

Spirits of War: A Field Manual

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Military doctrine is a system of knowledge disseminated and communicated through field manuals. This article analyzes the form and content of United States (US) military doctrine through the study of three manuals: the joint US Army and Marine Corps' *Counterinsurgency* (COIN) *Field Manual* (FM 3-24) (2007), the US Army's *Stability Operations Field Manual* (FM 3-07) (2008), and the US Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* (SWM) (1940). It explores and demonstrates the discursive and cognitive restraints of such military handbooks through imitating their form. In regard to content, it argues that the contemporary "spirit of war" is characterized by the organizing concepts of "culture" and "network"—seeing like a military in the twenty-first century is seeing a world of networks.

Only one weapon will do
the wound is closed
only by the spear which opened it.
(Wagner [1882] 1986:567)

Not different from how it must have been for the water animals, when they were forced to either become land animals or perish, is how it was for these half-creatures happily adapted to wilderness, war, wandering—at once all of their instincts were devalued and displayed

(Nietzsche [1887] 1999:322)

Military manuals are marked not only by their discursive content but also by the particular form in which they are arranged. Form enables and constrains texts in significant ways. Field manuals pose valuable cases for studies of the structure of communication and state society relations, because their utterances are explicitly performative and constative (Austin 1975).² They both describe and make the world. A successful military manual offers a *Weltanschauung*, courses of action, is read by legions, and changes the way a war is fought. As an artifact, the manual, like a manifesto, disrupts simple distinctions of theory and practice.

The historic context of the newer manuals and of this article are recent institutional and ideological reforms responding to gradations of crisis experienced by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. These reforms have emphasized

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²For a similar statement about the importance of studying military manuals, see (Biddle 2008:347).

certain types of knowledge and devalued others, thus engendering new relations between the academy and the military. This development has publicly manifested itself most prominently in the heated debates around the US militaries' turn toward anthropology. The emphasis of this article is not on the politics of academic engagement, the historic development, or colonial roots of counter-insurgency, but rather on how the manual form obscures the resources that critical knowledge constitutes for military doctrine. Critical thought can become part of the spirit of war—in the fully Weberian sense of that term.³

The manual form segments, viz., chapters, sections, and paragraphs—identified through a number system—stand alone as reified kernels of information in a hierarchic architecture of knowledge. This article has attempted to appropriate the manual form of writing, but still fit into an academic journal. The resultant product is inevitably a hybrid. The main body of this text lends itself to at least two different readings. The reader can experience the text as a manual, by ignoring the footnotes and references, or as a more academic paper, by considering them. By eschewing references, the manual form untethers ideas and concepts from the authors, texts, and debates from which they arise. This practice of the form empowers concepts by raising them from the constraints of particular times, locations, and dialogical exchanges to the realm of universal statements and applicability. The segmentation of knowledge makes it difficult to study military doctrine as a whole; the obscuring of sources provides a hurdle to tracing its intellectual influences. Nonetheless, there are a number of approaches available to the study of the form and content of contemporary military doctrine.

Researchers can investigate the organization and power relations of the individuals, bureaucracies, and states that write military doctrine. They can identify historic influences and precursors. They can also undertake a discursive analysis of the texts in questions—an approach to which this article is committed. Beginning with a systematic analysis, it seeks to identify key concepts at work in contemporary military doctrine and contrast these to the key concepts used in a military manual from the 1940s. The research shows that the contemporary “spirit of war” is marked by an emphasis on “culture” and “network.” *Seeing like a state in the 21st century is seeing a world of networks*. This is relevant because—unlike governance based on a world of race and class—there is no established rights discourse for networks, nor could one easily be constructed out of our legal traditions. The article proceeds to searching military doctrine for its hidden roots, those sources which are not apparent due to the eschewing of references. Through this exercise, contemporary military doctrine arises as a pastiche of snippets of social theory—in particular anthropology and sociology. After identifying these hidden roots, the article continues to consider the large fields of knowledge that have influenced military doctrine. The intellectual and textual developments of military doctrine are then correlated with recent programs launched by the US military, such as the human terrain system (HTS). The discovery of some, quite critical, social theory in the texts of the US military power can be disorganizing for researchers accustomed to drawing on those resources to critique power. The conclusion seeks to identify the opportunities that lie in this discovery and sums up the disparate strands of the article into one argument.

Key Concepts of the New Spirit of War

1-0. The primary functions of military doctrine are to make foreign and hostile environments legible, military action meaningful, as well as provide standardized

³Weber offers a cautious definition of spirit as a “historical individual, that is, a complex of relations associated in historical reality which we unite into a conceptual whole from the standpoint of their cultural significance” (Weber 2002 [1905/1920]:159).

procedures for personnel on the ground. Utterances of military doctrine can be organized into spirits of war. Recent discursive developments in the US military doctrine represent a different spirit of war to its immediate precursors. This “new” spirit of war can lead to a significant transformation in Western strategic culture (Booth 1979; Johnston 1995).⁴ To comprehend this spirit of war, it is necessary to contrast two of its prominent manifestations, FM 3-07 and FM 3-24, to a predecessor, *Small Wars Manual* (SWM)—which is described on the back cover of its 2005 reprinting as “one of the best books on military operation in peacekeeping and counterinsurgency operations published before World War II.” A comparison shows that different key terms are emphasized and privileged in the three representative texts. The terms can be organized into two categories: old spirit of war and the new spirit of war.

1-1. From the old to the new spirit, a general shift can be observed from terms that refer to material surroundings (nature and terrain) to terms that focus more on human relations (social, religion, tribes, culture); this corresponds to the rise of the culture concept in the academy. Yet, frequency alone is no sufficient indicator of the importance a term plays. To understand the relevance of a term, it is necessary to look at its definitions and the identity it takes on in a given text. For this purpose, “revolution,” “race,” “network,” and “culture” are further analyzed (Table 1).

