

STRATEGIKA

ISSUE 71

Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

APRIL 2021



DOMESTIC DISSENT AND U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS

IN THIS ISSUE

MARK MOYAR • EDWARD N. LUTTWAK • MILES MAOCHUN YU

EDITORIAL BOARD

Victor Davis Hanson, Chair
Bruce Thornton
David Berkey

CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

Peter Berkowitz
Josiah Bunting III
Angelo M. Codevilla
Admiral James O. Ellis Jr.
Niall Ferguson
Chris Gibson
Josef Joffe
Edward N. Luttwak
Peter R. Mansoor
Walter Russell Mead
Mark Moyar
Williamson Murray
Ralph Peters
Andrew Roberts
Admiral Gary Roughead
Kori Schake
Kiron K. Skinner
Barry Strauss
Bing West
Miles Maochun Yu

CONTENTS

April 2021 • Issue 71

BACKGROUND ESSAY

Domestic Disorder and International Credibility
by Mark Moyar

FEATURED COMMENTARY

Deterrence, Riots, and Education
by Edward N. Luttwak

**America's Protests and the CCP's Dogma
of Inevitability**
by Miles Maochun Yu

RELATED COMMENTARY

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Discussion Questions



ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.

Domestic Disorder and International Credibility

By Mark Moyar

George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020, at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer triggered allegations that his fate exposed a much broader problem of racism in American law enforcement and American society more generally. As this interpretation spread across old and new media, protests and riots erupted across the urban landscape, spearheaded by the movement Black Lives Matter. The violence and looting, which in some cities went on for several months, cost the nation an estimated \$1 billion in damages.

What exactly the summer of disorder meant for the United States was and remains a matter of dispute. To those who sympathized with Black Lives Matter, the protests were a justified response to systemic racism that deprived blacks of civil rights and economic opportunities. Senate Democrats were so convinced of the righteousness of this cause that they introduced the Economic Justice Act, which allocated \$350 billion for "immediate and long-term investments in Black communities and other communities of color."

Many supporters of Black Lives Matter viewed the riots as justified as well. "A riot is the language of the unheard," they asserted, invoking the words of Martin Luther King Jr. As the riots became more destructive and more unpopular, though, moderate liberals increasingly drew a distinction between protests and riots. "There are people who are protesting, and there are people who are looting, very, very different situations," New York governor Andrew Cuomo explained. "The protesting is righteous indignation over Mr. Floyd's murder and systemic racism and injustice."

For Americans more sympathetic to the police, the killing of an unarmed black man was a rare occurrence, not representative of any larger trends. Black Lives Matter and other activist groups, they contended, had blown Floyd's death out of proportion to advance political agendas. "The claim that racist police are prowling the street searching for black men to murder is absurd on its face, and even absurder when you look at the facts," stated Matt Walsh in the *Daily Wire*. In 2019, he noted, "25 unarmed white people were killed by police, compared to 14 unarmed black people, according to the Washington Post database of police shootings. That means about .0004 percent of all blacks arrested were killed while unarmed. The percentage for whites is comparable."

The implications for America's national defense were likewise open to debate. If one accepted the argument that the protests and riots of 2020 showed the United States to be deeply divided by rampant racism, then it could plausibly be argued that the United States lacked the national cohesion and moral authority to maintain its position as the leading global superpower. That argument was especially popular among those who believed President Trump had exacerbated matters by failing to yield to the protesters' demands. Samuel Brannen, for instance, contended that "by painting [protesters] as violent and illegitimate" and resorting to "the large-scale deployment of military and police forces," Trump had "created a strategic advantage for authoritarian regimes that seek to displace U.S. influence in the world."

