reevaluate their place in the world, review their doctrines and set new targets, the United States was given the chance to test in the battlefield their war machine against the Iraqi Army in order to reinstate the state of Kuwait, which was occupied by Iraqi forces in August, 1990. Of course, these weapon systems did not begin to develop in 1970s to fight the inferior Iraq. Iraq was not even on the radar screen of potential threats, in fact it was considered to be something like a strategic ally in the area in order to restrict the Islamic fundamentalism, which was considered a threat after the Iranian revolution in 1979¹⁰⁸. Despite the fact that Iraq was not considered a threat, what's interesting is that its army buildup was based in the Soviet type of army, which means that it relied in its mechanized, motorized infantry and tank corps to conduct a war¹⁰⁹.

The United States led coalition numbered approximately one million soldiers from 28 different countries, 3.300 modern tanks and over 1.800 modern aircrafts equipped with modern smart

American Army. Last but not least, the air-defense system was chosen to be the Patriot Anti-Air Defense System. COL David C. Trybula, "**Big Five**" **Lessons for Today and Tomorrow** (Alexandria, VG: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2012), p. 7-66

¹⁰⁸ Keith L. Shimko, The United States and the RMA: Revolutions do Not Revolutionize Everything *in Reassessing the Revolution in Military Affairs: Transformation, Evolution and Lessons Learnt*, ed. by Jeffrey Collins & Andrew Futter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publications, 2015), p. 19

¹⁰⁹ Of course, that doesn't mean that Iraqi forces, that spent eight years (1980-1988) fighting a modern trench war with Iran, were as capable as the mighty Red Army.

weapon systems for extremely precise hits. In the opposite corner, the Iraqi forces numbered over 1,15 million soldiers¹¹⁰, 5,000 tanks and 650 aircrafts. In a first reading the two forces seemed equally strong with the American led coalition excel in the air and the Iraqi forces in the ground. The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, was confident and believed that the main battle operations would be executed in the ground. So, he was aiming in causing such damage to the American forces, so that to create a “new Vietnam” and ultimately survive by waiting the American people to press the administration to withdraw from the war. What happened when the war got underway was not even close to what Saddam thought¹¹¹.

In the early hours of January 17th, 1991, the U.S. coalition launched the first air raids against the Iraqi forces and continued to attack from above until the February 23rd. Those air raids resulted in the destruction of the majority of Iraqi forces and fully disorganized the Iraqi high command, which in several cases didn't had a clue of what was happening in the battlefield. The damage caused by the air raids to the Iraqi forces was so devastating that, when the U.S. led coalition started to operate with its ground forces in February 24th, it took less than 100 hours for the American forces to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqis and proceed towards Baghdad in a distance of nearly 200 km from the city. This advance inside the enemy's mainland marked Iraq's total defeat and brought the war to the end with the U.S. coalition forces to count only 348 casualties¹¹².

¹¹⁰ 250,000 of them were regulars and approximately 900,000 were drafted from the reserves. Lawrence Freedman, **A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East** (New York: PublicAffairs Publications, 2008), p. 235

¹¹¹ E. Farkas, **Fractured States and the U.S. Foreign Policy** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publications, 2008), p. 113

¹¹² Lawrence Freedman, **A Choice of Enemies**, op. cit. p. 252

3.3 The Revolution in the Military Affairs

Everyone was stunned by the effectiveness and the capabilities of the modern sophisticated weapon systems the United States deployed against Iraq and a great debate got underway about the new **Revolution in the Military Affairs (RMA)**, that the U.S. forces were going through and how this would transform the American way of conducting war. The term “Revolution in the Military Affairs” has been used to describe a “major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of new technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts, fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations¹¹³”.

At that time, it seemed that the United States was just one step away from upgrading their military capabilities in a new level, which would make it possible to engage in conflicts worldwide, to win them in a very short time and with extremely low casualties. In the dawn of 20th century the American way of waging war was finally reaching its ideal operational form. Or at least that was many expected or hoped. In this pursuit of the fully implementation of this new technologies in the American war machine, an enormous amount of money has been invested in research projects

¹¹³ Thierry Gongora & Harald von Riehoff, **Toward a Revolution in Military Affairs? Defense and Security Policy at the Dawn of the 21st Century** (New York: Greenwood Press Publications, 2000), p. 1

Let’s also keep in mind that history demonstrates that there are many technological discoveries and advancements that are capable to cause a great change in the way of waging war and don’t have just military functions. For example, a great advancement was caused prior to 1st World War by the development of the railways in Europe. Railways were very important means for the civil life, due to the facilitations they provided in transportations and commerce, but they also allowed the quickest movement of troops in the front and their continuous resupply in a short time. As a result, more and more massive armies could be gathered to fight.

throughout the Universities and the several research institutes in the States. Everyone seemed to believe that there was no end in what technology could offer¹¹⁴.

But in this point, we should clarify what kind of advancements this technological outbreak brought specifically in the battlefield. The most important and productive technologies for the conduct of war can be identified within a complex, the “reconnaissance-strike complex”, that includes surveillance, communications, target identification, stealth and munitions guidance technologies¹¹⁵. One of the most important breakthroughs, this reconnaissance-strike complex brought to the battlefield, was the fact that it boosted extremely the target identification ability of the U.S. forces resulting in identifying targets from a great distance, without sending scouting teams close to the enemy and putting those men’s lives in great danger. Practically this can be translated as a great reduction of the Clausewitzian “fog of war”¹¹⁶, which does not allow the two opponents to know each and every of each other’s movements.

