

# Introduction

*David M. Kennedy*

*Parvi enim sunt foris arma, nisi est consilium domi.*

–Cicero, *De Officiis*<sup>1</sup>

This volume surveys the evolution, character, missions, and possible futures of the modern U.S. armed forces. It proceeds from the conviction that today's American military is at once increasingly prominent as an instrument of national policy and increasingly detached from and poorly understood by the civilian society in whose name it is asked to fight.

Since the creation of the all-volunteer force (AVF) in 1973, the United States has relied on an ever-smaller proportion of its citizens to shoulder its military burdens, configuring service members into a standing professional force with formidable capacities to prevail in virtually any conceivable battle space. Whether those developments should be celebrated or lamented is a question that animates many of the essays to follow, but all contributors agree that this is a situation with slender precedent in the history of the American republic. "A standing army, however necessary it may be at some times, is always dangerous to the liberties of the people," warned Samuel Adams, a leader in the American Revolution. "Soldiers are apt to consider themselves as a body distinct from the rest of the citizens. . . . Such a power should be watched with a jealous eye." For nearly two centuries thereafter, the United States accordingly embraced the principle of the citizen-soldier. Deeply rooted in antiquity, that principle was axiomatic in the organization of the Amer-

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ican military well into the twentieth century. It held that all who were able and deemed fit for service were liable to serve. As George Washington put it in 1783: "It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every citizen who enjoys the protection of a free government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services, to the defense of it."

To be sure, the citizen-soldier principle was more an ideal than a reality for much of the nineteenth century, when the military usually consisted of a modestly scaled professional force largely confined to frontier Indian-fighting and occasional constabulary duties. But the ideal remained robust and had a powerful effect in shaping the great conscript armies that the United States fielded in World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam.

But since the close of the Vietnam era, the United States has sought to wage major expeditionary wars with a relatively small professional force. That kind of force used in that way is something new in the American experience; small wonder that soldiers and civilians alike remain ambiguous or just plain uninformed about the structure of today's armed forces and the purposes for which they are used.

The advent of the AVF also severed the link between citizenship and service. No American today is obligated to serve in the military. Indeed, the ranks of the armed forces now include tens of thousands of non-citizens, who receive accelerated access to citizenship on the basis of their service. So service can earn citizenship, but citizenship does not require service. The implications of that curious asymmetry inform the analysis in several of the essays in this volume.

In December 2004, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said: "As you know, you go to war with the Army you have. They're

not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time." His now-notorious comment underscored the truth that the Army (and Navy, and Marine Corps, and Air Force) that this or any country has at any given time is the product of both history and prophecy. The size of the force, the configuration of its combat and support arms, the missions for which it is trained and equipped: all are guided by lessons distilled from the experience of the past and by guesses about what the future might hold. And because modern weapons systems and training regimes take years, even decades, to develop, the inexorable logic of inertia shapes the military's state of readiness at any given moment, even while the nature of the eventual mission might be largely unanticipated. A timeless issue, this phenomenon has become decidedly more pronounced in an age of exponentially accelerating social and technological change.

Recent years have seen striking disjunctions between the nature of the force and the tasks it has been assigned. The authors in this volume seek to explain just how history has deposited the U.S. armed forces where they are today, to clarify what is new and what is not about the twenty-first-century military and its missions, to understand the demography and the psychology of those who serve, and to judge the appropriateness of the force to the missions at hand. They also do their best to foresee the kinds of adaptations that are likely to be necessary going forward. This volume thus aims to shed light both on what today's military *does* and what it *is*, as well as on what it might *become*.

Beginning with the foreword by former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry, all the essays that follow take a historical approach to their various parts of the subject. They share the premise that American forces today are by no means your grandfather's or even your father's mil-

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*Introduction* itary. They explore the strategic, technological, and cultural factors that have made the modern American armed forces distinctive, with respect to both their own national antecedents and other nations' contemporary military establishments. They emphasize the ever-changing political and fiscal contexts in which the armed forces are recruited, trained, and deployed, and the constantly shifting objectives that they are tasked to achieve, especially in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 environment. Authors examine threat assessments, strategic doctrine, force configuration, composition, and training, as well as questions about who serves and why; the nature of modern warfare; the tactical challenges and ethical dilemmas it can generate; gender, legal, and medical issues in the battle space and beyond; the relation of the military to civil society, including the ways it is depicted in popular culture and the health of command-and-control systems; and its role in the institutional structure that constitutes the national security apparatus.