Those who contended that the 2020 protests did not reflect rampant racism in the United States generally foresaw much less harm to America's standing in the world. "I don't think there's systemic racism,"

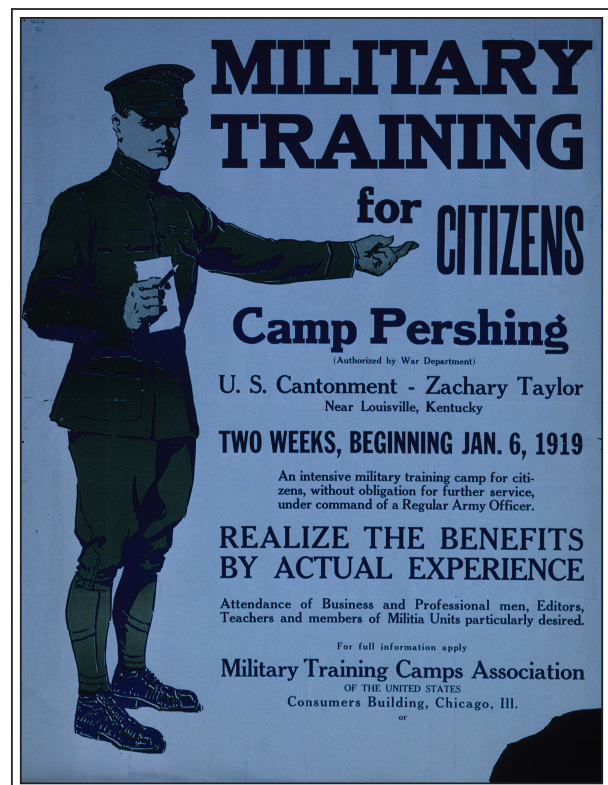


Image credit: Poster Collection, US 1951, Hoover Institution Archives.

National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien contended. "I think 99.9% of our law enforcement officers are great Americans." American adversaries would try to make hay of the protests, O'Brien said, but they would fail.

Similar divergence of opinion emerged from the Capitol riot of January 6, 2021. On that date, hundreds of demonstrators occupied the Capitol for several hours in a vain effort to overturn certification of the presidential election. Liberals argued that the advocates of racism, violence, authoritarianism, and conspiracy theories who took part in the riot were representative of many millions of Americans who had voted for Trump. In addition, they contended, Trump and those who voted for him were complicit in the nefarious deeds of the fanatics. Don Lemon of CNN asserted, "If you voted for Trump, you voted for the person who the Klan supported. You voted for the person who Nazis support. You voted for the person who the alt-right supports. You voted for the person who incited a crowd to go into the Capitol and potentially take the lives of lawmakers." Congressional Democrats employed such reasoning to justify impeaching Trump for the second time.

American conservatives generally viewed the riot as the handiwork of fringe zealots. In their view, the Left was portraying the rioters as broadly representative of Trump voters in order to delegitimize a large segment of the electorate. Ben Shapiro noted that the majority of Republicans opposed a second impeachment of Trump because "Republicans believe that Democrats and the overwhelmingly liberal media see impeachment as an attempt to cudgel them collectively by lumping them in with the Capitol rioters thanks to their support for Trump."

As before, the differences in interpretation led to starkly different conclusions about the implications for American military readiness and deterrence. The president-elect and his supporters cited the alleged prevalence of white supremacism as proof that the threat of "domestic terrorism" demanded new impositions on the rights of American citizens. These impositions included surveillance of suspected white supremacists and insurrectionists, censorship on social media, and "deradicalization" programs to cleanse the minds of incorrect thoughts. On the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, this line of thinking was viewed as political opportunism and encroachment on civil liberties.

The idea that domestic division could undermine America abroad is as old as the exertion of American power abroad. Bitter partisan quarrelling has always characterized American politics, giving foreigners ample reason to doubt whether Americans could put aside their bickering long enough to focus their energies and resources outside the country. The Baltimore riots of 1812 suggested that the United States would be incapable of maintaining the national will to fight its new war against Britain. In the 1890s, as war with Spain loomed, anti-imperialists were at the throats of imperialists who wanted the United States to obtain colonial possessions. Disagreement among Americans over international engagement in the 1930s sowed doubts about the willingness and ability of the United States to fight an offensive war against the Axis powers.

