



How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from the Pentagon by Rosa Brooks.

New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016. Pp. viii, 438. ISBN 978-1-4767-7786-3.

Review by James M. Davitch, US Air Force Academy (james.davitch@us.af.mil).

In her most recent book, professor Rosa Brooks (Georgetown Law) ponders the wisdom and consequences of the United States' being in a perpetual state of war and routinely using the military instrument to achieve other than strictly military goals. Her experience working in the Department of Defense (DoD) Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Office informs her argument throughout.

Though Brooks brings an attorney's perspective to her discussion of America's confrontation with difficult and unfamiliar moral, political, and legal situations, she writes for laypersons as much as for specialists. All that is required is an interest in the United States' response to crises in international relations and (mis)use of the military in its precarious position of post-Cold War arbiter of peace.

The first of the book's four parts, "Tremors," describes the unique tensions apparent in today's geopolitical landscape. "In the years since 9/11, it has grown steadily more difficult to define our enemies" (12). In particular, the invocation of the nebulous term "terrorism" has been used to justify the use of military force against foes who did not even exist in 2001. Brooks contends that, in a time when war has become a default state of affairs, a nation's citizens are more apt to endorse actions they would not condone in peacetime: "morality and law begin to lose their guiding force.... If we can't tell whether a particular situation counts as war, ... we lose our collective ability to place meaningful restraints on power and violence" (22). This laissez-faire attitude to legality in a context of rapid technological advances in intelligence, surveillance, and war-fighting makes Brooks's thesis all the more compelling.

In part II, "The New American Way of War," the author contrasts present-day emerging threats from cyberspace attacks, Chinese "unrestricted war," and garden-variety terrorism with what Americans *used to* identify as traditional war (e.g., Allies vs. Nazis in World War II). She asks what "winning" looks like in a conflict with an adversary not bent on controlling land. When, she asks, does a military response encroach on the realm of law enforcement?

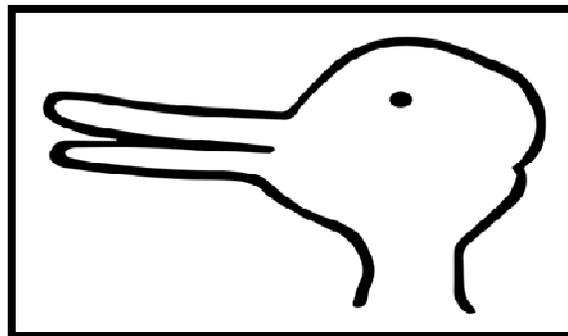
Brooks illustrates the effects of the DoD's broadened definition of the purview of the military, from the legal difficulties of running detention centers in Cuba and Afghanistan to the Pentagon's establishment of a modern information operations team. A fascinating passage concerns the development of a six-phase spectrum of conflict. The military's focus on the stability side of the spectrum resulted in the creation of Africa Command, a move that, Brooks notes, the State Department disdained.

As the six-phase conflict spectrum was meant to address low-intensity conflicts, the Pentagon's new "Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning" (JCIC) is designed to respond to "hybrid

warfare” threats.¹ Both planning models are intended to manage challenges below the threshold of a major conventional war. Several presidential administrations and large sections of the DoD have espoused a shift of focus from low-intensity conflicts in the Middle East to potential near-peer adversaries elsewhere²—with little effect. Instead, Brooks stresses, the military’s efforts to ensure stability in ill-governed or ungoverned areas of the world have continued to require the armed forces to assume roles beyond their normal combat specialties. Like former West Point historian Gian Gentile,³ she observes that the military’s poor track record in roles other than war-fighting shows that it should leave matters like health care, education, free news dissemination, and economic development to civilian experts.

Turning to the part played by new technologies in accelerating the military’s involvement in non-traditional combat, Brooks describes the advent of remotely-piloted aircraft (viz., “drones”). Like other cyber weapons, drones lower the financial, political, and reputational costs of war. Withholding judgment as to the morality of employing such weapons, the author pinpoints operational security concerns that require careful deliberation in any democracy. That she observes technological developments dispassionately is the chief benefit of her book

In part III, “How We Got Here,” Brooks traces the history of international law and the norms of war-making, to ascertain whether our moment in the history of military operations is truly unique. She provides intriguing details regarding such endeavors to constrain armed conflict as the Lieber Code, the creation of the International Red Cross, the Geneva Convention, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, all of which underlie our concept of human rights. Brooks clarifies the tension between the rights of the individual human being and the UN Charter’s emphasis on nonintervention without favoring one over the other. She uses the duck/rabbit optical illusion to symbolize the ambiguities of modern war theory.



Surround the image with pictures of rabbits, and the viewer will perceive a rabbit rather than a duck, and vice versa. So too, Brooks writes, our perception of a given attack as either (a) an act of terrorism requiring a military response or (b) a crime requiring a law enforcement reaction will depend on how the event is framed. In the case of the former, there will be fewer legal restraints on the state’s action.

The fourth and final section of the book, “Counting the Costs,” juxtaposes just and unjust wars. Here the author explores the blurring of the line between peacetime and wartime that has caused a seemingly inevitable slide toward a permanent state of conflict, asking whether the mili-

1. See Phillip Lohaus, “A New Blueprint for Competing below the Threshold: The Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning,” *War on the Rocks* (23 May 2018).

2. See the DoD’s online “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy.”

3. In *Wrong Turn: America’s Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* (NY: New Pr, 2013).

tary's exaggerated role in national security affairs is desirable. If not, then US citizens must so determine and propose an alternative.

If the United States' civilian leaders desire a Walmart style military, where one can "shop" for nearly anything—medical personnel, city planners, fighter pilots, et al.—that may be fine for the time being. But Rosa Brooks has persuasively argued that asking the US military to do a hundred things at once will mean doing none of them well.