Revolution

1-2. The old spirit of war is primarily concerned with situations of revolution or “when the spirit of revolution was rampant.” SWM sees its task as helping to prepare the United States for any emergency or “social revolution at home or abroad.” The term is generally understood as “sudden political changes” but can also refer to “any sudden transformation whether of beliefs, ideas, or doctrines.” In that sense, the old spirit of war is concerned with abrupt destabilization to what is regarded as secure systems; there is a conception that the United States intervenes to restore a balance. As to be expected from a text written in 1940, vocabulary is present that would not be used as easily today. In particular, there is much reference to “men” and “natives”: “revolutions are always a consequence of changes, often unobserved, which have gone slowly forward in *men’s* minds” and “[t]he spirit which causes the revolution arouses little enthusiasm among the poor *natives* at large...” (1-13, a; 1-3, d; 1-13, c; 1-13, f; 1-13, i; italics mine).

1-3. Contrasted to this central concern about revolution, the new spirit of war primarily refers to revolution as a historical concept that is of use in understanding contemporary insurgencies. Insurgencies are described as “variations of standard themes” that “adhere to elements of a recognizable revolutionary campaign plan.” According to FM 3-24, a key difference of historic revolutions to contemporary insurgencies is that “ideologies based on extremist forms of religious or ethnic identities have replaced ideologies based on secular revolutionary ideals” (xiv; 1-21). Unlike SWM, there is direct reference in FM 3-24 to historical revolutions and respective revolutionaries: including the French revolution, American Revolutionary War, Bolshevik Revolution, Chinese Revolution, Cuban Revolution, and Iranian Revolution. Less of an emphasis on revolution can be discovered in FM 3-07, which adds the category of “stability operations” to defensive and offensive operations. The current global war on terror is described as being “marked by the rising threat of a violent extremist movement

⁴The classic definition of strategic culture is “the sumtotal of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation” (Snyder 1977:8). For a debate on the utility of the culture concept, see (Desh 1998; Duffield, Farrell, Price, and Desh 1999).

TABLE 1. Frequency of Key Terms in FM 3-07, FM 3-24, and Small Wars Manual (SWM)

<i>Term</i>	<i>FM 3-07</i> (99 857 words)	<i>FM 3-24</i> (126 603 words)	<i>SWM</i> (166 202 words)
Old spirit			
Nature	28	50	112
Native	2	6	275
Revolution, revolutionary, revolutionists	2	38	47
Terrain	6	44	105
New spirit			
Information	139	244	154
Legitimate, legitimize, legitimacy	127	106	5
Social	69	149	29
Religion	7	14	6
Population	71	125	76
Race, racial	9	17	15
Network	15	193	1
Tribes	8	43	1
Culture, cultural, culturally	73	155	0

that seeks to create anarchy and instability throughout the international system.” Stability operations are defined as “various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or re-establish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief” (unpaginated foreword; 1-13, b.). While the term of stability operation is relatively novel, the core idea behind it is not: an emphasis on disruptions to balanced systems as well as systems that are not balanced, such as failed states. Stability is primarily achieved through effective and legitimate governance of a foreign population. This goal places the new spirit of war into a close relationship with earlier, colonial forms of warfare.

Race

1-4. Despite “race” occurring more frequently in FM 3-24 than in SWM, it plays a far more important role in SWM, where “race” is constructed as a pre-political foundation. It therefore functions as a key concept in the old spirit, but not in the new. SWM writes that “[e]ach race of people has its peculiar characteristics and customs. These may be modified somewhat under influence, but cannot be entirely destroyed or supplanted. These characteristics and customs should always be recognized and considered when dealing with persons of different races.” Culture is treated as slightly variable yet dependent on race, which is regarded as foundational. SWM features a theory of the human that grafts biology, psychology, and politics when it writes about race that “[t]he influence of racial psychology on the destiny of a people appears plainly in the history of those subject to perpetual revolutions.” It continues to state that “[w]hen composed largely of mixed races—that is to say, of individuals whose diverse heredities have dissociated their ancestral characteristics—those populations present a special problem” (12-22, a; 1-13, b). Contamination and mixing of races is represented here as a condition that makes societies unstable and vulnerable to revolutions. This understanding of race as an underlying biological determinant of politics is quite widespread at the time, but by no means unchallenged. In light of similar racist theories being expounded by the Nazi regime, the American Anthropological Association (AAA)—many of whose members would later be deeply involved in the World War II war effort—issued a resolution in 1938 stating that “the terms ‘Aryan’ and ‘Semitic’ have no racial

significance whatsoever.” They went on to write that “anthropology provides no scientific basis for discrimination against any people on the ground of racial inferiority, religious affiliation or linguistic heritage” (Price 2008:19).

1-5. With regard to race, FM 3-24 sounds more like the AAA in 1938 than the SWM. It states directly that “[a] *race* is a human group that defines itself or is defined by other groups as different by virtue of innate physical characteristics. Biologically, there is no such thing as race among human beings; race is a social category” (3-25). The important shift that occurs here is from an understanding of race as a natural phenomenon to one in which race is primarily a question of human definition and construction. Instead of race being an inherent essence that organizes society and makes it easily legible, it is cast as belonging to a world of perception, which makes it lose salience and utility as a marker of foreign environments.