The spread of mass media and mass communication in the twentieth century made it possible to motivate individuals across the country simultaneously and link them together in concerted political activity. Nationwide protests and riots surged during the 1960s, spurred by the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam War. Images of unrest in the international media raised doubts worldwide about the ability of the United States to maintain its commitment in Vietnam, its other military commitments, and its power of deterrence. The Vietnamese Communists, in particular, viewed the American domestic turmoil as a strong indicator that American willpower was waning, and focused their military and diplomatic strategies on exacerbating the dissension.

Mass protests subsided after the 1960s, but their legacy continued to shape world events. President Richard Nixon's gradual withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in the early 1970s was driven, in considerable part, by a desire to prevent further protests. This troop withdrawal did not lead directly to the fall of South Vietnam—the slashing of American funding and air support proved to be the most damaging blows. But the sequencing of casualties, protests, troop withdrawals, and defeat formed a narrative of American retreat that gained popularity around the world and emboldened American enemies in the decades to come.

This narrative helped convince the likes of Osama bin Laden that they could cow the United States by inflicting a modicum of casualties. "Look at Vietnam, look at Lebanon," Bin Laden is reported to have said.

“Whenever soldiers start coming home in body bags, Americans panic and retreat. Such a country needs only to be confronted with two or three sharp blows, then it will flee in panic, as it always has.”

Bin Laden’s 9/11 attacks did not cause America to retreat, but instead drove the United States to go on the offensive in Afghanistan, and then in Iraq. During the Afghan War, Americans were united in projecting military power abroad. The war in Iraq, however, triggered an upsurge in protests, which gained in popularity when the war proved longer and costlier than anticipated, and reports of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction proved erroneous.

Had Trump been reelected in 2020, left-leaning journalists in the United States and other countries would likely have continued the drumbeat of stories depicting the United States as caught in a destabilizing struggle between pernicious racists and virtuous anti-racists. Their reporting would have encouraged world leaders to question further whether the United States would be able to live up to its defense commitments, maintain its military readiness, and deter its rivals. Biden’s presidency is likely to change the perception of American division more than the reality. Seeking to create a favorable political climate for Biden, reporters are now spending less time bemoaning domestic strife, and instead are highlighting the rehabilitation of the country by the Biden administration.

Poll: What is the effect of domestic unrest and civil discord upon U.S. foreign policy?

- They have had no effect on U.S. foreign policy and military readiness.
- Our allies and enemies expect occasional volatility and factor that into their strategies.
- China, Russia, and other enemies are now seeking to enhance discord and to look for areas to exploit abroad.
- If wide-scale social chaos continues, the U.S. will not be able to retain deterrence abroad or ensure help to allies.
- 2020–21 was a wake-up call that the U.S. is no longer a stable power and cannot exercise global leadership.



MARK MOYAR has worked for twenty years in and out of government on national security affairs, international development, foreign aid, and capacity building. From 2018 to 2019, he served as the director of the Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation at USAID, and previously served as the director of the Project on Military and Diplomatic History at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. He is author of six books, of which the most recent book is *Oppose Any Foe: The Rise of America’s Special Operations Forces* (Basic Books, 2017), the first comprehensive history of U.S. special operations forces. He is currently writing the sequel to his book *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965*. He holds a BA summa cum laude from Harvard and a PhD from Cambridge.



Image credit: Poster Collection, US 2066, Hoover Institution Archives.

Deterrence, Riots, and Education

By Edward N. Luttwak

Deterrence is a tricky business because it all occurs in the minds of adversaries, forming fears that inhibit action. In 1977, while working in South Korea in a last-minute attempt to find quick ways of improving the country's remarkably retrograde ground forces (President Jimmy Carter wanted to withdraw U.S. troops quickly, as Presidential Review Memorandum #13 prescribed), I kept wondering why North Korea had made no attempt to exploit the Fall of Saigon opportunity of April 30, 1975. After all, that ignominious day of desperate last-minute evacuations of American lieges and of many more abandonments, was not the result of some tactical error but rather the ineluctable consequence of the Congressional decision to abandon South Vietnam to its enemies, which in turn reflected the opinions of a majority of

Americans at large no longer willing to accept Vietnam's frustrations, and indeed unwilling to fight any land war in Asia. Well, South Korea was part of Asia, and its North Korean enemy seemed very eager to attack it. Indeed, back on January 21, 1968, North Korean commandos had penetrated right into the grounds of the presidential palace in Seoul.