The partial, at least, dispel of the fog of war allowed the American forces to execute more accurate hits, with less casualties for U.S. soldiers and civilians. But the precision of hits alone does not tell

¹¹⁴ On 5 March 1994, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Gordon Sullivan, in a letter of his titled “Force XXI” destined for the Army’s general officers about how the U.S. army should adapt in order to face the challenges of the 21st century, he highlights: “today, we are a threshold of a new era and we must proceed into it decisively. Today the industrial Age is being superseded by the Information Age, the Third Wave, hard on the heels of the agrarian and industrial eras. Our present army is well-configured to fight and win in the Late Industrial Age, and we can handle Agrarian-Age foes as well. We have begun to move into Third Wave warfare, to evolve a new force for a new century, the Force XXI. This force will synthesize the science of modern computer technology, the art of irrigation doctrine and organization and the optimization of our quality people. The goal is to create new formations that operate at even greater performance levels in speed, space and time. Force XXI will represent a new way of thinking for a new wave of warfare”. Gordon R. Sullivan, **Hope is Not a Method** (New York: Crown Business Publications, 1997), p. 249

¹¹⁵ Keith L. Shimko, **The United States and the RMA: Revolutions do Not Revolutionize Everything**, op. cit. p. 18

¹¹⁶ Clausewitz, **On War**, op. cit. p. 117

the whole story. We must also take under consideration speed and range. The technological advancements in the “reconnaissance-strike complex” made it possible to hit a large number of targets, from a long distance, in a very short time across a wide battle space mainly by using airpower. This new devastating target hitting capabilities could cause an enormous damage to the enemy’s forces per se, by destroying its army, but also can “crack” the operating network of the enemy forces’ system¹¹⁷ by destroying their communication establishments or killing their leaders¹¹⁸. With its operating network damaged, the enemy’s army remains disoriented and vulnerable to collapse after an attack from ground forces.

These extraordinary new capabilities inspired the U.S. forces to create an almighty system of war, through a “network-centric doctrine”¹¹⁹. This is composed by three main pillars: sensors, a joint

¹¹⁷ The structural and operational “system” of the armed forces: “*Generically, a system is a set of interrelated elements that collectively form a whole. Armies are made up of many different systems: myriad units, organizations, command arrangements, multiple communication nets, logistic structures and so on. Co-operation among these elements is required for effective command and control, movement, fighting and supply. Contemporary thinking about armies as systems has led to the emergence of two concepts: the “system of systems” and the “systemic shock”. A “system of systems” is created through intense networking between systems, utilising new technologies, especially digital communications, and associated procedures to create a more unified whole out of the distinct elements. This allows information to flow much more quickly and effectively, which, in theory, dramatically increases the speed at which decisions can be made and the tempo at which operations can be conducted. Conversely, it is possible to render enemy forces ineffective by destroying their capacity to function as a system, even if the enemy combat elements are still intact. This can be done by inducting “systemic shock” in the enemy: paralyzing the ability of the individual elements in an army to function together. This can be achieved through a variety of related means, including: disrupting enemy communications, attacking command-and-control infrastructures, undermining enemy decision-making through high-tempo operations, denying the enemy information and undermining their morale*”. David Jordan, James D. Kiras, David J. Lonsdale, Ian Speller, Christopher Tuck & Dale C. Walton, **Understanding Modern Warfare** (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 111

¹¹⁸ Those kinds of missions are called “decapitating” missions. For more information see Pape, **Bombing to Win**, op. cit. p. 58-66

¹¹⁹ Thomas G. Mahnken, **Transforming the U.S. Armed Forces: Rhetoric or Reality**, (Newport, RI: Naval War College Review, Summer 2001, Vol. 3), p. 88

communication network and shooters. As sensors we should consider anything that provides intelligence for the battlefield. They can be varied, from space-based observation satellites and sophisticated radar systems on ground establishments or equipped in aircrafts, to scout teams from special forces and Rangers. Sensors in total are capable to provide great battlefield awareness and information dominance against the enemy resulting in providing an extremely valuable amount of information to the shooters, which will execute the hits against the enemy forces. As shooters are of course capable to function every war machine or every military formation capable of engaging in combat.

3.4 Drones and Other Unmanned Machines

Both as sensors and as shooters can be used contemporary unmanned aircrafts and land vehicles, which are considered to be one of the best ways to execute military operations without human casualties. The most well-known of these unmanned vehicles¹²⁰ or machines are the drones. Trying to describe with accuracy what a drone is we end up in stating that they are a group of powered electro-mechanical systems, all of which have in common, that they do not have an onboard human operator, they are designed to be recoverable in order to be used again or secure their data and, in

¹²⁰ The idea of using vehicles or machines with minimum risk for their operators is not something new in the American military thinking. During the 2nd World War, the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy used B-17 Flying Fortress bombers in a very similar way. The aircraft was fully loaded with explosives and a pilot had to fly it 2000 feet above its target, aim the detonators towards it and then try to parachute to safety. This kind of operation was less known and had been used less extensively because it was particularly deadly, killing 70% of the pilots who undertook such missions. Heather Ashley Hayes, **Violent Subjects and Rhetorical Cartography in the Age of the Terror Wars** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2016), p. 20.

Prototype drones had been deployed by the US Air Force in Vietnam too, though with little success since they were quite large, noisy and slow thus ended up presenting easy targets for enemy fighters. Ibid. p. 29

a military context, they are able to exert their power in order to deliver a lethal or nonlethal payload or otherwise perform a function in support of a military force's objectives¹²¹.