Network

1-6. A term that plays a prominent role in the new spirit of war is “network.” In SWM, there is only one reference to it: “connected with other towns in a large network” (2-46, f; emphasis mine), while in FM 3-07 there are 15, and in FM 3-24 there are 193 instances of “network.” The definition of network provided in FM 3-24 states that a “network is a series of direct and indirect ties from one actor to a collection of others. Insurgents use technological, economic, and social means to recruit partners into their networks. Networking is a tool available to territorially rooted insurgencies. . . .” Network is deployed as a very versatile concept in the new spirit of war. It is described as a noun (“a series of direct and indirect ties from one actor to a collection of others”), as a verb (“networking is a tool”/“to network”), and as an adjective (“networked organization”) (1-94). Instead of referring to a technical distribution network—as it does in SWM—network has been redefined to mean a form of social organization that is characterized by being relatively non-hierarchical, diffuse, and often secret in character. In the new spirit of war, networks are typically described as organizational forms that the enemy successfully assumes and the US forces need to emulate. The ontological shifts in the spirit of war from territory, to individuals, to network move away from politicized categories with established rights discourses toward plateaus with less political and legal restraints. In this way, the emphasis on network can be read as a depoliticizing practice, avoiding the more salient categories of race, individual, class, or country.

Culture

1-7. In FM 3-24, “culture,” “cultural,” or “culturally” appears 155 times, while in the SWM there is not a single instance of either—if one excludes the 7 references to “agriculture” or “agricultural.” Apart from a choice of vocabulary, there is also a more substantial difference. Whereas FM 3-24 calls for “well-informed, culturally astute leaders” (online version foreword) and FM 3-07 repeatedly emphasizes how forces need to be “culturally aware” (1-32, 3-5, 4-49, 5-6, 6-43, 6-44), the SWM writes that military authorities “should scrupulously avoid discussing” politics or religion (1-31, c). Contrasted to this injunction, the new spirit of war embeds itself within these discussions. FM 3-24 advises to “[l]earn about the people, topography, economy, history, religion, and culture of the area of operations” (A-2). Culture is therefore not simply addressed; it is closely analyzed and subsequently securitized.⁵ The definition of culture

⁵ “[T]he exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998:25).

employed in FM 3-24 is that it is a “web of meaning” shared by members of a particular society or group within a society.

Culture is:

- A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another.
- Learned, though [sic] a process called enculturation.
- Shared by members of a society; there is no “culture of one.”
- Patterned, meaning that people in a society live and think in ways forming definite, repeating patterns.
- Changeable, through social interactions between people and groups.
- Arbitrary, meaning that Soldiers and Marines should make no assumptions regarding what a society considers right and wrong, good and bad.

Internalized, in the sense that it is habitual, taken for granted, and perceived as “natural” by people within the society (3-37).⁶

Further Differences and Similarities

1-8. A primary contrast from the old to the new spirit is that the prize and realm of the conflict are no longer territory but rather population, and especially the population recognizing the US forces as legitimate. In a manner, particular notions of “race” and “revolution” in SWM have been replaced by concepts of “network” and “culture” in FM 3-24 and FM 3-07. Apart from these differences, there are also contending ideas of sacrifice present. SWM writes that “revolutionary forces... can often be imbued with an ardent enthusiasm and are capable of heroism to the extent of giving their lives unhesitatingly in support of their beliefs.” It also writes that “[t]here are people among whom the spirit of self-sacrifice does not exist to the extent found among more highly civilized peoples or among races with fanatical tendencies” (1-13, n; 1-14, t). In contrast to this account, which identifies the spirit of self-sacrifice as a characteristic of civilized people and “races with fanatical tendencies,” FM 3-24 firmly locates the spirit of self-sacrifice within the enemy when it writes that Al-Qaeda “is notable for its members’ willingness to execute suicide attacks to achieve their ends” (1-23).

1-9. There are also a number of similarities. Most prominently, the form the texts take is relatively similar: knowledge is segmented and reified in all of them. In regard to content, similar notions of prevention are also present in both old and new texts. SWM claims that “[i]n these days when pernicious propaganda is employed to spread revolutionary doctrines, it is conceivable that the United States might intervene to prevent the development of political disaffection which threatens the overthrow of a friendly state and indirectly influences our own security” (1-7, e). FM 3-07 goes further and enshrines a principle of prevention in its notion of Phase Zero operations. The main difference between Phase Zero and Phase Four operations is that in Phase Zero operations the primary lead is the local government, while in Phase Four it is the United States or an international body. Another important component of Phase Zero stability operations is the focus on conflict transformation, which seeks to get at the underlying drivers of conflict and possibly pre-empt escalation. It is understood as “the process of reducing the means and motivations for violent conflict while developing more

⁶The definition of culture used in the new spirit of war could also apply to a structural notion of language as a system that is learned, patterned, changeable, regarded as natural by its users, and marked by an arbitrary relation of sign to signified.

viable, peaceful alternatives for the competitive pursuit of political and socioeconomic aspirations” (1-23).

1-10. Both the frequency of the two terms identified earlier—culture and network—and the prominent roles they play in the text demonstrate that they are central organizing concepts of the new spirit of war. In summary, it could be said that the world that the new spirit of war portrays is one of ethnicity and diffuse networks and not of class and hierarchical organizations. In this sense, it serves to reinvent tradition and ethnic identity in other, non-Western societies. While it does not reduce cultural factors to race—as the old spirit did—it holds a conception of culture that has been sanitized of ideas about the role colonialism and empire play in the formation of cultural identities. Through emphasizing that culture is variable yet “natural” to the people within it, a level of abstraction is first injected and then neutralized. This practice enables the concept of “culture” to be regarded as politically correct and justified by academic writings while maintaining its salience and utility as an organizing concept of a foreign hostile environment.

