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The Importance and Anxiety of the American Way of War

The main objective of this article is an analysis of the American way of war concept, its specifics and also its basic elements. The first part of the article concentrates on the discussion of how this conception originated and evolved due the course of time, how it effects present the USA defense and foreign policy and also how it has influenced it in the past. In the second part of the article the author attempts to analyze what possible impact to the process of NATO transformation this American way of war may have. Finally, in the last part of this article, the author attempts to find out the possible effects of the American way of war on Lithuania's defense policy.

Introduction

Lithuania, being a member of NATO and active participant in various military missions, is catching up at a fast tempo to other Western countries. Politicians, and military often, speak about a transformation, new military technologies (for example the UAV), new military doctrines and tactics¹. The appearance of such discussions and practical solutions is very positive. Being a young country, Lithuania, after the restoration of the independence, created the armed forces and a system of military defense from the scratch. However, the idea of creating a large standing army, domination of the idea about territorial defense, had more resemblance with western armed forces of the Cold war period than with the new type of armed forces that were now beginning to emerge in the West. Western countries, in different temps, started transforming their armies into smaller, more professional armed forces. In Lithuania, these changes that were occurring in the West attracted more attention when it became clear that without new reforms, the successful integration into structures of the NATO will be difficult. These theoretical and political discussions

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¹ When experts of defence, military policy and politicians speak about “transformation” they have in mind military reforms which were started because of technological, geopolitical changes and etc. Americans were the first who started using this conception. Eventually this expression became very fashionable. By using it states purportedly show, that they are following new “trends” in military sphere. Now almost every Western country tries to define its military reform as transformation.

in the West about new threats and new type of weapons, the armed forces step by step attracted the attention of Lithuanian politicians, civilian servants, and soldiers. However, the process of adaptation to all of these changes with Lithuania's needs is quiet difficult.

The attempt to follow the new "military trends" is a very positive thing. However we do not have a clear understanding why some of the concepts, doctrines, and technologies prevail and dominate? Without the intention of downplaying the qualifications and achievements of the people working in the Ministry of Defense and serving in the armed forces, it is important to make one remark: we do not have a tradition of critical assessment and understanding of these global "military trends"². In many cases, particular decisions are made because NATO, the USA, and or other countries are doing this. But not everything that suits the USA or Sweden is suitable for Lithuania. The USA dictates "military trends" in the world, but we must try to understand why Washington is taking these particular actions. An understanding of the US military policy, and its traditions may help us to find out what is useful for Lithuania and what is not.

1. The American Way of War

The United States, being the biggest military power in the world, dictates trends in warfare. All countries in one way or another are trying to copy the USA. If we take a look at history we will see many similar examples, for instance: in XVII century everybody copied Sweden and France; in early XIX century – Napoleonic style of fighting; after 1871 – Germany; and etc. New weapons and also military formations were the most popular things which were copied. However it is important to notice that copying of all technical issues was and still remains an easy task, but to copy or understand the "spirit" and conditions of these changes is not very easy. Every military power had and still has specific fighting traditions, or "ways of war"³.

² In Lithuania only a small group of scholars and experts are doing research about war studies and the related disciplines (strategic studies, military sociology, history of military thought, terrorism studies and etc.): T. Jermalavičius, J. Novagrockienė, K. Paulauskas, E. Račius, M. Šešelgytė, V. Urbelis and some other scholars. The Lithuanian officers also pay little attention to theoretical discussions about military issues. There of course are some exceptions, for example col. G. Zenkevičius.

³ In a broader sense scholars are talking about the western way of war. Its main specific features are discipline, importance of the technologies and etc. Also scholars speak about the British and German ways of war and etc. Military historians till now argue about the British way of war, but they agree that it is a combination of economical pressure, blockade, combined missions on land and sea, and experience which was got policing colonies. The main feature of the German way of war is short, mobile war, trying to annihilate enemy in the battlefield using surprise and maneuver. French D., *The British way in warfare 1688-2000.*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990; Howard, M., "The British Way in Warfare: A Reappraisal", Howard M., (ed.), *The causes of wars and other essays*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983; Strachan H., "The British Way in Warfare", Chandler D., (ed.), *The Oxford history of the British Army*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; Citino R. M., *The German way of war: from the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.

1.1. R. F. Weigley's Conception of American Way of War

Scholars and military men tirelessly argue which elements and features define the American way of war best. However they all agree that such a tradition exists and that it has influenced the way of American fighting since the creation of the state up to present days. The father of this conception is American military historian Russell F. Weigley. In his book *The American Way of War: a History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* he formulated the main features of this tradition⁴.