Shortly after 9/11 terrorist attacks, President G.W. Bush's promised to get Osama Bin Laden "dead or alive" and Approved CIA drone strikes on Al Qaeda as a defensive measure in the Global War on Terror. The first drone kind weapons fired against enemy targets were those which fired against Taliban troops in October 2001 and against Al Qaeda leaders south of Kabul in November 2001¹²². The use of armed drones to target terrorist suspects came alive during G.W. Bush's administration, but the total number of attacks did not grow over 50, somewhat a pity number compared to his successor's use of drones. When Barack Obama took over the presidency, he put a stop to a number of policies from the Bush era that he disagreed with, but the drone programme became one of his priorities regarding his doctrine on Global War on Terror¹²³. As a result, the U.S. drone programme grew exponentially in founts and in importance during the Obama administration resulting in over

¹²¹ Jai Galliot, **Military robots: Mapping the moral landscape** (New York: Routledge Publications, 2015), p. 7

¹²² Brian Glyn Williams, The CIA's covert Predator drone war in Pakistan 2004-2010: the history of an assassination campaign, **Studies in Conflict & Terrorism**, 33:10 (New York: Routledge Publications, 2010), p. 873

¹²³ The unmanned vehicles can penetrate into dangerous areas, where the foot troops are too vulnerable or can't reach. Regarding hits, their operators perform two general kinds of them, "Personality" strikes and "Signature" strikes. Personality strikes refer to targeting with priority individuals, that the US military considered to be "High Value Targets" (HVTs), such as leading figures of terrorist organizations or insurgents. On the other hand, signature strikes are based on pattern of life analysis. That is to say that people are often killed by drone strike when their behavior, as seen from the sky, appears to correspond to pre-identified modes of behavior that is linked to militant activity. In other words, a signature strike is justified by observing a pattern of action that indicates the individuals, although not known specifically or personally, are preparing an attack. The combination of a signature strike policy and considering all military-age males to be combatants has the potential to lead to a very wide category of individuals being targeted and killed. There have been a large number of false positives in the past. With pattern of life analysis, despite the scientific language in which it is often couched, there are frequently some assumptions made about individuals, behavior and the nature of contact. David Cortright, Rachel Fairhurst & Kristen Wall, **Drones and the future of armed conflict: Ethical, legal, and strategic implications** (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 52

1000 hits until 2016¹²⁴. The use of this kind of contemporary war machines already from the Gulf War, many years before the Obama administration, inspired the common imagination¹²⁵ about the destructive power of the future war machines and the future use of more sophisticated machines, like humanoid robots in the battlefield¹²⁶.

From the sensors being the input channels of this “network-centric” system to the shooters being the output channels there is a function gap that is being filled by third main pillar of this system, the joint communication network. This network plays the most important role in the whole process due to its amazing capabilities. Through the joint communication network, the analysts and the military personnel can process in real time and simultaneously information gathered by the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Intelligence services¹²⁷. This oversized number of information sometimes might cause a problem of proper evaluation of what’s important and what it is not, but there is no doubt that that intel can provide the best possible battlefield awareness. Additionally, that information is at the very same time available for the decision makers back in the United States, resulting in letting the President or the military High Command to decide instantly how each operation will escalate and offering them a very important weapon in their hands, since the modern war machines are capable of delivering precision destructive power on specific targets, even individuals, with measured lethality¹²⁸.

¹²⁴ Jameel Jaffer, **The Drone Memos: Targeted Killing, Secrecy and the Law** (New York: The New Press Publications, 2016), p. 9

¹²⁵ Carl Boggs & Tom Pollard, **The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture** (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), p. 234

¹²⁶ See appendix 5, p. 62

¹²⁷ Keith L. Shimko, **The United States and the RMA: Revolutions do Not Revolutionize Everything**, op. cit. p. 27

¹²⁸ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 379

So, the fact that the U.S. military command can have so much information about the enemy in real-time and is capable of launching an attack with speed and precision, changed the necessary means needed for the victory to come. The very same war objective shifted, from fighting directly the enemy's main forces "man to man", to achieving a victory by crippling the enemy communications without the mass armies or the enormous destruction common in the wars of the past¹²⁹. This new doctrine was based on advanced technology techniques and not in the number of available soldiers. As a result, the structure of battle formations of the U.S ground forces changed from division type to light and heavy brigade type combat teams¹³⁰, reducing even more the number of necessary combat soldiers.

A great way to understand how this new network-centric doctrine aimed to cripple the enemy is to use as an analogy the human body for the enemy¹³¹. Having this analogy in mind the new objective of the U.S. operations was to destroy the "system of nerves" that transmitted orders from the brain to the muscles, severing the links between the decision makers and the fighting forces. An equally acceptable target is to destroy the "brain", meaning the leadership and the decision makers, from the beginning and the "muscles", meaning the armed forces are last in an order of preference. Severing the many links between the brain and the muscles is no small task¹³². Numerous systems transmit signals. Hence, the task was to temporarily stop the flow of instruction, and then move rapidly, faster than the enemy could respond, to destroy the brain, or sufficient parts of the central nervous system to paralyze the enemy and thereby achieve military and political objectives. So, as we can see, the new objective was not to fight directly the enemy's main forces, the muscles. By

¹²⁹ Lawrence Freedman, **Strategy: A History**, op. cit. p. 221

¹³⁰ Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning & Terry Terriff, **Transforming Military Power Since the Cold War**, op. cit. p 109

¹³¹ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 376

¹³² Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning & Terry Terriff, **Transforming Military Power Since the Cold War**, op. cit. p. 89

operating faster than an enemy due to the use of superior information, it was believed that the enemy's options were taken away. His decision-loop, the time it takes for him to react to changes on the battlefield, was too slow to compensate for the rate of change inflicted by fast-moving American forces, causing partial paralysis, which creates the opportunity for the decisive destruction of the center of gravity, the brain.

