

The american way of war



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Thesis: The United States has developed distinct American way of war.

Since 1941, the United States of America had developed an American way of war based on technology, precise usage of power from distance and employment of Special Operation Forces (SOF) in order to find, fix and mark adversary forces and expose them to precise air and ground fire.

Additionally, outstanding use of the Combined Arms Maneuver and incorporation of all available enablers distinguish the American way of war from other nations.

The term “ American Way of War”[1]was mentioned for a first time in early 1970s with the publication of “ The American Way of War” written by Russel Weigley who examined the key political and military figures from George Washington to Robert McNamara and their approaches to the war. He wrote that The American Way of War seeks on the pursuit of a crushing military victory against opposing army, using a strategy of an attrition or annihilation. According to Weigley, the United States military and political leaders seek to destroy adversary’s military capabilities and to conquer their capital city in order to force them to stop the war and to start postwar negotiations under already established United states terms and conditions. [2]Additionally, he made clear distinction between the United States Army and most of the European armies, meaning that the United States usually will capitalize their military victory achieving strategic success after war in order to keep or extend the influence by politics and diplomacy.

Some writers argued that the United States did not develop “ The American Way of War” and instead of the term mentioned above, they were arguing

that the United States has developed “ The American Way of Battle”[3], because the most of the western armies along with the US Army were studied Napoleon, Clausewitz, Moltke, and developed tactics, procedures and doctrines according to their way of warfare. Anyway, the one thing that distinguish the US Army from other western armies (British, German, French) especially after WW 2 was the US Army ability to bring to war more than some countries and armies could even imagine.

During the WW 2, the United States Army destroyed most of the German and Japanese cities using strategic bombing on a daily base and making them incapable of conducting offensive operations and to sustain fighting for a long period of time. According to Max Boot, and his article The New American Way of War, he wrote that: “ the Civil War, World War I, and World War II were won not by tactical or strategic brilliance but by the sheer weight of numbers — the awesome destructive power that only a fully mobilized and highly industrialized democracy can bring to bear.”[4]The United States brought to the WW 2 more than many other country, and even more important, the United States were able to sustain that battle rhythm and to finish the WW 2, along with their allies as victorious. From the other side, conflicts in Korea and Vietnam showed that “ the awesome destructive power”[5]was not enough to achieve success, so after those two conflicts the United States Army started with the process of “ rebuilding the broken army”[6]examining the reasons of failure in those two conflicts and drawing lessons learned from them in order to improve negative sides and to sustain those good sides. After those two conflicts the morale, discipline and readiness of the US Army were lower and even worse than at any time in 20

th Century and probably in the history of the United States Army. The Army leadership started with training and doctrinal reform and finally the adaptation of Field Manual 100-5 Operations, during 1976 was some kind of wake-up call for the Army. Even though the FM was widely criticized it brought the fundamental change in the way how army should see itself in a fight, in addition, the FM was a transition step that opened an intellectual dialogue across the Army.[7] Later on this FM was revised in 1982 and 1986 introducing and refining the Air Land Battle and soon after this concept will be proven during the Desert Storm campaign.

Operation “ Desert Storm” was turning moment and can be used as a first example how the United States developed an American way of war based on technology, an air power, usage of precisely guided ammunition (PGA), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), SOF and combined arms maneuver along with other enablers in order to defeat adversary forces for a short period of time and to achieve decisive victory. This operation was pure combination of combined arms maneuver supported by an air, maritime, and ground fire power, and can be connected to the traditional, firepower-intensive mode widely used during WW 2. The ground operation started with massive armored assault, after more than five weeks of precise bombing from air, land and sea guided by Special Operations Forces. During this operation the US Army adopted and proved the American Way of War, seeking a victory while having minimal casualties. The characteristics of new way of war were: speed, maneuver, flexibility, and surprise, supported by precision firepower, SOF, and psychological operations. The integration of air, ground and naval

power into one synchronized matrix was more successful than the most optimistic predictions.[8]