Personally I did not stay awake at night in fear of North Korean commandos, but I confess that I was terrified by Jimmy Carter's intention of "seeking guarantees from China and the Soviet Union that North Korea would not be permitted to invade the south"—even though at the time the U.S. was still in a standoff with the Soviet Union over West Germany, while the People's Republic of China in its immediate post-Mao turmoil could not "permit" or not permit anything by North Korea (its leaders were going to prison, and the People's Liberation Army had no fuel). As for nuclear deterrence for South Korea, a president plainly determined to avoid any casualties on any side no matter what made that policy a fantasy.

Carter's statecraft would extend to Iran with consequences that last till now, but of course North Korea did not attack the South. Why? Fundamentally because there is a lot of ruination in a Great Power, and while Carter was very likely to order the evacuation of U.S. ground forces if North Korea attacked, there were still many U.S. fighter-bombers in Korea or within combat range, and strategic bombers too of course.

But those are mere technicalities: far more broadly, the growth of American power from Pearl Harbor onwards had generated such a vast accumulation of alliance affiliations, base infrastructures including in nearby Japan, military expertise, and weapon inventories that even Carter's ruination of U.S. credibility could not extinguish the unspoken fears of retaliation that sustain deterrence.

In spite of every attempt to prolong its effect—multiple media evocations till this day, and the National Guard is still there for that purpose—the January 6, 2021, Capitol riot hardly qualifies in the deterrence stakes as compared to the abandonment of Saigon or Carter's paralysis in the face of Iranian outrages.

As for the abundant urban violence of 2020, aided, abetted, even encouraged by officeholders and mainstream media faces and voices, it merely confirms the American proclivity for violence which, on the whole

increases rather than reduces deterrence. That is certainly true as compared to the April 1968 Martin Luther King riots that swept across American cities with large black populations and burned out much of the very heart of Washington, DC, from 7th to ultra-central 14th Street.

But another thing also happened in the plague year 2020 which prejudices the industrial and military future of the country to such an extent that it is bound to erode deterrence unless reversed. The consequences of riots and looting depend on the reaction of the non-rioters and non-looters. Do they rebuild? Do they run away? Or do they surrender? That is the option adopted in many American educational institutions, from selective high schools in major cities to MIT along with much of the Ivy League: under the cover of plague and riot the admission bureaucrats abandoned objective testing to allocate places as they see fit to sundry categories defined by them alone, so that soon enough exams will also have to be waved to avoid riots by the cruelly deceived. This race to the bottom is accompanied by the sudden elevation of academic staff unqualified except for their lack of qualifications, many to teach “identitarian” and “decolonial” subjects blessedly free of any literature that cannot be read in one weekend.

Given that the current struggle with China is really geo-educational more than geo-political, the worst news of 2020 for the present writer was that Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai University, Zhejiang University, Northeast Normal University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Capital Normal University, Nankai University, Sichuan University, and Wuhan University are all trying to expand their classics departments, with a queue of other universities only impeded by the shortage of staff capable of teaching Greek and Latin in Chinese. Not for them the foolish notion that technology springs from nothing, and neither are they attracted by the pursuit of an equality of ignorance.



EDWARD N. LUTTWAK works as a contractor for the U.S. Department of Defense and for some treaty allies, and has served as consultant to the White House chief of staff, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy. Luttwak also co-founded and heads a conservation cattle ranch in the Amazon. His books, including *The Rise of China* viz. *The Logic of Strategy*, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, and *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, have been published in multiple English-language editions, and also in twenty-three other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, Korean, and Russian. He has also published other books in Italian and in Japanese, and has a number of honorary as well as academic degrees.