In his historical analysis, Weigley was using ideas of Hans Delbrück, a prominent German historian. In his research regarding military history since ancient times till Napoleonic wars, this German scholar made conclusion that during all periods there existed two types of warfare. According to him, "the first and most important principle of all strategies is to assemble the army, find the main army of the enemy, and annihilate it in the battle and pursuit enemy until he will agree to make a peace"⁵. This way of fighting he named the "strategy of annihilation". The main purpose of such a strategy is a battle in which the army of the enemy is destroyed.

However results of his historical analysis showed, that the battle did not always mean the end of the war. Delbrück made a conclusion that there exist another way of war – strategy of attrition/exhaustion⁶. The essence of such fighting is a constant wearing down of the enemy – destroying his food, ammunition supplies, dissolving his lines of communication and logistics, and also annihilating detached military units⁷. But this second strategy is not neither a mere variation of the first nor, an inferior form; both strategies are equal⁸.

While performing his research, Weigley interpreted the military history of United States using these two concepts of strategies. He simply looked at which of them was used more often. His conclusion was strict and unambiguous – the essence of American way of war is a strategy of annihilation. In his book he concludes that "at the beginning (War of Independence – D.Š.), when American military resources were still slight, America made a promising beginning with the nurturing of strategists of attrition; but the wealth of the country [...] cut that development (attrition warfare – D. Š.) short, until the strategy of annihilation became characteristically the American way of war"⁹. Afterwards Weigley expressed some doubts that he interpreted complex and interesting military history of the USA using only two conceptions. But he never decli-

⁴ Weigley, R. F., *The American way of war: a history of United States military strategy and policy*, New York: Macmillan, 1973.

⁵ Delbrück H., *History of the Art of War*; vol. 4, trans. Walter J. Renfro. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990, p. 293.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁷ A classical example of such a strategy is the Napoleonic Russian campaign in 1812, when Russians tried to avoid climatic battle and by all possible means tried to exhaust the French army.

⁸ Craig G. A., „Delbrück: The Military Historian“, Paret P., (ed.), *Makers of modern strategy from Machiavelli to the nuclear age*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1984, p. 342.

⁹ Weigley, xxii.

ned his idea that Americans look for the solution in the war by annihilating a hostile army¹⁰. It might look strange when somebody speaks about fighting war without battles. Still, history is full of examples, when both opposing sides reached their war goals without battle¹¹. It is important to keep in mind that when Weigley speaks about the domination of annihilation strategy, what he wants to say is that for Americans victory at the battle is equal with the victory at the war. Americans disregarded the advantages that the fighting side can get from popular resistance or by diplomacy.

1.2. A. H. Jomini vs C. von Clausewitz

Weigley explaining why the strategy of annihilation became dominant in America and gives a simple answer by naming one person – Antoine-Henri Jomini. Those, who are not familiar with USA military history (which sometimes very much contradicts the public image and stereotypes of the American armed forces) may be surprised that ideas of the Jomini are more important for American military and strategic thought than Carl von Clausewitz¹². According to Colin S. Gray, “the true parent of American thinking on national security is Jomini, not Clausewitz. [...] his quest for certainty and his obsession with reducing the complex and ambiguous to a few apparently simple principles has also characterized American military thought and practice”¹³. This small nuance has very important and far reaching consequences. In every book of international relations, security or military studies you can find a chapter where it is stated that Clausewitz is the most influential strategic and military thinker. But the most powerful country of the present day – the United States – pays more attention to the ideas of Jomini, than Clausewitz. This means that the American approach to the strategy and military issues differs from the outlook of other countries. In his book Weigley convincingly shows how in the USA, Jomini became more popular than Clausewitz.

¹⁰ Linn B. M., “The American Way of War Revisited“ with a response by Russell F. Weigley, *The Journal of Military History* 66 (April 2002), p. 501-533.

¹¹ XVIII century is a classical period when states during the wars were avoiding battles. The military leaders preferred long marches, maneuvers and sieges. Reluctances to fight battle were mostly related with a possible loss of soldiers. At that time soldiers were the biggest “luxury” which states could afford and because of that nobody wanted to lose everything in one battle.

¹² Both authors were writing at same time. Both were using Napoleonic wars as departure point for their theories. They thought that these wars were proof that warfare is radically changing. Because they both were influenced by Napoleonic era their writings and ideas in many places were very similar. The fundamental difference between them was that Jomini was more interested in warfare. He tried to find universal principles of war. His ideas were influenced by ideas of Enlightenment thinkers. Especially it is obvious from his inclination to use geometry and mathematical methods. Clausewitz on the contrary was very skeptical about all these attempts to explain war with help of mathematical methods. He analyzed war not as isolated phenomenon but as related to other social activities especially with politics.