Hidden Elements of the New Spirit of War

2-0. Hidden elements of different knowledge systems can be found in the new spirit of war. Critical anthropologists were the first to demonstrate that FM 3-24 features a substantial amount of text plagiarized from social theorists (Price 2007a,b). For instance, the definitions it provided of race, culture, and network are all taken from unacknowledged sources. “Race” is taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica entry on “Race,” “culture” comes from an introductory cultural anthropology book, and “network” is taken from a 1997 journal article. Apart from these cases, definitions of “governance,” “rule of law,” “ethnic group,” “society,” “groups,” “tribes,” “values,” “symbols,” and “power” are also taken from unacknowledged sources; the “governance” definition, in particular, stems from a document prepared by the European Commission. In this category of unacknowledged definitions, the most blatant for academics is “power,” which is a famous sociologist’s definition of power being “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his or her own will despite resistance” (Weber 1978 [1922]:53) (Table 2).

2-1. For critics of the new spirit of war, the fact that the ideas of eminent academics were used without attribution is a symptom of the recurring military abuse of academic knowledge (González 2007a,b). Yet, the information that snippets of social theory are present in the manuals, while the theorists are absent points to more than just a violation of academic propriety. It demonstrates some very important characteristics of the form of the spirit of war: the manner in which it is inoculated against certain types of critique and the transformation which academic knowledge undergoes when it is appropriated by a military knowledge system.

2-2. By disembodiment ideas from their originary thinkers and the periods, countries, and academic debates they were written in a whole category of knowledge is lost: the information that locates a thought in place and time. Various conventions legislating referencing formats and a strong distaste for plagiarism governing the rules of the formation of academic discourse are supposed to hinder this from taking place. Through placing marks and traces that designate where parts of a text stem from, knowledge is connected to precursors and intellectual influences are identified. Yet, different rules govern the formation of discourse in the new spirit of war. Within these rules, it is possible to decontextualize ideas. This has two immediate and connected results: the reifying of particular concepts as well as a shrouding of its sources. Taking ideas outside of the setting and conditions, they are generated in making them appear

TABLE 2. Some Unacknowledged Sources of the New Spirit of War

<i>New spirit of war</i>	<i>Unacknowledged source</i>
FM 3-07: Governance is the state's ability to serve the citizens through the rules, processes, and behavior by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in a society [...] (2-36)	Governance concerns the state's ability to serve the citizens. It refers to the rules, processes, and behavior by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in society (European Commission 2003)
FM 3-24: Race is a human group that defines itself or is defined by other groups as different by virtue of innate physical characteristics (3-25)	[Race] refers to a human group that defines itself or is defined by others as different by virtue of innate and immutable physical characteristics (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1974)
FM 3-24: Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another (3-37)	The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with this world and with one another (Plog and Bates 1988:7)
FM 3-24: A network is a series of direct and indirect ties from one actor to a collection of others (1-94)	Network consists of a series of direct and indirect ties from one actor to a collection of others [...] (Davern 1997:288)
FM 3-07: Rule of law is a principle under which all persons, institutions, and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and that are consistent with international human rights principles (1-40)	It refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards (UN Security Council General 2004:3-6)

both independent and universal; it covers part of their historical meaning and imbues them with a different kind of significance. Power is not understood as the definition of a famous German sociologist who was writing around the time of World War I, but instead as power per se. Culture is not understood as a particular “structural-functionalist” (González 2007a,b:16) account of culture that leaves out colonial heritage and the importance of economic forces, but instead as culture per se. At the same time, this covering of sources that are nonetheless present opens up the question of who or what is the signatory of these military manuals. Lacking both explicit references and author information, the new spirit of war is nothing short of a postmodern pastiche of government documents and snippets of social (critical) theory. It demonstrates that authors, whether they are soldiers or critical theorists, have no ultimate mastery over the meaning of their texts.

2.3. The disembodiment of ideas that takes place in the new spirit of war inoculates it against critique in two manners. First, it is difficult without the help of traces and references to assemble a critique that shows how aspects of writing have been selected from a general oeuvre that would resist simple characterization. The idea that race is not a biological concept can serve as an example here. A referenced discussion of this idea would quickly lead to discovery of one of its strongest advocates who was also the most outspoken critic of anthropologists using their academic credentials and knowledge to assist the US government in World War I and was subsequently censured by the AAA's governing council for critical remarks he made.⁷ By covering the traces of ideas, these forms of intellec-

⁷This is the German émigré anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942); see (Price 2008:11–17).

tual engagement and resources of critique are further removed from the reader. Second, once sources are uncovered and a critique is actually mounted, it might be the case that the critical resources used are already being drawn on by the new spirit of war. For instance, favored resources of contemporary social theorists analyzing military thought are the writings of two French philosophers.⁸ Yet as has been convincingly demonstrated, these thinkers are major intellectual resource for the Israeli Defence Force and are also beginning to be drawn on by the US Marines Corps.⁹ In this manner, the new spirit of war (unintentionally) inoculates itself against critique by appropriating critical intellectual resources.