Operation “ Enduring Freedom” is second example to explain the United States, or American way of war, based and highly dependent on technology, an air power, PGA, UAV, SOF, combined arms maneuver, and other critical enablers such as sustainment which is required for successful conduct of war. Also this operation showed ability to conduct the combined arms maneuver and to sustain operations in hostile environment such as terrain, extreme temperatures and poor infrastructure. Carefully examining terrain and the experience of the USSR during invasion of Afghanistan, the US Army did not fail into the same trap pouring ground forces into the country, and instead of making the same mistake, the US Army decided to fight with the Special Operation Forces and massive usage of precision guided-ammunition. Additionally, the SOF established connection with the Northern Alliance and provided support to fight Taliban regime. After two months of fighting Taliban regime collapsed and operation Enduring Freedom succeed. From the other side, small amount of ground forces at the beginning of operation could not cover escape routes from Afghanistan, and Osama bin Laden escaped Afghanistan with other top terrorists.[9]

The operation “ Iraqi Freedom” was even more successful comparing with war in Afghanistan, and during this operation the United States Army, together with coalition forces, conducted truly combined-arms operation. Comparing the numbers, Coalition forces deployed less than half size of units deployed during operation “ Desert Storm”, anyway, it did not stop them to conquer al entire Iraq for a very short period of time with one-third of

casualties and one-fourth the cost comparing with the first operation. One more time the United States Army demonstrated ability to incorporate an air, sea and ground fire-power with combination of surgical strikes guided and conducted by Special Operation Forces in order to shape the battlefield for major operation. The Iraqi Forces deployed more than 450, 000 troops in order to defend Iraq, it was not enough not only to slow down, but also to stop advance of Coalition Forces led by the United States Army. Doctrinally, the attacking forces must have 3 to 1 force ratio to be successful, and if operation is conducted in difficult terrain or urban areas, the ratio goes up to 6 to 1 force ratio. In this case the Coalition forces had more than 3 to 1 disadvantage in numbers, anyway it did not stop them to achieve remarkable victory in a very short period of time. One more time the United States Army proved that the combined arms maneuver, supported with all the available enablers, is if not the only way, than definitely one among few possible ways how to conduct future military operations regardless the scale of operations, units and enablers.[10]

Conclusion:

After WW 2, the United States of America conducted several military operations and limited wars from Korea to Afghanistan and Iraq, and over the time has developed distinguished way of war based and highly dependent on technology and other enablers such us: air, naval and ground support discussed in this essay. Additionally, the United States Army uses every opportunity to analyze and conduct an after action reviews in order to derive lessons learned and to improve conduct of military operations. Also,

ability to sustain military operations, regardless of time, differentiate an American way of war from other nations and their armed forces.

So what:

As LtC Steed described definition of winning as: “winning is enhancing or improving interests and influence.”[11]The only thing, or “Big So What” from this essay that I will take away is: The United States Army in case of war can bring to bear more than other countries can dream about. I would argue that having the United States of America as a true partner and friend can be really beneficial, especially for smaller countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. We already gained a lot benefits having The United States as friend and partner and hope to improve and strengthen our relationship in the near future. At the end I would like to mention that the World would be different without presence of The United States as leader in a free democratic world.

References:

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2003-07-01/new-american-way-war>

2 Ibid

3 H307 Rebuilding a Broken army, reading H307RA, The Collapse of the Armed Forces, by Robert D. Heinl Jr.

4 H307 Rebuilding a Broken army, reading H307RB, The Post-Vietnam Army, by Robert H. Scales

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11LtC Steed, H308 The past and prologue, March 14, 2017

[1]AN AMERICAN WAY OF WAR OR WAY OF BATTLE? Compiled by LTC Antulio J. Echevarria II, page 1

[2]Toward an American Way of War, Antulio J. Echevarria II, page 9 (PDF file)

[3]Ibid, page 10

[4]<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2003-07-01/new-american-way-war>

[5]Ibid

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[11]LtC Steed, H308 The past and prologue, March 14, 2017