¹³ Gray C. S., „Strategy in the nuclear age: The United States, 1945-1991“, Murray W., Knox M., Bernstein A., (ed.), *The making of strategy: rulers, states, and war*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 592.

The USA's first years of independence almost coincided with the Great French revolution. Then, Americans copied Europeans in all spheres, including the military. At that time European warfare was dominated by Napoleonic ideas, whose essence was climatic battle where the hostile army is annihilated. Napoleonic wars were the basis of the Jominian military thought. Napoleon himself expressed positive remarks about the works of the Jomini. All this made the ideas of Jomini very popular in Europe. The essence of his military theory is the principle of massed armed forces which concentrates all its power and attacks the enemy at the decisive point¹⁴. Simply speaking – Jomini was an advocate of offensive war. Also in his theory he paid a lot of attention to the logistical issues, because without a good logistical system, it is impossible to concentrate and supply mass armed forces¹⁵.

The works of Jomini for very long time were one of the basic textbooks in the US West Point Military Academy, where future military leaders of US were taught. The American Civil war is considered as a best example how Americans put ideas of Jomini into the practice¹⁶. After this war his ideas not only preserved its popularity, but were also applied to naval warfare. This shift was done by Alfred T. Mahan. According to him, the main objective of the navy was destruction of a hostile navy. Only by the destruction of the enemy's battleships, the dominance in the seas could be reached¹⁷.

The existence of the principles of war is another example of the Jominian influence on US military policy. These principles were created by Americans during the interwar period. The main purpose of these principles is to ease the job of officers and soldiers by giving them simple, short and exact guidelines for fighting. In the US Army's *Field Manual FM3-0, Operations*, released in 2001, the principles of war are listed as such: mass of forces, clearly defined objective, offensive, surprise, economy of force and etc.¹⁸.

It is also important to say that Americans were familiar with the ideas of Clausewitz. However he became a military icon only in the second part of XIX century. His style comparing with Jomini was more complex and more philosophical. Because of that his ideas were constantly misunderstood and misinterpreted. More over, in many places, his ideas were similar to ideas of Jomini. Clausewitz in his book, more than once speaks about the importance of the battle, concentration of the armed forces, attacking the decisive point and

¹⁴Jomini A. H., *The art of war*, London: Greenhill Books; Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1996.

¹⁵ American logistical system always was and still is regarded as the best in the world. According to C. S. Gray, for Americans logistics is one of few elements which helped to conquer vast distances of America and to settle in. Thanks to logistics, settlers could get ammunition, food supplies on time and in many cases it saved their lives. (Murray, *The making of strategy: rulers, states, and war*, p. 590). All this might be one the reasons why Americans liked ideas of Jomini. In his books he always paid a lot of attention to the problems of logistics.

¹⁶Weigley, p. 92-192.

¹⁷ Mahan, A. T., *The influence of sea power upon history, 1660-1783*, London: Sampson Low, Marston & co, 1890.

¹⁸ US Army, *Field Manual FM 3-0, Operations*, 2001. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/3-0/index.html>> 25 08 2007.

etc.¹⁹. This superficial similarity of the ideas gave an impression that Clausewitz was not proposing anything new when comparing with Jomini.

There were periods when the idea of Clausewitz attracted the attention of the American officers. He especially became very popular after the Vietnam war²⁰. But these zests of popularity were temporary. After the First Gulf war, when everybody started talking about the Revolution in military affairs (RMA), there were discussions that time of the fact that the C. von Clausewitz ideas have passed. New military technologies, computers and other hi-tech stuff will help to lift the fog of war²¹.

Clausewitz ideas about the friction forces led Americans to feel themselves very uncomfortable²². The idea that the best, ideal plan always will be disrupted because of unknown factors is not very exhilarating for Americans. They think that new technologies: computers, space satellites, communication systems help to eliminate lack of information about enemy's movements and etc. Reading articles of the American scholars and officers, you may get an impression that they are obsessed with the idea, that friction might be eliminated²³. In some cases it possible to find quiet radical proposals. Someone is speaking about using various drugs, which could help overcome fatigue, hunger, pain and etc. There are also serious debates about creating a cyborg-warrior²⁴. Also the US government spends a lot of money for armed forces robotization programmes²⁵. All in all these are attempts to find the way to control men's behavior in the battlefield trying to eliminate friction.