The new advanced technologies, the U.S. Army invested on, made possible the implementation of this new doctrine of war but they didn't solve everything. The biggest problem with this vision of war was that it left out the idea of human beings as a whole. People are more than the sum of their parts. This doctrine diminished and hid the fact that wars are not won until the people accept defeat, it assumed that a very rapid destruction of the brain or the nerves would end the conflict instantly. It overlooked the power of the human "soul", which in our case comes from within the society and sparks the local insurgent networks against the distant invader, the United States.

Appendix 5. Hollywood's Contribution in boosting the "Technowar"

Following the breakthrough of the war in Iraq, the film industry didn't engage immediately and actively in supporting or rejecting the war, although in the years following 2007, when the movie *Hurt Locker* was released, more and more movies referring to a contemporary war against evil Arabs and Persians started going under filming. But long before this war went underway Hollywood firms, influenced obviously from the whole debate regarding the RMA and the future capabilities of the American war machine, produced films depicting futuristic wars among advanced war machines. Those movies aimed in communicating two kinds of messages¹³³. The first one was that the future capabilities of the United States army would be so great and destructive that no other force can deny their superiority. The second was the fact that the humans should not be afraid and question the technological advancements because they remain capable of controlling or shutting down, if necessary, the future advanced machines. This combination aimed in inspiring people to support the technological superiority. This technological superiority would serve as the main source of supremacy in the future war for the United States¹³⁴. Movies were the best way to subconsciously make the people believe that the United States would remain the most powerful nation in the world. Of course, that does not mean that it was an organized conspiracy from the Hollywood brands or the U.S. government to influence the American people, just that it was a "trend" which expressed the main belief about the bright future of the U.S. forces due to their technological superiority.

¹³³ Carl Boggs & Tom Pollard, **The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture**, op. cit. p. 221

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 233

Appendix 6. The contemporary role of the U.S. Navy

The reason why using an appendix to mention the role of the U.S. Navy in this paper is that this role hasn't change substantially in the contemporary world. Despite the several changes in technical and tactical levels with the implementation of new technologies and the reduction in its staff, the U.S. Navy remain attached to its traditional role, which is achieving, exploiting and denying sea control in order to secure trade routes worldwide and, coming from the sea, influence what happens in the land¹³⁵. With the American Navy being the most powerful around the world and can with on nation capable of matching its might, just the presence of U.S. ships is enough to secure naval superiority in the area. The most important new element can be found in the capabilities the U.S. has about influencing the land. During the 2nd World War in every naval invasion from the Allies, the U.S. warships provided support by firing against the enemy defensive positions in the land¹³⁶. The new advanced weapons installed in the U.S. warships allowed the to support the land operations in Iraq and Afghanistan with considerable firepower and from a greater range than ever before in the past. While right now the possibility of a major conflict in the sea among conventional sea forces seems extremely distant, due to the superiority of the U.S. naval forces, it would be naïve to assume that the situation will remain the same forever. A good understanding about the way of war in the sea is still important nowadays, as it was until now.

¹³⁵ David Jordan, James D. Kiras, David J. Lonsdale, Ian Speller, Christopher Tuck & Dale C. Walton, **Understanding Modern Warfare**, p. 174

¹³⁶ Colin Gray, **The Navy in the Post-Cold War World: The Uses and Value of Strategic Sea Power** (Pennsylvania, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. 16

Part 4. From Convectional Triumph to Unconventional Ineffectiveness

4.1 The Triumph Over Conventional Forces

If someone tries to determine the birthday date of the War on Terror, that resulted in the American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, he would probably go back in February 1998, when the terrorist leader, Osama Bin Laden, called upon a “Holy Jihad” against Americans¹³⁷. But how can a non-state actor fight and succeed against the most powerful State in the whole world, which just one decade before has managed to win the struggle against the mighty Soviet Union. Not by fighting in a conventional way, for sure. So, this non-state actor, Al-Qaeda in our case, have to move “above” or “below” the conventional war tactics in order to cause problems to a superpower like, the United States. Tactics located above conventional warfare have to do with the use of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and those located below conventional warfare refer to the use of terrorist attacks or guerrilla tactics to harm the enemy.

Al-Qaeda chose the latter option and launched a series of terrorist attacks against American targets, starting with the bombing of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in August 1998, moving to

¹³⁷ “*All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on God, his Messenger, and Muslims. ... The jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries. ... As for the fighting to repulse an enemy, it is aimed at defending sanctity and religion, and it is a duty. ... On that basis, and in compliance with God’s order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims: The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies, civilian and military, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it. The days to come are sufficient for the U.S., God willing, to see a black fate like the one that befell the Soviet Union. Blows will come down on the U.S. one after another from everywhere and new Islamic groups will emerge one after another to fight U.S. interests that are still based on stealth and usurpation. Islamic armies will set off one following the other to fight the U.S. criminal forces. And you will see: as for the unbelievers, never will disaster cease to seize them for their ill deeds or to settle to their homes until the promise of God has come to pass, for verily, God will not fail in his promise*”. Stephen Coughlin, **Catastrophic Failure: Blindfolding America in the Face of Jihad** (Washington DC: Center for Security Policy Press, 2015), p. 46

the attack against the US Navy destroyer, the USS Cole, two years later and escalating greatly with the hijacked airplane attacks in New York and Washington DC in 9/11 2001. The 9/11 attacks shocked the world and forced the U.S administration to answer decisively resulting the declaration of War on Terror from the President George W. Bush¹³⁸. This War on Terror led to the military interventions in Afghanistan through the operation “Enduring Freedom”, where the Taliban were letting Al-Qaeda operate through their continents, and in Iraq through the operation “Iraqi Freedom” where the Bush administration feared that the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, would provide WMDs to Al-Qaeda.