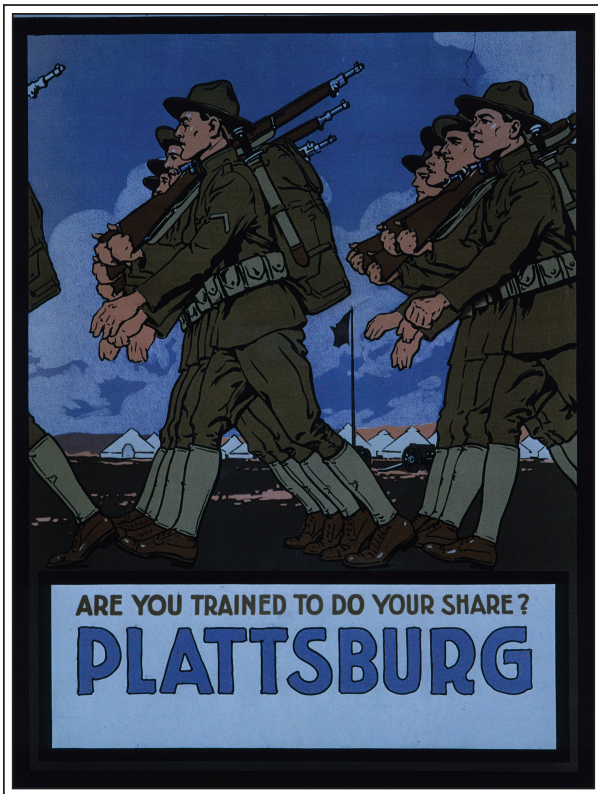


Image credit: Poster Collection, US 2067, Hoover Institution Archives.

America's Protests and the CCP's Dogma of Inevitability

By Miles Maochun Yu

America's violent protests in the summer of 2020 have impacted how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recalculates the geopolitical power balance and strategic risk of a head-on confrontation between it and the presumably weakened United States, and enlivened the communist government's ideological impulses against the international capitalist system.

The Chinese Communist Party is no doubt among the most ardent orthodox followers of Marxist-Leninist communist ideology. One of the most important Marxist-Leninist tenets is the theory of the inevitability of the capitalist system's demise and the inexorable triumph of international socialism. And the reason

for this is because capitalist society, as Vladimir Lenin famously said, is by nature "decaying and moribund."

The massive summer protests across the U.S. provided the CCP with not only proletarian schadenfreude but also further self-fulfilling evidence that the U.S. political system and social order were even more rapidly "decaying" and that the only superpower is indeed "moribund," just as Lenin had predicted. Not surprisingly, such a decline stimulates the CCP's strategic confidence that makes it more aggressive and reckless in its domestic repression and international behavior.

During the entire course of the violent protests triggered by the death of George Floyd, the CCP's propaganda machine churned out enthusiastic and extensive coverage of all aspects of the chaos and protests, using the protesters' language and rhetoric to systematically attack the American social and political system as a grand failure. During the height of the protests, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's chief spokesperson Hua Chunying routinely led her venomous anti-American tweets on Twitter with "I can't breathe!"—the last words of George Floyd—despite the macabre irony that the CCP was at that very moment conducting racist genocidal acts against the Uyghurs on a grand scale and that Twitter is entirely banned inside China.

To the CCP, the violent protests in the U.S. marked a new high point of the steady "decline" of the world's "hegemon" since 2008, as evidenced by a crippling financial crisis, the election of a black president, which the racist inner core of the CCP viewed as a sign of America's weakness, and now the chaos and discontent by the protesters. From the CCP's perspective, a nation ravaged by its domestic protests is necessarily weakening its comprehensive national power.

Such withering away of America's hegemony resulting from violent internal protests comes at the same time as the rise of an emboldened socialist China led by a die-hard ideologue who holds a doctorate in "Scientific Socialism." No one is more convinced of America's decline and the CCP's rise than the general secretary himself. Since the summer protests, Xi Jinping has been espousing a theory called "The East is rising, the West is declining" or neatly compacted in the CCP parlance as Dongsheng Xijiang (东升西降). And now, this Xi theory has become a party shibboleth to be studied and believed by every Party member across the nation.