2.4. Knowledge changes when it shifts from being academic to being military. When it moves from being an argument to becoming intelligence—apart from covering its intellectual sources—knowledge is both intentionally simplified and stratified. Simplicity is a mantra of military planning and education. It is worth quoting from FM 3-07 at some length that features an account of the importance of simplicity. “Simplicity is central to reducing complexity in planning. The most effective plans are clear, concise, and direct. Simplicity fosters a shared understanding of the situation, the problem, and the solution.” The manual goes on to say that simplicity “counters the effects of complexity by encouraging Soldiers to exercise initiative, accept prudent risks, and seize opportunities. A well-conceived plan accounts for risk and spurs initiative. It is flexible enough to allow for adaptation within the commander’s intent yet sufficiently clear to ensure that all effort focuses on a common understanding of the desired end state” (4-5). This enshrining of the importance of simplicity combined with a resurgent interest in governance moves the new spirit of war into the realm of state simplifications. “State simplifications” according to a well-known academic, “represent techniques for grasping a large and complex reality; in order for officials to be able to comprehend aspects of the ensemble, that complex reality must be reduced to schematic categories. The only way to accomplish this is to reduce an infinite array of detail to a set of categories that will facilitate summary descriptions, comparisons, and aggregation.” In this sense, simplification and stratification of knowledge go hand in hand. Furthermore, simplifications do not just fulfill a didactic purpose; they actually enable a tighter form of governance. “The invention, elaboration, and deployment of these abstractions represent... an enormous leap in state capacity—a move from tribute and indirect rule to taxation and direct rule” (Scott 1998:77).

2.5. In summary, hidden elements of the new spirit of war point to the traces of different knowledge systems. The manner in which knowledge is presented serves to both reify it and enable a closer form of the governance of foreign environments. The form of the knowledge is paramount for this simplification to take place; through the use of numbered paragraphs and a lack of references,

⁸(Deleuze and Guattari 1987) For a recent application of some of their ideas, see (Bousquet 2009).

⁹“Several of the concepts in *A Thousand Plateaus* became instrumental for us [in the IDF]... allowing us to explain contemporary situations in a way that we could not have otherwise explained. It problematized our own paradigm....” Most important was the distinction [Deleuze and Guattari] have pointed out between the concepts of “smooth” and “striated space”... [which accordingly reflected] the organizational concepts of the “war machine” and the “state apparatus”. In the IDF, we now often use the term “to smooth our space” when we want to refer to operation in a space in such a manner that borders do not affect us. Palestinian areas could indeed be thought of as “striated”, in the sense that they are enclosed by fences, walls, ditches, roads, blocks, and so on... We want to confront the “striated” space of traditional, old-fashioned military practice [the way most military units presently operate] with smoothness that allows for movement through space that crosses any borders and barriers. Rather than contain and organize our forces according to existing borders, we want to move through them.... [T]ravelling through walls is a simple mechanical solution that connects theory and practice. Transgressing boundaries is the definition of the condition of “smoothness” (Shimon Naveh quoted in Weizman 2007:200–201). James Der Derian provides a similar account of a conference: “But also in attendance were Israeli generals citing semioticians like Roman Jakobson, feminist theorists applying the ideas of Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway, and doctoral students (including one whose previous career had been training snipers) quoting Deleuze on nomadism and Virilio on litoral defense” (Der Derian 2001:220).

information is present, but its sources are shrouded. Ideas can thereby easily be placed into different fields of relation depending on where they have the most utility.

Historic Influences on the New Spirit of War

3-0. Particular forms of knowledge become more useful than others in the new spirit of war. A short historical overview will be conducted of moments, which featured similar principles of the new spirit of war and debates. Military doctrine is an ideas-driven endeavor, but is usually not treated as such.¹⁰ Advocates of the new spirit of war are following a more than two millennia old idea that to be successful in battle one must “know the enemy” (Mcfate 2005a,b:42). What the original advocate of that idea says next is seldom referenced though: it is that we must also “know ourselves,” for only then will we “never be in peril” (Tzu 1971: 84). To understand the new spirit of war, it is necessary to recognize that these two kinds of knowledge—of ourselves and of our enemies—are indissociably linked to each other. To know “ourselves,” we need to understand our knowledge of the enemy. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is by illuminating the relationship of the new spirit of war to other knowledge systems that act as resources for it, such as anthropology and the business management literature.

3-1. The importance of cultural knowledge for military operations has been recognized by many different people through the ages. A very successful commander once wrote that before a country is invaded, “it must be determined whether it is inhabited, and if so by what kind of peoples, and what religion or rite they have, and upon what they live, and what there is in the land” (Hernan Cortes quoted in Todorov 1999:175). For a contemporary academic, this attitude to cultural knowledge is regarded as highly significant. “Here we glimpse the function of the future ethnologist: the exploration of these countries will lead to their (better) exploitation.... A new trinity replaces—or rather puts in the background, for he must always remain ready to intervene—the old-style soldier-conquistador: it consists of the scholar, the priest, and the merchant. The first collects information about the condition of the country, the second permits its spiritual annexation, the third makes certain of the profits; they help each other, and all help” their home country (Todorov 1999:175). An anthropologist in World War II places a familiar emphasis on the importance of academic disciplines in assisting in the governance of a foreign environment, “The peoples [in the regions of the conquest] are extremely various and complicated in their race, culture and polity, so that we shall adopt the policies that are fully customized to the actual situations of the people.... Ethnology and sociology... should positively propose a guideline for the construction of our ethnic policies.”¹¹ There are countless more examples of cultural knowledge being drawn on and advocated for military operations; the important thing to note is that the impulse for cultural knowledge in warfare is not novel but recurring.

Anthropology

3-2. The current resurgent emphasis on culture has identified the discipline of anthropology as a resource for the US military and subsequently placed it into the center of a public debate on scholarly ethics. With authors of FM 3-24 and defense intellectuals surrounding Gen. David Petraeus having a background in

¹⁰An important exception is (Brown 2008).