By the time the two operations went underway, the “reconnaissance-strike complex” mentioned above and the network-centric doctrine had been improved greatly. resulting in A decade after Dessert Storm, guided munitions were cheaper, their stockpiles larger, and many more platforms were able to deliver them. Intelligence assets, forces and platforms were more tightly linked so

¹³⁸ “Americans have known wars but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack”. George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People (**The Whitehouse Press Releases**, September 20, 2001), available at: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html Last accessed in November 5, 2018

Also:

“The struggle against international terrorism is different from any other war in our history. We will not triumph solely or even primarily through military might. We must fight terrorist networks, and all those who support their efforts to spread fear around the world, using every instrument of national power- diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and military. ... You're either with us or against us in this fight against terror”. George W. Bush, “You are either with us or against us” (**CNN.com/ Us**, November 6, 2001), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/> Last accessed in November 15, 2018

they could function together as a “system of systems” in a common mission¹³⁹. A decade long emphasis on “jointness” in planning and training had broken down inter-service divisions and rivalries to promote cooperation. Improved communications dramatically accelerated the transmission of information, increasing battlefield awareness and shortening the sensor-to-shooter cycle. All these advancements, even followed by a substantial reduction in the manpower, resulted in creating an extremely technologically advanced and lethal professional force capable of bringing enormous destructive power upon its opponent. And so, it did.

The first campaign of the war against Islamic extremists was played out on September 25, 2001, when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced the beginning of operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, which Al-Qaeda had for years used as the major place to organize and expand. During the operation Enduring Freedom were used mainly light ground forces and air power with many experts back in the States being dubious about how effective could this combination be against the Taliban¹⁴⁰. Despite those objections the U.S strategic planning didn't change and kept being based on light teams of ground forces, mostly teams of special forces, and airpower provided by either manned or unmanned aircrafts¹⁴¹. And in the end this strategic buildup was proved extremely effective resulting in defeating the Taliban almost three months after the

¹³⁹ Keith L. Shimko, **The United States and the RMA: Revolutions do Not Revolutionize Everything**, op. cit. p. 23

¹⁴⁰ For example, professor John Mearsheimer from the University of Chicago stated “*American airpower is of limited use because there are few valuable targets to strike in an impoverished country like Afghanistan. Taliban ground forces are hard to locate and destroy from the air because, in the absence of a formidable ground opponent, they can easily disperse. Furthermore, the inevitable civilian casualties caused by the air assault are solidifying Taliban support within Afghanistan and eroding support elsewhere for the American cause. The United States must deploy a force of at least 500,000 troops to defeat the Taliban and crush Al Qaeda in Afghanistan*”. John J. Mearsheimer, *Guns Won't Win the Afghan War* (New York: **New York Times**, November 4, 2001)

¹⁴¹ Thomas Mahnken, **Transforming the U.S. Armed Forces: Rhetoric or Reality**, op. cit. p. 203

terrorist attacks of 9/11 and causing substantial problems in the function of Al Qaeda. Moreover, it defied prewar predictions that the campaign would turn into a bloody conflict with large numbers of casualties boosting those who were claiming that the United States have reached a new level of waging war without a great risk for the lives of combat soldiers. Specifically, Taliban were overthrown by the U.S coalition at the cost of only thirty-nine dead, just sixteen of whom died in active combat¹⁴².

In 2003 the United States found themselves once again in war with the state of Iraq after 1991. But this time its task was more ambitious, to remove and replace Saddam Hussein's regime, not just expel its forces from recently conquered territory, as it was the case with the Gulf War in 1991¹⁴³. Since the mission was different, the battle plan was as well. Unlike Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom began with a combined aerial and ground assault. What made American operations extremely easier was the fact that the Iraqi army decided to abandon its cover and rush out to fight in the desert, where the modern U.S. reconnaissance-strike war systems can produce their best results. That's because it's much easier to identify and strike a target in a huge desert where there is no place to hide, than in an urban area, where the enemy forces can hide among the buildings or blend in with the civilians¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴² Benjamin S. Lambeth, **Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom** (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation Publications, 2005), p. 203

¹⁴³ *"This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat. Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success"*. George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People (**The Whitehouse Press Releases**, September 20, 2001), available at: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html Last accessed in November 5, 2018

¹⁴⁴ A. G. Hopkins, **American Empire: A Global History**, op. cit. p. 731

The Air Force and the U.S. ground forces combined in an impressive way launching widespread, parallel and precise attacks against the Iraqi forces on the full range of tactical, operational and strategic targets, this time accompanied by a very rapid ground advance through southern Iraq. The military goal was to disable Iraqi forces, paralyze their political leadership and generally overwhelm the Iraqis as ground forces descended on Baghdad as quickly as possible to oust the regime. The scale of the attack was enormous compared with the capabilities of the Iraqi army and the latter found itself under attack from every possible direction, a situation that caused panic and disorganized the Iraqis. The U.S. forces proved once again their superiority and it took them only three weeks to defeat the Iraqis and overthrow Saddam's regime¹⁴⁵. Even those who expected favorable outcome for the United States seemed almost stunned by the speed and ease of victory¹⁴⁶. So, anyone could solidly question how two extremely successful operations for the Americans that allowed them to win two conflicts in a very short time with minimum casualties ended up to become in time a struggle costly in money and lives.

