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Adrian R. Lewis, *The American Culture of War: The History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Pp. xxi, 538. ISBN 978-0-415-97975-7.

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The title of Adrian Lewis's book suggests that it is rather narrowly focused on the development of American military power in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, it becomes clear that his study is not another institutional and operational history of the American military, but rather a broader examination of the intellectual and cultural system of the armed forces of the United States since World War II. Lewis states clearly in his introduction that he intends to explain not only how Americans have fought wars but also why they have fought them as they have (xvii).

Professor Lewis, chair of the history department at the University of North Texas and a retired Army major, has already established himself as an important military historian. His previous monograph, *Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory*,[1] provided an intriguing, albeit critical, evaluation of the American landings during the Normandy invasion. *The American Culture of War* continues to mark him as an innovative thinker and to show military historians how their work can be informed by fields like anthropology and political science.

The book is primarily a synthesis, understandable given that the author covers over sixty years of history and a wide range of topics and subjects. He does include a moderate primary source base made up primarily of official histories prepared by each of the military branches as well as operational and doctrinal guides. The book covers the period from World War II through the current war in Iraq in chronological order. Each chapter is devoted either to establishing how American cultural concepts of war changed or to a specific operational history that demonstrates how such changes affected military practice. Arguably the most important chapters are the first two, "Culture, Genes, and War" and "Traditional American Thinking about the Conduct of War," in which Lewis provides the theoretical framework for his argument about culture. One of the great tasks that a historian faces in making claims about cultural norms is to clearly define what is meant by culture. The numerous debates of historians and anthropologists over how best to define the term raise the peculiar problem of too many classifications. The author states that his intent is not to forge his own definition but rather to choose the most appropriate one for his work (2).[2] Lewis's target audience is a fairly broad one, including historians, anthropologists, political scientists, and military professionals. The latter or, more narrowly, the civilian decision makers within the military structure, are his primary audience.

[1] Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 2000.

[2] Lewis finds Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge U Pr, 1977; orig. 1972) best suited to his work. Bourdieu defines culture as individuals interacting in societies using accepted practices that have specific meanings and objectives in order to reach culturally acceptable results. Sometimes, however, the individual must use unacceptable practices when faced with a new or unique situation and this leads to the development of new accepted norms.

Lewis argues that since the end of World War II American cultural thinking about warfare has changed to the detriment of the nation-state. The greatest change has occurred in what Lewis deems the two most important tenets of American warfare: first, that man is not a means to an end, and second, that there should be equality of opportunity or more precisely "equality of sacrifice." The first tenet meant that Americans, through World War II, were willing to become a means for the ends of the state because, for the most part, wars were relatively short, decisive affairs—aberrations in the normal pattern of life. American citizens thus were willing to allow themselves to be used to fulfill the needs of the state, but only because doing so represented an anomaly in the course of their lives rather than the norm. Traditionally, Lewis posits, Americans had been reluctant to allow the government to dictate their service to the state in times of war. The second tenet was founded on a long-held belief that all American men were capable of serving in the military when necessary as a duty of citizenship. However, as Lewis argues so forcefully, the wars of the second half of the twentieth century have completely altered how Americans think about how wars are to be fought.

In American memory World War II remains "the good war." The citizen-soldiers of the United States had proven their worth against the hard-edged militarism of Germany and Japan. Upon their return home, veterans were treated as heroes and granted the benefits of the G.I. Bill. Lewis, however, points out that World War II also had an insidious effect on the military structure of the United States, one that in the long run severely weakened its ability to carry out wars as successfully as it had in previous years. The development of the air power doctrines of World War II, the idea that wars could be won solely through the use of strategic bombing, gained great currency among American airmen, civilian leaders, and the general public. The infatuation with air power, in Lewis's estimation, stemmed from the American preference for fighting wars with technology and overwhelming material superiority. This formula for war removed men from the dangers of the battlefield; this conformed to the first American cultural tenet of war, that man is not a means to an end (62).[3] While historians and others have long argued about the ultimate efficacy of air power, Lewis forces the reader to consider a new and much more worrisome question: namely, whether American emphasis on air power has fundamentally undermined the military's ability to achieve successful results. The author's primary concern is twofold: first, air power doctrine has de-emphasized ground forces, which has made Americans ever more wary of putting their soldiers in harm's way, and second, the success of the Air Force in the public mind has forced the Army to stress technological innovation over commitment to the doctrines that had served it well prior to and through World War II.