¹¹Yoshitar Hirano—Japanese Academic working for Japanese Institute of the Pacific—quoted in (Price 2008:67).

anthropology—such as David Kilcullen and Montgomery McFate—the discipline has left a prominent mark on US military strategy, akin to the role organizational science and modernization theory played under McNamara during the Vietnam War (Cullather 2006; Latham 2000). This role of anthropology has been publicly criticized through recent exchanges by academics in *Anthropology Today* and a statement issued by the American Anthropological Association (AAA). To understand the new spirit of war, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the historic role of anthropology to the US military and the opposition to it.

3.3. Much of the debate surrounding the new spirit of war can be traced to a conflict between two very different anthropological traditions: the study of the (exotic) culturally other and the study of modern state power. This also accounts for the passion with which this debate is waged. What is at stake for some is the very essence of anthropology in the twenty-first century. These anthropological strands of thought have drawn radically divergent lessons from the history of the twentieth century, in particular the Vietnam War. A key moment in the critique of these extant power relations occurred in 1963, when an academic constructed a typology of anthropology in Africa in which he characterized anthropologists after World War I as the “handmaidens of colonial governments” (Hooker 1963:455). The critique was extended in 1968 when another anthropologist—in a phrase that appears to have often been combined and confused with the previous one—described anthropology as a “child of Western imperialism” (Gough 1968:403). The central argument is that the knowledge practices of anthropology helped to justify the domination of non-Western peoples at significant junctures of colonial power relations (Asad 1973).

3.4. The critique of the US military use of anthropology has a further pivotal moment after the Vietnam War, when it is discovered that the work of anthropologists was at times used and sponsored—against their knowledge—by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Price 2007a,b). This scenario was somewhat re-enacted when it was discovered that the text of an unwitting anthropologist had been a key resource for US interrogators at Abu Ghraib.¹² Referring to these past events, one of the most vocal critics of anthropology as a resource in the new spirit of war has described the recent developments as “mercenary anthropology” (González 2007a,b). The belief is that social science and social scientists have historically been abused and weaponized in wars not of their choosing.

3.5. Advocates of the new spirit of war have a similar historical account with a radically different normative upshot. Their argument is that there was a long tradition of collaboration of anthropologists with the US military, which soured on both sides after Vietnam (McFate 2005a,b). At around the same time at which US anthropology was redefining itself and severing its ties to specific types of government programs and interventions, the US military was drawing very different lessons from the war. It turned away from small wars and focused its energies on classical inter-state warfare, the development of supreme military technology and improved forms of (introspective) inter-service cooperation—this spirit is manifested most strongly in the US Army’s *Operations Field Manual* (FM 100-5), which only dedicates 9 out of 163 pages to operations other than war, including all peacekeeping and counterinsurgency operations. This orientation toward logistics, overbearing firepower, and inter-service cooperation occurred despite the fact that a lack of cultural knowledge of the other can easily be identified as one of the main grounds for failure in Vietnam. To further understand the case for the new spirit of war, it is necessary to turn to the kind of academia that was being drawn on by the US military during the Vietnam War. It is important to recall that McNamara and his “whiz kids” were no strangers to scientific paradigms: they had first restructured Ford and then the Defense Department by the

¹²This is Raphael Patai’s *The Arab Mind* (1973) for a discussion see (González 2007a,b).

means of “scientific management,” with a strong emphasis on process, quantifiable results, and statistics. The reliance on this approach led to a situation in which facts that could not be translated into numbers—such as historical identity—were left out of the equations describing the Vietnam War. This tendency was further compounded by what can only be described as “ignorance of Vietnamese history and society” among the US policymakers (Adas 2006:297). As McNamara himself said years later, “We clearly lacked the understanding of Vietnamese history and culture that would have prevented us from believing that they would reverse course as a function of being ‘punished’ by US power” (quoted in Adas 2006:296). Contrasted to this number-driven universal approach to knowledge, the new spirit of war advocates a logic that is radically local and particular.

3-6. There are various historical instances in which the imagination about a foreign population had a very wide-ranging impact on it. Examples from colonialism find little reference in the new spirit of war. Yet, it has become widely accepted that particular identity constructions with a high salience have often come out of colonial encounters; prominent examples are the Indian caste system and Hutu and Tutsi identities in Rwanda (Bowen 1996; Dirks 2001; Fearon and Laitin 2000; Prunier 1995). The argument is not that these categories have not previously existed, much rather that by operationalizing these categories as a means for making a society legible and dominating it, they are reified in a manner in which they previously were not (see Cohn 1996). The discipline of anthropology has historically been at the center of these kinds of undertakings. What is important to note is that long after old anthropological texts have been decried by critical anthropologists as outmoded, orientalist, handmaidens of colonialism, these old anthropological texts can be used by the people they are about to support a particular construction of traditional power at the heart of modernity.¹³ In the same manner in which organizational science suffers from a few particular epistemological blind spots (such as historical identity), the type of anthropology being drawn on in the new spirit of war also has particular epistemological tendencies. Owing to the disciplinary focus, one can expect that assuming the anthropological gaze will provide an analysis that tends to decentralize secular political power and reconstitute traditional forms of control. This is the case because the anthropological gaze drawn on by the military manuals is typically focused on the “tribe” as the level of analysis. A tendency also exists within a structural version of this kind of analysis to stratify what is really a configuration of ethnicity and identity that is in transformation.