4.2 The Ineffectiveness Over Unconventional Forces

In order to answer this question, posed just above, and in fact understand why the United States were ineffective in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite the execution of impressive operations at first, we should take under consideration what has been said until now. Several pages back, in the beginning of this paper were mentioned the main objectives set by the American administration,

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Mahnken, **Transforming the U.S. Armed Forces: Rhetoric or Reality**, op. cit. p. 207

¹⁴⁶ John Keegan stated: "*The Americans achieved a pace of advance unprecedented in history, far outstripping that of the Germans toward Moscow in the summer of 1941 and even that of the British from the Seine to the liberation of Brussels in the victorious summer of 1944*". John Keegan, **The Iraq War** (New York: Vintage Publications, 2005), p. 186

when the United States decide to go to war. One of those main objectives is the occupation of the enemy's country, after the defeat of its armed forces, in order to put the enemy nation under a process of transformation politically, economically, socially and, in the ultimate level, culturally so it will be in a similar mentality to the United States and thus cooperative effectively with it in the future, without hostile intentions¹⁴⁷.

As we can see the main political objectives haven't change. But the means to achieve those objectives changed greatly. No one can doubt that the technological advancements and the better trained and smaller forces made the U.S. Army more effective and lethal. But that's exactly where the balance has turned around. Because of the smaller number of soldiers available to control the occupied territories in Iraq and Afghanistan and the fact that the advanced war systems proved ineffective in identifying insurgency targets, especially in urban areas, and thus the United States run into a stalemate in both countries¹⁴⁸.

To be precise, Americans didn't expect any kind of insurgency actions against them. In the States there had been created a very optimistic trend¹⁴⁹ supporting, that the Iraqis were waiting the American troops as liberators to set them free from the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein. In practice things turned out to be quite different. Many Iraqis felt that the United States was treating them with injustice or just felt humiliated by the American occupation of their country. One of the greatest mistakes, the U.S. administration made, after the victory in Iraq was the fact that it decided to completely dismantle the Iraqi armed forces believing that soldiers and officers

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 25

¹⁴⁸ James D. Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy* (New York: Routledge Publications, 2006), p. 31

¹⁴⁹ Kimberly A. Hudson & Dan Henk, *Strategizing in an Era of Conceptual Change in The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays*, ed. By Caron E. Gentry & Amy E. Eckert, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), p.

were supporting Hussein. But this plan ignored some 250,000 former regular soldiers and officers, who were left unemployed, with no income but armed¹⁵⁰, natural recruits for the insurgency and the militias, they were about to be formed against the American occupation.

A few months after Saddam was defeated, in April 2003, the United States was confronted not merely with random, spasmodic violence perpetrated by Saddam loyalists¹⁵¹ but also an organized Sunni insurgency determined to undermine the American presence in Iraq and whatever government replaced Saddam's regime. The first attacks came from the Saddam Fedayeen, an Iraqi paramilitary organization loyal to Saddam Hussein, using improvised bombs and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). Those attacks targeted infrastructures and small teams of U.S. forces without being very lethal, but the fact that the Americans couldn't prevent those attacks grew even more the discontent against them with more and more men, women or even children joining insurgency groups¹⁵².

Where the advanced war technologies, results of the famous RMA, helped decisively the American forces to defeat the conventional Iraqi forces in a very short time, they couldn't be equally effective against the Iraqi guerrilla fighters and the Islamists in Afghanistan. Back when the Operation Iraqi Freedom went underway the newly implemented "network-centric doctrine" provided the best possible quality of information and a clear image of the battlefield in real-time allowing the execution of operations and hits with breathtaking precision. But against the insurgents the balance changed distinctively¹⁵³. That's due to the nature of the insurgency, meaning that guerilla fighters

¹⁵⁰ Lawrence Freedman, **A Choice of Enemies**, op. cit. p. 437

¹⁵¹ Benjamin Buley, **The New American Way of War**, op. cit. p. 130

¹⁵² Keith L. Shimko, **The United States and the RMA: Revolutions do Not Revolutionize Everything**, op. cit. p. 26

¹⁵³ Caron E. Gentry & Amy E. Eckert, **The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays**, op. cit. p. 43

do not form conventional military formations, that can be identified easily in the field and get destructed in the process. Insurgents chose to fight quickly and then hide in places like dense forests, mountains or urban areas.

So, no matter how useful the “network-centric doctrine” was in conventional battlefield, during an insurgency, it is the insurgents they who enjoyed information dominance¹⁵⁴. They knew where the Americans were as US troops and their bases stood out like sore thumbs while the militias and insurgents were able to blend into their native surroundings, employing a form of low-tech stealth enabling them to avoid detection. At the same time U.S. intelligence assets that could detect and track tank columns moving in the desert could not differentiate a militiaman or insurgent from a regular citizen, a safe house from a family dwelling or a garage where cars were repaired from one where explosives were produced¹⁵⁵. This is the kind of information the machines couldn’t deliver and the American forces found themselves starved for intelligence about the insurgency. With the number of the deployed American soldiers being limited, the plan was for them to remain safe and protected inside strongholds and camps, from where they would launch operations and heavily armed patrols. But since the American Soldiers were remaining away from the neighborhoods, the U.S. forces couldn’t create a trusting relationship with the locals, who were the best possible source of information. So, in order to get those needed information, thousands of young Iraqi men, most of the times Sunnis, were rounded up in broad sweeps, imprisoned and interrogated in numbers so great that many of Saddam Hussein’s old prisons had to be reopened¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁴ Keith L. Shimko, **The United States and the RMA: Revolutions do Not Revolutionize Everything**, op. cit. p. 29