1.3. Other Interpretations of American Way of War

The Weigley's interpretation of the American way of war got enough criticism. Even the author acknowledge that some critics points were correct.

¹⁹ Clausewitz C. von, *On War*: edited and translated by Howard M. and Paret P., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 204.

²⁰ After retreat from Vietnam, the US military tried to understand why they lost in Vietnam. At that COL H. Summers, referring to the ideas of Clausewitz wrote a book about the failure in Vietnam. This book became very popular and very influential among military. The main conclusion of this book is that military was tool of politicians and it is important to strengthen ties with them. Only in such way it will be possible to avoid the adoption of the decisions which in military sense are unrealistic. Summers H. G., *On strategy: a critical analysis of the Vietnam War*, New York: Dell, 1984.

²¹ In one of his article W. Murray very precisely and clearly shows how the US military treats and uses ideas of C. von Clausewitz. Murray W., "Clausewitz out, computer in: Military Culture and Technological Hubris", *The National Interest*. June 01, 1997

²² Clausewitz, 104.

²³ Adam T.K., "Future Warfare and the Decline of Human Decisionmaking". *Parameters*. Winter 2001-02, 61. <<http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/01winter/adams.htm>> 04 10 2007; Watts B. D., *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War*, Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies of National Defense University, 2000, 23. <<http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/Watts2/FrictionTOC.htm>> 13 10 2007; Owens W. A., Offley E., *Lifting the Fog of War*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

²⁴ Gray Ch. H., *Postmodern war: the new politics of conflict*, London: Routledge, 1997.

²⁵ Graham S., "America's robot army". *New Statesman*, Monday 12th June 2006.

Mostly he was criticized for oversimplification of US military history, and ignoring some important issues²⁶. Also he was attacked because of inaccuracy of some historical facts and events. However, despite all complaints, the idea of American way of war, that Americans have specific fighting tradition, remained unchallenged. Very soon other scholars started searching and writing about the American way of war. Some of them stated that American warfare is distinct because they consider that fire is much more important than maneuver²⁷. Other's emphasized almost fanatical American belief that new technologies might win the wars²⁸.

Max Boot in some way is the biggest critic of Weigley. He proposed different ideas of the American way of war. According to Boot, Weigley in his book exclusively speaks about conventional, large scale wars. However, Boot says that the US also has another, old military tradition. Since the creation of the state, Americans continuously till nowadays were fighting small wars all over the world. Some of these wars were merely small missions, boarding small units into the shore, but some of them lasted for years²⁹. In his book Boot sets the history of the wars and missions conducted by Navy and marines in Latin America, Pacific, Asia, and Europe. According to him, in many cases, the American society knew little about these missions and achievements of their soldiers. Society at that time was more interested and eagerly read about life of celebrities than about soldiers, fighting hundreds kilometers from their Homeland. The name of these wars as "forgotten wars" appeared not accidentally. However, having in mind, how often these small wars were fought it is quiet reasonable to ask the question – are conventional, big wars is a rule or exception from long American military history?

The experience and lessons which US soldiers, especially marines got in all these small wars looking from today's perspective are very important. During all these conflicts American soldiers were doing the same thing that they are doing right now in Iraq, Afghanistan – state building, peacekeeping, stabilization missions and even fighting Islamic insurgents (in Philippines)³⁰. However the history of all these small wars has darker side – almost in all cases, after the American soldiers went home in all countries stability did not

²⁶ Linn.

²⁷ Scales R. H., Jr., *Yellow smoke: the future of land warfare for America's military*, Lanham, Md.; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.

²⁸ Boot M., "The New American Way of War", *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 82, No. 4, July/August 2003, p. 41-58; Cebrowski A. K., Barnett T. P. M., „The American Way of War“, *Transformation Trends*, January 13, 2003; Cheney D., *A New American Way of War*, speech for Heritage Foundation, May 1, 2003.

²⁹ Boot M., *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 2002.

³⁰ It could be possible to discuss the means and ways which were used at the beginning of the XX century are suitable for contemporary times. Probably the best answer could be the *Small wars manual* which is used by US Marines Corps. This manual was composed in 1940, but until now is considered the best manual about unconventional warfare. *Small Wars Manual*, United States Marine Corps, 1940. <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/swm/index.htm>> 15 10 2007.

last very long. One of the reasons why this happened was because all the work of stabilization was done by the military alone; other US government institutions were not interested in participation³¹. That's why American soldiers were forced to come back to the countries (especially in Latin America) which they left few years ago and stabilize the situation again. According to Antullio Echevarria, all this does not deny the theory of Weigley, but on the contrary – supplements it. Both theories agree on one thing: “the American way of war tends to shy away from thinking about the complicated process of turning military triumphs, whether on the scale of major campaigns or small-unit actions, into strategic successes”³².