All consideration of these topics, of course, begins with an understanding of the threats for which the military thinks it must prepare and the means it deems appropriate for coping with them. Lawrence Freedman documents the advent of the high-tech Revolution in Military Affairs, or RMA, that drove doctrinal and weapon-system changes in the closing years of the twentieth century. He takes both the military and civilian leadership to task for embracing the RMA too uncritically, especially in the post-Cold War era when protracted, large-scale conventional warfare among advanced industrial nation-states seemed decreasingly likely. He dwells on the inappropriateness of RMA-driven weapons and tactics in counterinsurgency warfare and the effort, led by General David Petraeus among others, to devise an effective way to wage "fourth-

generation warfare," or "war among the people." He predicts a considerably diminished role for conventional military forces in the coming years. Brian McAllister Linn expands on Freedman's contribution by focusing on the uniformed "military intellectuals" who write about strategic doctrine. He tracks the debate within military circles about fourth-generation warfare and ends with a discussion of how the Petraeus counterinsurgency doctrine has been promulgated and implemented. Thomas G. Mahnken also puts the accuracy-and-technology-driven RMA at the center of his analysis. He describes the adaptive responses to it as either "emulative" or "countervailing," with special emphasis on the latter. He shares Freedman's view that the architects of the RMA did not adequately anticipate what the counter-responses would be, especially the emergence of asymmetrical warfare. He provocatively speculates that the evolutionary pathway of these weapons and the tactical innovations they have spurred on the part of adversaries may drive American war-fighting doctrine back to a greater or renewed reliance on nuclear weapons.

Turning from what the military is asked to do to who actually does it—to the human face of the force—Robert L. Goldich examines the widely held notion that today's recruits come from the least advantaged corners of American society, and he comes up with some surprising answers. But he also invokes the example of the Roman Legionaries to argue that a potentially dangerous gap has opened between military and civilian cultures. He focuses not only on the socioeconomic differences between the civil and military sectors but also on the possible divergence in values between those serving in the military and civilians, particularly with respect to the legitimacy of violence and force. It should be noted that some of his empirical data about who serves is dis-

puted by Lawrence J. Korb and David R. Segal in the immediately succeeding contribution – especially with respect to Goldich’s argument that the educational profile of AVF recruits is superior to that in the comparable civilian cohort. Segal and Korb examine the demographic and fiscal characteristics of the AVF, with special attention to the financial implications of measures taken to meet recruitment and retention goals. They are particularly critical of the fact that military health and pension benefits have not been budgeted on an accrual basis. They raise the vexed question of whether it might be desirable to restore conscription, or at least Selective Service registration. They also advocate reforms in veterans’ medical benefits, along the lines that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates suggested in January 2011. Deborah D. Avant and Renée de Nevers examine that part of the overall force that is not in uniform: the surprisingly large numbers of civilian “contractors” who have taken over a range of traditional military duties, including construction and supply, but armed combat roles as well. In Iraq and Afghanistan the number of contractors has apparently equaled or exceeded the number of uniformed troops. Avant and de Nevers probe the implications of those numbers for civilian perceptions of the size of the force commitment and the political ease of defending that commitment (since its true scale is not altogether apparent). They also analyze issues of command, control, and accountability that arise from such heavy reliance on an “irregular” force component, while noting that the Defense Contract Management Agency, in charge of overseeing those contractors, has actually downsized rather remarkably since 2002.

Jay M. Winter and James J. Sheehan open the supremely important subject of the military’s relation to civil society.