Business Management Literature

3-7. Another intellectual resource feeding into the new spirit of war is the business management literature, which can be understood as a representation of the current zeitgeist of capitalism. This is seen in a few general developments in the form of organization, such as the dominant turn to outsourcing (pioneered by Toyota in the 1990s) and automatic resupply (pioneered by Walmart in the early 2000s), but also in the ideas present in the new spirit of war. In particular, the notion of “network” has great weight in the business literature. The term ‘network’ achieves its current meaning through a conjunction of the proliferation of the notion of computer networks and a search in the social sciences for concepts with which to understand nonhierarchical structures. This idea of the network as the most efficient and effective form of social organization can be

¹³For instance, Ashanti chiefs in Ghana read anthropological texts from the beginning of the twentieth century to help them learn about their traditions. There are also similar accounts of a Nuer chief referring to Evans-Pritchard’s texts. Interview with Nana Kofi Antwi-Boasiako, 22 December 2008, Accra.

discovered in the business literature of the 1990s, where companies such as 3M and W.L. Gore & Associates purposely design their structures to be relatively flat. Many of these ideas actually stem from the 1960s anti-capitalist and anti-militarist movements (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007), indicating a familiar relationship to critical intellectual resources. As a term and theoretical concept, network helps to motivate young cadres—who are supposed to be less restricted by their superiors. This idea can also be found in the new spirit of war. FM 3-24, states that “[i]ndeed, young leaders—so-called strategic corporals—often make decisions at the tactical level that have strategic consequences” (1-157). This perception of the network carries a very particular world view with it.

3-8. A good summary of this worldview is provided by two academics who write that: “Social life today is no longer presented in the form of a series of rights and duties towards an extended familial community, as in a domestic world; or in the form of a wage-earning class within a hierarchical body, whose rungs one climbs, where one spends one’s whole career, and where professional activity is clearly separated from the private sphere, as in an industrial world. In a reticular world [which means a world resembling or forming a network], social life is composed of a proliferation of encounters and temporary, but reactivable connections with various groups, operated at potentially considerable social, professional, geographical and cultural distance” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 108; Sennett 2006).

3-9. The message of the new spirit of capitalism and the new spirit of war are the same here: different maxims for success govern behavior in a world of the network. New strategies and tactics need to be formed for a world that has moved away from a hierarchical and territorial order. The world viewed as a network *filters* the various real hierarchies (such as domestic classes and international power differentials) that constrain and enable military policies in different contexts. By casting the world as one of networks and thereby filtering out other, more class-based, actors the landscape is depoliticized. It shrouds the hierarchies that are constitutive of politics. In some ways, this is in keeping with the notion of an independent liberal self—which is far removed from actual relations of hierarchy and dependence in the world. What does a manual do then, when it presents network and culture as the fundamental social ontology? It makes a case for a particular policy. It frames the problem in a fashion that qualifies it for a specific intervention.

Implementations of the New Spirit of War

4-0. One of the most prominent policies of the New Spirit of War has been the HTS. HTS comes from Join Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization, “a task force assembled in 2003 to analyze the growing threat of IEDs in Iraq. Part of that effort was a computer database of cultural knowledge—culture in a can, as it were—that was supposed to help commanders identify the social networks behind IEDs, from the bomb makers to the financiers down to the men who planted the devices” (Featherstone 2008:63). HTS defines its mission as providing “commanders in the field with relevant socio-cultural understanding necessary to meet their operational requirements” (US Army 2009). HTS’s primary units are Human Terrain Teams (HTTs), which consist of 5–8 persons, some of which are social scientists, embedded at the brigade level. The plan is for there to be one team for every combat brigade. One member of a HTT deployed in Iraq has described themselves as “Basically... non lethal COIN specialists.”¹⁴ HTT members are US government employees, but initially the program was staffed by contractors. First results of HTTs in Afghanistan showed a large reduction of

¹⁴Confidential email exchange with HTS member, 12 September 2008.

kinetic operations (60–70%) (Schweitzer 2008). As a concept and institution, HTS is growing in significance in the US military's approach to conflict.

4.1. A central focus of some HTT members is the construction of tables and systems that identify tribes and their relations to one another. Through the use of census and geographic information system mapping tools commanders are supposed to be provided insight into the human terrain. As one member of a HTT recently wrote, "Tribal identities are intact, with the exception of those who think they are 'intelligentsia,' and they deny their tribal identity (but they still know it, they just don't want to admit it)."¹⁵ This brings to mind a letter written home by a British officer affiliated with a Sikh regiment during World War II, "The Sikhs have many religious customs; we see that they keep them whether they like it or not" (quoted in Barkawi 2004:141). The role religion and ethnicity play here is not just that of a different identity, but a means for making the social reality of the "other" legible, and legibility is always a necessary condition for governance: be it to exploit or govern benevolently. Whether tribes are the operative political entities in Iraq today needs to be considered in light of the fact that Iraq today is neither natural nor neutral, it is a country in violent upheaval with many contending seats of power and a large Diaspora.¹⁶ In Iraq, this tribal focus means that one could expect to see tribal leaders empowered, precisely at the time when the Iraqi government is undergoing an extensive legitimacy crisis. If the key social marker in Iraq today is a tribe, then the solution to problems will be sought for at the level of the tribe, which will not only empower some tribes that were previously marginalized but provide validity for the whole unit of the tribe, thereby filtering out other organizations, such as classes and political parties.

4.2. HTS has become a lightning rod for criticisms from a large segment of the academic anthropological community—and this despite the fact that out of 417 HTS employees, only 6 possess a PhD in anthropology (CEAUSSIC 2009:12). Criticism has also come from other quarters, with an editorial in *Nature* declaring that "The US Department of Defense's HTS, an attempt to have social sciences inform military decision-making, is failing on every level" (Failure in the Field 2008:676). The most recent assessments from the academic anthropology community have shifted from ethical concerns of anthropological engagement to a denial that HTS does anthropology. "When ethnographic investigation is determined by military missions, not subject to external review, where data collection occurs in the context of war, integrated into the goals of counterinsurgency, and in a potentially coercive environment—all characteristic factors of the HTS concept and its application—it can no longer be considered a legitimate professional exercise of anthropology" (CEAUSSIC 2009:3).