1.4. The Way of Battle

Echevarria even takes a more radical step than Weigley. Echevarria in one of his articles says that the US till this day does not have its own way of war. All events about which wrote Weigley and other scholars is about the American way of battle, not war. Echevarria says that Weigley was right by saying that Americans always understood war as battle³³. Americans, not unlike many their European counterparts, “considered war an alternative to bargaining, rather than part of an ongoing bargaining process”³⁴.

By introducing his conception Echevarria debates about the American way of war puts in the context of a broader theoretical discussion about relations between two similar and at the same time different phenomenon – war and warfare. These two concepts very often are mixed into one or used as synonyms. One of the reasons of such situation might be the dominant public war image as fight or battle. For the people war firstly is a battle, heroic death during the fighting. Sometimes it is even possible to hear talks, that because there were not battles, the conflict can not be seen as war. However the history is full of examples, when wars were fought without battles³⁵.

The concepts of war and warfare are not equal. War is not only warfare, rude fighting. It is also legal concept, social phenomenon. War also is preparation for the fighting and living after struggle ends. Warfare is only one stage of the war, during which the bloodshed occurs. States and other political entities wage “warfare in order to prosecute their wars”³⁶. According to Gray, Napoleon and German generals in both world wars showed real mastery in the fields of fighting, but it

³¹ Echevarria II A. J., *Toward an American Way of War*. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004, p. 6. <<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB374.pdf>> 10 07 2007.

³² Echevarria, p. 7.

³³ The idea of job division, which is very advocated by US, confirms this notion. According to Americans, the US will do breaking and entering, which means use of armed forces, and after that Europeans will conduct stabilization operations.

³⁴ Echevarria, p. 1.

³⁵ In this case, the battle is understood as climatic struggle (Borodin, Austerlitz), but not as small encounters, skirmishes.

³⁶ Gray C. S., *War, peace and international relations: an introduction to strategic history*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 6.

did not help win the wars because victory in the battle does not mean the victory in the war³⁷. It is worth remembering the words of Clausewitz that “war is thus an act to compel our enemy to do our will”³⁸. Fighting is very important, but there are other war tools also. The victory in the battlefield might be transformed into victory in the war. But to do that you must have skills in strategic thinking³⁹.

As was mentioned earlier, according to Echevarria, Americans lack this capability to transform tactical success into strategic. The cases such as that of the Vietnam war and contemporary operations in Iraq, and also Afghanistan are good examples of this. Military victories in these operations were not transformed into strategic success.

Other issues also demonstrate that Americans are not very eager to acknowledge that warfare does not equal war. For example, Americans have very interesting conception -military operations other than war⁴⁰. The idea, that military operations such as peacekeeping, and state building are not part of the war only confirms the idea that Americans understand war as warfare.

1.5. The Experience of Other Nations

This notion of the “American way of battle” becomes clearer when it is compared with military traditions of other countries and regions. The British way of war, compared with its American counterpart is more complex. Brits since the times of Elizabeth I were using various tools of war: warfare on land and sea, economical pressure by capturing enemy’s ships with gold, plundering its colonies⁴¹. The tracks of this tradition are easy to find till the beginning of the First World War. Another specific feature of the British military tradition is related to the expansion and control of its Empire. Trying to preserve their control and power in the colonies, the British had to fight many small wars. It is not so difficult to find many resemblances with these Victorian wars and small wars of US. However, the British, differently than Americans, paid much more attention to this experience and used it in fighting conventional wars⁴². The British theory of war has been “Eurocentric, but the practice has not”⁴³. All this means that while politicians, soldiers, scholars were speaking about wars which United Kingdom fought in Europe, its actual fighting experience came

³⁷ In his book H. Summers remembers conversation with Vietnamese colonel. During this conversation H. Summers told that Vietcong never defeated American soldiers. The Vietnamese colonel agreed with that, but according to him, all this was irrelevant because North Vietnam won. Summers, p. 1.

³⁸ Clausewitz, p. 75.

³⁹ Gray, p. 7.

⁴⁰ This group of missions includes missions of peace keeping, peace enforcement, arms control and etc.

⁴¹ Howard, p. 172.