Perhaps more important than World War II in the transformation of the American culture of war, in Lewis's estimation, was the Korean War: "The citizen-soldier Army of the United States would never again fight a major war with offensive strategy and doctrine" (84). The Korean War radically altered how American policymakers and the military

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[3] Other works which discuss the development of American air power include Michael S. Sherry's *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, CT: Yale U Pr, 1987), Conrad C. Crane's *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 1993), and such classic works as Giulio Douhet's *Command of the Air*, trans. D. Ferrari (1942; rpt. Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1983). An interesting study of the American love of technology and its use as a diplomatic tool is Emily S. Rosenberg's *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (NY: Hill & Wang, 1982).

thought about war. The Truman administration entered the conflict in Korea with a limited strategic objective, the restoration of the 38th parallel, rather than with the mindset of a total victory, which would have meant the forceful reunification of the Korean peninsula under a pro-Western democratic regime. The author does admit that, in the aftermath of MacArthur's successful landing at Inchon, the United States briefly reverted to a total war mindset. However, the entrance of Communist China in late 1950 again turned the war into one of limited objectives, something nearly unheard of in American history. America placed great emphasis on the air campaigns against the North Koreans and Chinese and thus, according to Lewis, relegated the Army to fighting a defensive war of attrition, something essentially opposed to the raison d'être of the Army.

The Korean War was also important because it altered the second great American tenet concerning war: equality of sacrifice. The burden of the war did not fall as evenly across American society as had that of World War II and, as Lewis points out, the American general public quickly lost interest in a war that had morphed into something unrecognizable to the generations who had lived through World Wars I and II.

It was in Vietnam, though, that the final change in the idea of equality of sacrifice occurred within the American culture of war. Lewis does an admirable job of concisely outlining the historiographic debate over the draft system used in Vietnam. The main point of the draft, according to Lewis and other historians, was not how equitable it was but rather how little it disrupted American society (276). One of the anti-war activists' main criticisms of the draft was that it unfairly targeted lower-class whites and African-Americans, who suffered the brunt of the fighting and of the casualties (275–276).[4] Lewis points out that initially there was some truth in these claims, especially in the case of African-Americans. For the first time, he argues, the United States was fighting a war in which the vast majority of Americans had little at stake. There was no rationing, no war bond drives, no massive tax increases during the conflict. However, the long duration of the war violated basic precepts of Americans' cultural understanding of war. This led to an increased animosity towards both the war and the military itself. As a consequence, the military leadership concluded that the traditional volunteer force that had long been a staple of American cultural thinking about war lacked public support and was no longer viable. Thus the military turned towards the model of a small, professional military. This further exacerbated the conflict between traditional attitudes about conducting war and the new realities facing the nation by placing the burden of war on a small segment of the American society and causing yet another division in an already fracturing nation.

The last two chapters of the book are especially intriguing because they cover the current war in Iraq; in some ways, they are an exercise in historical conjecture. Lewis concedes that the records needed to write an authoritative account of the decision to go to war in 2003 will not be available for many years. He presents many theories that have been put forth to explain why the United States invaded Iraq; he himself clearly believes the war was initiated for the wrong reasons and using the wrong methods. Many commentators and large segments of the public see the war as "un-American," a violation of basic principles of Ameri-

[4] In 1966 African-Americans made up 13% of the Army and 8% of the Marines but suffered almost 23% of the casualties. By the war's end, the casualty rate had dropped to 13%, mirroring the percentage of African-Americans in the American population.

can conduct. Analyzing the insurgent war in Iraq, Lewis states that "Rumsfeld's vision of war was *culturally regular*" (437, my emphasis). The second Iraq War was the culmination of a cultural evolution that had been taking place in the American military structure since the end of World War II. A small, highly professional force fought using overwhelming technological and material superiority while keeping the war for the most part isolated from American society. The Iraq war provides Lewis with the best evidence for his argument. This is a frightening idea and leads to an even more bothersome question: if the current Iraq war is how the United States has come to learn to fight wars, then can Americans actually expect to win this or any future war? Although Lewis never poses this question directly, his book strongly implies a negative answer.

The *American Culture of War* is a well argued, well written work. Lewis skillfully guides the reader through some relatively abstract cultural concepts and demonstrates how changes in both actions and words have negatively affected America's ability to prosecute wars. The book is not without flaws, but these are minor. For example, Lewis only considers major military engagements. It would be interesting to see how his thesis could be applied to the American campaigns in Grenada, Nicaragua, and Panama, to name just a few. Lewis might also have explored the role of alliance building, a major focus of the American government and military in the conflicts of the second half of the twentieth century. Much has been made of the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq today. In the first Persian Gulf War, the United States strove to build a viable alliance that would not further upset the Middle East. In Korea and World War II, alliance building was often at the heart of American strategy or policy. In Vietnam, the United States fought alongside old allies, South Korea and Australia; while their numerical support may have been comparatively small, the pain and loss of the war were as deeply felt in those countries as in America.[5] Although Lewis does discuss the importance of allies in his chapters on World War II and the Korean War, the issue deserves stronger consideration, especially regarding its impact on the American culture of war. Overall, however, Lewis's use of theoretical models is a valuable addition to the study of military history; his book will have deep resonance not just for professional historians but for any American interested in the direction the United States may take as the twenty-first century unfolds.

[5] One of the better works on American alliance strategy is Mark A. Stoler's *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 2000). For the Australian experience in Vietnam, consult Michael Sexton's *War for the Asking: How Australia Invited Itself to Vietnam*, rev. ed. (Frenchs Forest, NSW: New Holland, 2002).