Inherent Restraints of the New Spirit of War

5.0. The new spirit of war is essential to modern US militarism because it restrains it. In that sense, it plays a key role in helping to maintain US power in the same fashion in which philanthropy and "corporate social responsibility" help to sustain and restrain capitalism.¹⁷ There are two main categories of restraints the new spirit of war itself encounters: restraints of form and of content.

5.1. Understanding the restraints of form that the new spirit of war encounters means considering the cognitive style of manuals and power point presentations (Tufte 2006), but also of looking at the restrictive function of some vocabulary choices made. For instance, while it is clear that the term of human

¹⁵Confidential email exchange with HTS member, 14 September 2008.

¹⁶For an account of previous tribe state relations in Iraq, see (Baram 1997).

¹⁷For a similar point in a different context, see (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007:25).

terrain was developed to assist old commanders, used to thinking about terrain, to recognize the importance of culture; this term has come at the cost of importing a restricted understanding of culture. For, while terrain is relatively unchanging, culture is not. Culture is a dynamic configuration that actors can re-configure and re-articulate in a rapid fashion; it is always already political. As others have pointed out that there is also a slight dehumanizing element to calling people “human terrain,” but it is still better than calling them “sand-niggers” (Noyes 2009).

5-2. In regard to content, criticisms can be organized by military and nonmilitary sources. This manual has already dealt with the majority of the nonmilitary sources. Military critics of FM 3-24 have pointed out that the manual places too much emphasis on localized Maoist revolutionary warfare, they claim that the current strategic environment in Iraq is very different and can be characterized by “real-time cooperation and cross-pollination between insurgents in many countries” (Kilcullen 2006–2007:4) rapid technological diffusion and a battle of images (Hoffman 2007:84). Other critics close to the British military have pointed out that too much emphasis is placed on culture and too little on history in this analysis.¹⁸

5-3. One restraint of the old spirit of war, which the new spirit of war is less restricted by is the need for external justifications for military action. Ultimately, the point of the spirit of war is to attribute moral justification and significance to military activity and lend meaning to the existence of those committed to it. By drawing more forcefully on discourses of legitimacy and governance, the new spirit of war is moving into a sphere in which military action, in the form of a transformation operation, is inherently positive, preemptive, and productive—not reactive, destructive, and the bane of humanity. This is similar to an occurrence in the business management literature where “The spirit of capitalism must meet a demand for self-justification, particularly in order to resist anti-capitalist critique; and this involves reference to conventions of general validity as to what is just or unjust” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007:25). These claims for general validity are approached by the new spirit of war by appropriating notions of governance, rule of law, legitimacy, etc. The goal here is not the subjection of a world at the hands of military power, but can much better be expressed by stating that, “Our interest is to help establish a self-running world (in which we take an appropriate part), not to try to run the world ourselves, or to withdraw and have it run into chaos again” (Stayley 1943:378).

Conclusion

If the text hitherto seemed elliptical, cut off, segmented, this can be blamed, in part, on the manual form. The manual form permits writing without context, conclusion, or references. This article has sought to argue and demonstrate how knowledge takes on a different form in manuals by being disembodied from its sources. This practice leads to a simplification and reification of military knowledge that is essential to its utility yet restrains its own stated goal of transforming the military into a learning organization (FM 3-24 x). Without references, footnotes and quotation marks, this text would recapitulate the same cognitive style as a manual. The only figures it would purposefully name would be secretaries of defense, generals, and defense intellectuals. I have undertaken this exercise to avoid the mistake of seeking

¹⁸“Being Vietnamese, Islamic, eastern, or oriental was probably not the main driving force behind the asymmetric strategies of the Viet Cong or Al-Qaeda, any more than being Spanish or American was the main driving force behind the indirect methods of those who took on Napoleon or the British Empire” (Porter 2007:54); see also (Porter 2009).

for the essence of military doctrine beyond the form. The segmentation, reification, untethering of knowledge through the form is the essence of military doctrine that transcends different spirits of war. Apart from analyzing the manual form, which has remained relatively constant through different spirits of war, this article also focused on recent examples of military doctrine. In particular, I sought to demonstrate that the key organizing concepts in this “new” spirit of war are “culture” and “network.” Network turns out to be a problematic category somewhere between individual and community, thereby avoiding the salient rights discourses developed to protect both these categories. It is important not to lose sight of the emancipatory properties of the new spirit of war. While we have yet to hear from Iraqis or Afghans about their views on the culture turn in military doctrine—the new spirit of war legitimizes itself through a representation of their interests. And anything that can be used to legitimize a practice can also be used to delegitimize it.

What does it tell us when we see EU documents and very different scripts referenced in these texts? It demonstrates that just like a modern weapons system can consist of foreign sourced parts, so too can modern knowledge practices. The shrouding operation of sovereignty is to regard the national entity as the cornucopia that produces knowledge, technology, and military power—whereas it is only a site at which these different strands and discourses are assembled. The international is already present in all of our attempts at the national. Moreover, the discovery of radical subversive knowledge at the core of power can be alienating and disorienting for scholars accustomed to deploying these thinkers as tools to critique power. Yet, this development is an opportunity for the academy, not just because it pushes the search for new theoretical foundations, but because it necessitates a new empirical encounter with political practice and unexpected realities. Realities in which US military manuals plagiarize from social theorists and European Union publications; the commander-in-chief of the most powerful military force in history reads Fanon (Obama 2008: 100); and it is no longer sufficient to simply quote some critical academic to make a politically meaningful statement.

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