⁴² For example, the British officer in 1896 published book “Small wars” which till nowadays is one of the best theoretical books about such kind of wars. Callwell C. E., *Small war: a tactical textbook for imperial soldiers*, London: Greenhill Books/Lionel Leventhal, 1990.

⁴³ Strachan, p. 405.

from patrolling missions in colonies. During these “small wars” the British soldiers got a lot of experience as to how to conduct psychological, and also economical operations and how to work with civilians. This tradition of small wars was continued during the cold war: the process of decolonization, and the upheaval in Northern Ireland. Officers with knowledge and experience of such kind warfare even today hold high positions in UK military structures, contrary to the USA⁴⁴. The British way of war is more complex and sophisticated.

Similar conclusions might be said about French military tradition. French, despite inheritance of Napoleonic military tradition, have a lot of experience fighting unconventional warfare. Like the British, the French got this experience by fighting many colonial wars in their empire.

Some defense experts and scholars even started to speak about the European way of war, which is a synthesis of British, French, and German military traditions⁴⁵. The main feature of this European way of war is experience and knowledge in conducting stabilization, peacekeeping, and counterterrorist missions⁴⁶. Mostly it is such type of missions which was ignored by Americans for a very long time. Also missions of such a kind demand very close cooperation between military and civilians.

In conclusion it might be said that the European approach to war is more complex than the American. For them war is not only fighting. However, Boot showed that Americans also have tradition of fighting small, unconventional wars. However looking from a nowadays perspective, it seems that Americans failed to use the experience, which they gained in these wars. It seems, that examples, which were presented by Boot are excellent test papers, which help to identify one more specific feature of American character. According to scholars, this feature has a huge impact as to the way how America conducts foreign and military policy.

1.6. Indifference to History

The examples, given by Boot, contradicts dominant opinion, many time expressed by high ranking officers, that the real and only American military tradition is fighting conventional, big wars. Also it seems strange, that Americans, having such experience in fighting small wars have so many problems in Iraq and Afghanistan. Journals and newspapers are full of amazements and questions how Washington managed to repeat the mistakes of the Vietnam war. Gray and some other scholars propose one, quiet interesting and solid explanation why such things are happening. They think that the answer to question lies in the American attitude toward history.

⁴⁴ Strachan, p. 406; Cassidy R. M., „The British Army and Counterinsurgency: The Salience of Military Culture“, *Military review*, May -June 2005, p. 53-59.

⁴⁵ Everts S., Freedman L., Grant Ch., Heisbourg F., Keohane D., O’Hanlon M., Eds., *European Way of War*, London: Centre for European Reform. 2004.

⁴⁶ Everts, p. 2, 25.

According to Gray, “[...] to some extent in practice United States is still the New World. The study of history is not popular in the United States. [...]. History and historical experience suffer an equal lack of respect from Americans. The United States is not only indifferent to historical experience – its culture is actively anti-historical. [...] each new policy review tackles the future boldly and rediscovers the obvious, committing old errors in new ways”⁴⁷. It is a well known American believe that they are a God’s chosen nation and that they beliefs and virtues must be taken by other nations. The nation of chosen people has not to look to the past, because its actions and policy are correct and right. The most important thing is future, not past.

It is not difficult to find examples which show how such attitudes influence US foreign and defense policy. Present president of the United States George W. Bush, on many occasions spoke about the necessity to expand democratic ideas in the world. Many could argue that such speeches are only camouflage of real, imperialistic American policy which is dictated by ideas based on geopolitical and realpolitik interests. All these arguments are very reasonable, but it is also important to have in mind one important thing. It is really possible, that when George W. Bush and other politicians spooked and still are speaking about expansion of democratic ideas they really believe that Americans are chosen nation which must fulfill its destiny⁴⁸.

Many social researches confirm the words of Gray. Nowadays in American schools and universities the attention to the education of history is below the required minimum. The surveys of schoolchildren and students showed that most of them do not know simple facts from the US history, not to mention knowledge about history of other countries and regions⁴⁹. One of the researches states that “As we move forward into the 21st century, our future leaders are graduating with an alarming ignorance of their heritage”⁵⁰.

The dominant public attitudes by no doubt are reflected in the US

⁴⁷ Gray, *Strategy ins the nuclear age: The United States, 1945-1991*, p. 592

⁴⁸ But it does not mean that fulfilling the God’s will the US have not use aggressive politics. On the contrary – in many cases it is necessity. Robert Kagan in his last book tries to prove that Americans since colonial times were an aggressive nation, which very eagerly used military means to achieve set goals. And the religion in all these matters played very important role. Kagan R., *Dangerous Nation: America in the World 1600-1900*, New York: Atlantic Books, 2006. Walter Russel Mead in his publications analyzes relations between religion and U.S. foreign policy. Mead W. R., *Special providence: American foreign policy and how it changed the world*, New York: Knopf, 2001; W. R. Mead, „God’s country?“, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2006.