¹⁵⁵ Lawrence Freedman, **A Choice of Enemies**, op. cit. p. 439

¹⁵⁶ One of those old Iraqi prisons that had to be reopened was the well-known Abu Ghraib, where prisoners were undergoing several inhuman tortures from their American interrogators, which caused a great sentiment of disapproval

But this tactic was proved to be quite counterproductive and ended up in refueling even more the insurgency with fighters. What should we remember and not oversee here is the fact that the reconnaissance part of the reconnaissance-strike complex is not equally effective in lifting the fog of war and dramatically improving battle space awareness in all settings. And the problem didn't have only to do with the reconnaissance part, but with the striking part too¹⁵⁷. That's because one of the main characteristics of the contemporary American way of war, in the context of the artificial limited war, is the fact that enemy has changed. It has moved from the entire enemy Nation to just its leaders, because the citizens in the West are not willing to accept collateral damage and the sacrifice of human lives, especially those belonging to civilians. As we can imagine, this change does not justify bloody strikes and bombing campaigns as those that took place during the 2nd World War¹⁵⁸, for example¹⁵⁹. So when, there are valid intelligence that a group of insurgents is hiding in a block of flats, a hospital or a school, the U.S. forces are not justified to bring the whole place down with their advanced guided munitions killing also everyone else present in the area. The American military officers must organize and execute an operation to engage with the hostile group and capture or neutralize them with the least collateral damage possible.

Let's not forget that the American occupation in Iraq was aiming in transforming the nation into resembling more towards a western type liberal democracy. This goal could not be achieved by having no bonds with the local communities and looking as a bloodthirsty invader. So, in the end of the day, what American forces actually need was boots on the ground in order to protect the

regarding the U.S. actions against the Iraqis, suspected as insurgents, not only in the United States but also along the whole world.

¹⁵⁷ Hew Strachan & Sybille Schiepers, **The Changing Character of War** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 72

¹⁵⁸ Pape, Bombing to Win, op. cit. p. 320

¹⁵⁹ Tarak Barkawi, **Globalization and War** (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publications, 2006), p. 68

very same Iraqis from the paramilitary groups and forge bonds of trust among the American administration and the local communities. This would also be the first fundamental step for getting valid intelligence from the people.

The first step towards this direction was the reevaluation of the counterinsurgency field manual of the U.S. Army in 2007¹⁶⁰. Based on this, the U.S. armed forces changed their approach in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new approach that was guided in Iraq by the newly appointed general Petraeus and its main component was organizing the American soldiers in groups patrolling constantly in the field among the Iraqi civilians. There is certainly a kinetic component to counterinsurgency in driving out insurgents and destroying their assets when at all possible. This is essential for securing

the population. But this is a relatively small part of what is needed to achieve the ultimate goal of winning over the local population in order to isolate the insurgents and deny them safe haven. At first the American casualties rose slightly but this new approach seemed like working with many insurgent networks suffering serious blows and the local community becoming friendlier towards the U.S. forces and even started cooperating with them until Americans were withdrawn from Iraq in 18 December, 2011, failing to achieve their political objectives and leaving Iraq suffering from corruption¹⁶¹.

This unexpected failure of the U.S. forces to defeat and disband the Iraqi insurgency networks help us understand why discussions about the how the RMA could make the United States army invincible have waned in recent years. It is not necessarily because there has been no revolution¹⁶².

¹⁶⁰ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 479

¹⁶¹ Heather Ashley Hayes, *Violent Subjects and Rhetorical Cartography in the Age of the Terror Wars* (New York: Routledge Publications, 2016), p. 154

¹⁶² Hew Strachan & Sybille Schiepers, **The Changing Character of War**, op. cit. p. 79

There is a persuasive case to be made that in some settings technological, organizational and doctrinal changes have indeed greatly altered the conduct of warfare. The problem may be that the revolution's scope is more limited than many anticipated in the 1990s, after the rapid victory in the Gulf War. The RMA, as it was conceptualized then, seems to be more relevant to a type of conflict that is becoming increasingly rare¹⁶³. It is highly unlikely that even nowadays, in 2018, there is a State or a coalition of States capable to defeat the United States with conventional means. So, in fact the United States were preparing to face a kind of war they wanted to face, not the kind they were going to get. The RMA provided stunning results in defeating a conventional force but it provided no doctrinal advancements in defeating non-conventional opponents. In contrast, the American forces were weakened due to the reduction of their personnel.

The Global War on Terrorism illustrates both the utility and the limitations of advanced technology¹⁶⁴. Advanced military technology helped the United States achieve quick decisive victories in Afghanistan and Iraq. It did not, however, offer a panacea for insurgency. Advanced technology was far from useless in combating the Iraqi insurgency, just as it had been far from useless in Vietnam. To take but a single case, the fact that U.S. troops in Iraq possess body armor capable of protecting them from automatic rifle fire has saved numerous lives. Moreover, to the extent that combat deaths erode public support, body armor permits the United States to stay the course in a protracted counterinsurgency struggle. The missing element was the absence of innovative doctrinal advancements that would allow, if possible, for the new technologies, produced in the context of the RMA, to be equally effective against insurgents, as they are against conventional forces.