This new CCP understanding of “U.S. in decline and China on the rise” serves to embolden reckless domestic and international behaviors of the communist government, making the China threat ever more imminent and dangerous, best shown in the PLA’s nearly daily military harassment of democratic Taiwan through dangerously intrusive surveillance and bomber flights near the island, taunting America’s deterrence pledge and strategic resolve in defending Taiwan.

And this is not the first time America’s domestic turmoil has excited the CCP. The current CCP’s power-balance calculation reeks of Mao Zedong’s own strategic recalculation of the 1960s and 1970s, when the chairman came up with the theory of “The Eastern Wind Overpowers the Western Wind” (东风压倒西风). The CCP under Mao was similarly greatly encouraged by the anti-war chaos and civil rights protests in the U.S. Many hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese were ordered by Mao to hold mass rallies across China in support of the American protesters. American anti-war activists such as Staughton Lynd and Tom Hayden made ideological pilgrimages to Beijing via Hanoi to tout Mao’s socialist paradise—ignoring the ongoing madness of the Cultural Revolution at the time—and condemned their own imperialist, racist, and capitalist country.

The violence and protests of the 1960s and 1970s thus greatly boosted the CCP’s self-confidence in its own otherwise bankrupt communist system. As a result, China became recklessly aggressive and cantankerously provocative, dramatically increasing its military involvement in the Vietnam war against the U.S., and bringing the Soviet Union and China to the brink of a nuclear war in 1969, while in the meantime ruining the lives of millions in China—all as a result of the CCP’s ideological hubris and dogmatic adherence to a Marxist-Leninist prediction of America’s inexorable demise and socialism’s ultimate triumph.

Last summer’s chaos and violence have no doubt imposed a reputational cost on the United States, boosting the CCP’s self-confidence, thus weakening America’s global deterrence against aggression and authoritarianism in general, and its strategic realignment against Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific in particular.



MILES MAOCHUN YU is the principal China policy and planning adviser to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Concurrently he is a professor of East Asia and military history at the United States Naval Academy (USNA). His books include *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (Yale University Press, 1997) and *The Dragon’s War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China, 1937–1947* (Naval Institute Press, 2006). He is the author of many scholarly articles on China, military and intelligence history, and newspaper columns. His numerous awards include the USNA’s top researcher award, U.S. Navy Special Action Award, and U.S. Navy Meritorious Service Award. He received a doctorate in history from the University of California–Berkeley, a master’s degree from Swarthmore College, and a bachelor’s degree from Nankai University.

Related Commentary

- Jim Mattis, “Better Together: Finding Strength in Unity,” PolicyEd video (November 20, 2020). <https://www.policyed.org/intellections/better-together-finding-strength-unity/video>
- H. R. McMaster, “Former National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster Makes the Case for Strategic Empathy,” *Therefore, what?* podcast (February 10, 2021). <https://omny.fm/shows/therefore-what/former-national-security-adviser-h-r-mcmaster-make#description>
- H. R. McMaster, “Rethinking Empathy,” *Rethink* podcast, BBC (July 3, 2020). <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08jq3n7>

Discussion Questions

1. What is the role of China, if any, in U.S. domestic turmoil?
2. Will the U.S. return to “normal” after the pandemic and reassume its former global stature?
3. Where will opportunists abroad most likely test the U.S.?
4. What will be the major foreign policy changes in a Biden administration?



IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Chinese Communist Party Propaganda

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



The publisher has made this work available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license 4.0.

To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>.

Efforts have been made to locate the original sources, determine the current rights holders, and, if needed, obtain reproduction permissions. On verification of any such claims to rights in the articles or images reproduced in this publication, any required corrections or clarifications will be made in subsequent printings/editions. The views expressed in this publication are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff, officers, or Board of Overseers of the Hoover Institution.

Copyright © 2021 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University

Hoover Institution, Stanford University
434 Galvez Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-6003
650-723-1754

Hoover Institution in Washington
The Johnson Center
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202-760-3200