⁴⁹ Stern Sh. M., *Effective State Standards for U.S. History: A 2003 Report Card*, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003 September. <<http://www.fordhaminstitute.org/institute/publication/publication.cfm?id=320>> 18 10 2007; Martin J. L., *Losing America’s Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century*, American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2000. <<http://www.goacta.org/publications/reports.html>> 18 10 2007. The seriousness of this issue confirms the fact, that U.S. Senate in 2000 issued resolution where the Senate expresses concerns and urge to take immediate measures and eliminate deficiencies in the education of history. S. CON. RES. 129, Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the importance and value of education in United States history, June 30, 2000. <<http://www.goacta.org/publications/Reports/congressres.htm>> 18 10 2007.

⁵⁰ Martin, p. 2.

military education system. According by military experts and military men situation of the studies of history in military colleges, academies are not very optimistic. During the last 50-60 years the attitude to history in American military education institutions radically changed at least three times. After the end of Second World War history was one of the most important courses in studies curriculum. However in 1950s and 1960s, because of dominant position of positivistic ideas in social sciences, appearance of nuclear weapon, more attention was given to studying management, system analyzes. Studies of history almost disappeared from curricula⁵¹. The situation again changed after the Vietnam war, when military men started asking themselves why they lost in Vietnam. And they were looking for answers in the past. History, especially military history suddenly became one of the most important courses during all studies. However, according to scholars and officers, after the First Gulf war the situation again started changing. Belief that new military technologies will help win the future wars once again put the history into the corner⁵². It was asked – what is the purpose to look at the past, if new technologies will change the character of warfare irreversibly. Ironically, it seems that American soldiers have not learned from history and started repeating mistakes of the Vietnam war. It seems that attitude to the importance of history changes with every new generation of officers. Such frequent swinging of the attitude is not helping American soldiers to learn from history and mistakes, done in the past.

If we will try to look closer at the present US defense policy, dominant military ideas and theories we could find many examples which confirm the notion that Americans lack historical understanding. The “forgotten wars” of Boot and experience which they brought today are discovered anew⁵³. In such context the expression “forgotten wars” does not seem very comical, but is very good illustration, how Americans treat history and how it influence practical policy⁵⁴.

Reluctance and incompetence to learn from mistakes of the past is one of the reasons why the strategy of annihilation still dominates in the US defense policy and military tradition. Because they pay little attention to history, US

⁵¹ Sinnreich R. H., „Awkward partners: military history and American education“, cited from Murray W. and Sinnreich R. H., ed., *The past as prologue: the importance of history to the military profession*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 58-59.

⁵² Van Riper P. K., “The relevance of history to the military profession: an American Marine’s view“, cited from Murray W. ir Sinnreich R. H., ed., *The past as prologue: the importance of history to the military profession*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 52-53.

⁵³ There is also one more reason why the lessons of these small wars were ignored. In almost all these wars and missions participated only Marines, which for very long time were disliked by other military services, especially by Army. The competition between branches of armed forces is not unique, but in U.S. it has very deep historical roots.

⁵⁴ Powell doctrine is one of the best examples, which shows how tradition of “small wars” is neglected in the Washington. This doctrine is one of the most important “products” of the U.S. defense policy in the last two decades. Its essence is that United States will take actions in such military conflicts which are vital for the national security of U.S, have clear goals and objects, where exists plausible exit strategy and etc. Simply saying U.S. will participate only in the big scale military actions and will take actions only in the fights (battles). Powell C. L., “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead“, *Foreign Affairs*. 1992 Winter.

military has a poor understanding about existing alternatives to the strategy of annihilation. It seems, that words, which were said hundred years ago by President Theodore Roosevelt, that “Americans learn only from catastrophes and not from experience” are still valid⁵⁵.

1.7. Revolution in Military Affairs

Assessing trends which at the present time prevail in US military, Echevarria makes a conclusion that Washington continues to treat war as “battle”. According to him, the idea of “revolution in military affairs” (RMA) or transformation is the best proof of this trend⁵⁶.