¹⁶³ Jeffrey Record, Operation Allied Force: Yet Another Wake-up Call for the Army, **Carlisle Barracks**, Vol. 29, Issue 4 (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, winter 1999), p. 30

¹⁶⁴ Lewis, **The American Culture of War**, op. cit. p. 479

Conclusions

This work tried to analyze what has changed to the American thinking of waging war and the United States ended up being ineffective in the War on Terror and failing to disband inferior insurgent networks in Iraq and Afghanistan. And most importantly that this ineffectiveness took place in an era, when the United States was the sole superpower in the whole world, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are two main elements in the contemporary American thinking of conducting war that play a major role in explaining the ineffectiveness of the American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan against the evidently inferior networks of insurgents.

The first one is related with the fact that the basic elements of the traditional American way of conducting war have evolved and have led to substantial changes in the organization of the U.S. armed forces but at the same time the traditional strategic and political objectives set by the American administration, when deciding to engage in a conflict, have remained the same. The presence of disastrous nuclear weapons capable of whipping out extensive parts of the population made the United States turn away from the option of waging total wars and towards the contemporary artificial limited war. But this new kind of war is extremely distant from the traditional American thinking, since the Americans engage in war when it is absolutely necessary. The result was these wars, waged according to the concept of the artificial limited war, to be distant from the people in the United States and thus lacking in securing their support. The introduction of nuclear weapons changed radically the character of war and resulted in the next great change in the American conduct of war, which was a cultural one, the end of the draft and the establishment of the all-volunteer mercenary force.

The end of the draft brought strategic changes in the planning of war, political changes in the process of the U.S. engagement in a new war and sociological changes by detaching the Americans from the conduct of war. This new all-volunteer force was a well-trained, professional force, capable of conducting operations with greater effectiveness. Its size though was reduced significantly. This reduction in size conflicted with the political objectives, as set by the U.S. administration, when engaging in a war. With a significantly smaller force, the proper occupation of a state in the size of Iraq from the U.S. forces, with enough troops to maintain a strong presence across the country and be able to keep the order, was impossible. Having this in mind, it's getting clear that the main political objective of the American conduct of war, meaning the occupation of the enemy state and its transformation to a western type capitalism democracy, resembling to the United States, was destined to fail. Because of the small number of American troops being present in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. forces failed to keep the order across the two countries and couldn't stop the several insurgent networks to grow and act against them.

The second element, that is crucial to understand the American ineffectiveness in Iraq and Afghanistan, can be summarized in the following phrase: "the United States are preparing to face the kind of war it wants to face, not the kind of war it is going to get". In simple words, the U.S. forces, supporting the idea of the RMA, implemented in their way of war innovative and advanced new technologies in order to fight a conventional opponent. Those technologies proved extremely effective and managed to beat almost in a blink of the eye the Iraqi army. But when the battle turned unconventional those innovative technologies and the advanced military capabilities failed to produce equally effective results against the insurgents.

The American forces have managed to implement nearly perfectly their new military capabilities in their conventional way of waging war, believing that the people of Iraq and Afghanistan were

expecting them as liberators. That's why they were not prepared to face an insurgency struggle. But even when they did face this struggle and tried to fight the insurgents with the same way they defeated the conventional forces, they found out that new technologies were not equally effective. There was no doctrine capable to transform advanced military technologies into a decisive factor for the counterinsurgency operations. That's exactly when the U.S. military command realized that in order to face insurgents, the U.S. forces had to gain first the trust of the local communities. But in order to make the local communities trust them, they had to provide more soldiers patrolling among the neighborhoods to establish a strong presence outside the U.S. strongholds and bases and, in the same time, protect the civilians from the very same insurgents. The demanded number of soldiers for the U.S. forces to operate in latter way across the whole Iraq and Afghanistan and defeat the insurgent networks had never been available, clinching the ineffectiveness of the U.S. military presence in those two countries.

Those failed military interventions can be considered as lessons that will influence or reshape the U.S. military structure and operational doctrines in the future. But beyond dough those lessons are useful for many other state and non-state actors around the world and not solely for the United States. In era, during which the balance of power globally starts to change shape, it is very interesting to observe how the structure of the military forces will change worldwide with new kinds of threats emerging and new kinds of weapons, like cyber weapons, starting to get implemented in many arsenals around the globe. The contemporary American way of waging war on the ground proved very effective against conventional forces, but significantly ineffective against unconventional enemies.

But let's not forget that the conventional forces the United States have fought in the last fifty years were clearly inferior compared to the U.S. army. In the future, when China or any other nation

gain enough power to deploy armed forces equally powerful to the U.S. forces, it is questionable whether the United States will manage to defeat other nations, or a coalition of nations, even in a conventional war. For the time being, the United States remain the sole superpower in the world with conventional military capabilities, that surpasses those of every other's state. But the cultural and doctrinal changes in its way of war, during the last decades, had disengaged the citizens of the United States from the American war struggles.

Thus, with them being absent both the U.S army won't be able to demonstrate its full range of capabilities and the war struggles will lack of people's support and acceptance. And, as the cases of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated, a war that lacks of support inside the very same United States runs a great risk of turning into a flop, while the advanced technological capabilities of the U.S. forces are not capable of entirely substitute the absence of people from the conduct of war. Those wars weren't of course threatening the very same existence of the United States, but in a future war that this might happen the U.S. administration have to be capable to mobilize a considerable number of U.S. citizens, a task that will be harder if the majority of the Americans remain dispatched from the war struggle.

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