Winter asks how the public on the home front forms its image of warfare on the distant fighting front. He discusses some widely read war novels but focuses on that most accessible and influential of all popular media, film, from the era of the silents to the present. He finds a persistent tension between the rendition of war as spectacle and war as the setting for psychological and moral drama, with an increasing tendency in our time to focus on stories that are less about war per se than about individual warriors and their interior lives. Sheehan rehearses the role of the military in state formation in Europe over the last two centuries, showing how most Western European nations have become “civilian societies,” with a much diminished role for the military. Meanwhile, across an ill-defined but discernible boundary, on the eastern side of which lie many of the successor Soviet states, as well as Turkey, the military remains a powerful institution, largely relying on conscription. Sheehan’s comparative analysis casts the United States into clearer perspective as an anomalous hybrid of the Eastern and Western European models: it has a small and relatively inexpensive military that commands unprecedented destructive power, and it is a civilian state with significant military obligations – indeed, a greater weight and range of such obligations than any other nation.

Andrew J. Bacevich takes Sheehan’s argument about the relation of the American military to the civilian state still further. He decries what he sees as the ascendant power of the military in national security decision-making, what he calls “inside the Beltway” civil-military relations. Turning to the “beyond the Beltway” dimensions of the subject, he revisits the long-running debate about the political implications of force configuration among military intellectuals and policy-makers from Emery Upton and Elihu Root in the

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early twentieth century to John McCauley Palmer and George C. Marshall in the World War II and Cold War eras. He asks how the tradition of the citizen-soldier or its functional equivalent might somehow be restored, as a way of buttressing civilian engagement with the military and underwriting political accountability for decisions to resort to force. Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., looks at a special and crucial facet of the civil-military interface by recollecting President Dwight Eisenhower's famous warning that "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex." He argues that Eisenhower's warning was heard and largely heeded, and that the real danger today is that we may dismantle the remaining industrial infrastructure on which military efficacy ultimately depends.

Martha E. McCally, a former fighter pilot, examines another of the myriad ways that the armed forces are challenged to reflect the norms that are honored in civil society: in this case, gender equality. Reviewing women's role in the military from the Revolutionary era to the present, she concludes that the time has come for giving women unqualified access to all combat arms and assignments. Eugene R. Fidell examines yet another aspect of civil-military relations, the relation of the Universal Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) to civilian law. He argues that although there are problems inherent in the differences between the two, and in their sometimes uneasy relation to each other (as in the controversy about whether to try suspected terrorists in civil or military courts), the UCMJ is a healthy, defensible corpus of jurisprudence, whose practitioners deserve to be better understood and respected in the larger society.

Jonathan Shay, a clinical psychiatrist who has written extensively about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), con-

cludes this volume with reflections on war's aftermath for the men and women who wage it, and the wounds, physical and psychological, it has inflicted on them. He distinguishes between "primary" and "secondary" physical wounds and points out that most battle deaths have historically resulted from the latter – from infection and exsanguination, for example – and that modern battlefield medicine has sharply reduced the incidence of secondary effects. He explores the implications of those improved battlefield medicine techniques that have, in effect, substituted long-term disability for mortality for tens of thousands of service people. (By some estimates, if the armed forces had practiced Vietnam-era battle medicine procedures in Iraq, the U.S. military death toll would have been well over 20,000, rather than the approximately 4,500 dead counted by mid-2011.) He then draws a parallel with psychological trauma, arguing that the secondary, or post-battle, effects of what he terms "moral wounds" are less well understood and currently receive inadequate attention from the military and the medical profession.

Taken together, the essays in this volume paint a comprehensive portrait of the American armed forces today, and they raise several urgent questions, which may be summarized as matters of military efficiency, political accountability, and social equity. Does the United States have a well-articulated national security doctrine that is relevant to the challenges ahead, and are the armed forces properly configured for those challenges? Are the mechanisms that throughout American history have ensured civilian control of the military, and held civilian leaders properly accountable for the decision to shoulder arms, still operating properly? Does the recruitment of today's force

honor American notions of fairness and shared obligations? Perhaps most important, how faithful are we to Cicero's ancient dictum that arms are of little value in the field unless there is wise counsel at

home? On the answers to those questions hangs not only the security of the republic, but its political and moral health as well. *David M. Kennedy*

ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> "Arms are of little value in the field unless there is wise counsel at home"; Cicero, *De Officiis*, Book I, XXII, par. 76.