Over the last two decades the US military and security community without a break is discussing the importance of RMA. Precise guiding munitions, smart bombs, UAV, computerization of military sphere, virtualization, doctrine of network centric warfare, space satellites and etc. All this, according to experts, officers and politicians, brings radical changes in the military field. The speed becomes the most decisive element of war – information is collected, analyzed, and transferred to the battle field and orders are executed at tremendous speed. Consequently contemporary armed forces must be mobile, small, agile, and easily deployable. To reach all these tasks will be more easily if there could be joint armed forces⁵⁷. All this is the core of all present discussion in the large defense community. Experts are arguing about different aspects, nuances, but they all in principle agree that RMA really is happening. Even more, some of them are saying, that because of achievements in the fields of biosciences, nanotechnologies we are approaching another RMA.

However if we will look to all these changes from the angle of tradition of the American way of war we possibly could tell that new achievements are not changing this tradition, but enhances it. According to retired General A. Zinni, “the U. S. military is becoming more efficient at killing and breaking”⁵⁸. All these new capabilities, weapons, doctrines make American armed forces almost invincible in the battlefield, but not in the war. It seems that last 18 years American political and military bureaucracies put all their energy and attention to the questions, which give the answers as to how to win in the battlefield, but not how to make these tactical victories into success in the war. Even despite clear lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan it is very difficult to imagine, that Americans suddenly will change their attitude.

⁵⁵ Roosevelt T., *Theodore Roosevelt: an autobiography*, New York: Da Capo, 1985, p. 204.

⁵⁶ Echevarria, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Cebrowski A. K., and John Garstka J., „Network-Centric Warfare: Its Origin and Future“, *Naval Institute Proceedings Magazine*, 1998, January. <<http://www.usni.org/Proceedings/Articles98/PROcebrowski.htm>> 10 07 2007; Murray W., „Thinking About Revolutions in Military Affairs“, *Joint Force Quarterly*, 16, Summer 1997, 69-76. <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1416pgs.pdf> 28 08 2007; Edwards S. J. A., *Swarming on the Battlefield: Past, Present, and Future*. RAND, 2000. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1100/index.html> 20 08 2007.

⁵⁸ Echevarria, p. 10.

From all this, what was said one conclusion might be formulated – the American way of war till this day is way of battle, not war⁵⁹. Even more, this tradition is spreading around the world, because other countries are copying the American military transformation and are also are copying their fighting tradition⁶⁰.

2. American Military Tradition and Transformation of NATO

The transformation of NATO is one of the examples showing how the American notion about war, warfare are transferred and adopted in other places of the world. The definition of military reform as transformation is sufficient proof, showing what country NATO regards as example.

The story of NATO transformation started in November of 2002 in the Prague summit. In the declaration of this summit it was stated that leaders of NATO countries agreed to create NATO Response Forces (NRF), transform the structure headquarters⁶¹. The biggest pushers to start the process of transformation in NATO were Americans. They were worried, that European allies were lacking far behind in developing new military capabilities. Such situation threatened future military cooperation between Americans and Europeans. Therefore the US proposed to start a transformation process hoping that it will help European countries to close existing gap between allies.

NRF are considered as the axis and catalyst of the transformation process inside the NATO. The Prague Summit Declaration stated that NRF will be forces “consisting of a technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed, as decided by the Council”⁶². Practically all this might be interpreted as Washington’s encouragement trying to persuade European countries to transform their armed forces following American example. Because without changes in the national armed forces it is quite difficult to imagine that any changes may occur on NATO level.

The NATO transformation is not only changes in the structure of armed forces, creation of new military units and etc. It is also a means, that it forces changes in the field of military thought, military doctrine and tactics. Like in

⁵⁹It is important to say, that the defense community in the US is very big and there are circulating a lot of different ideas and opinions. It would be incorrect to deny that there nobody proposes different scenarios of military transformation. But all these ideas are not dominant.

⁶⁰The case of American idea of *Network centric warfare* is good example illustrating how other countries react to U.S. military transformation. Network centric warfare concept is one of the axis of all American transformation. That’s why other countries are copying it or creating their own concepts. At this moment at least few countries have similar concepts. The UK has concept of *Network Enabled Capability*, Sweden - *Network-Based Defense* concept, Australia - *Network Enabled Capability/ Network Centric Warfare* concept. Other countries like France, Netherlands at this moment are creating similar concepts.

⁶¹Prague Summit Declaration, <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm>> 20 08 2007.

⁶² Ibid.

the case of NRF, NATO there also is copying Americans. For example – NATO concept of Network enabled warfare capabilities is a copy of American concept of Network centric warfare⁶³.

The main task for the NRF is participation in the battle. These forces are designed so, that it could as fast as possible to reach the place of crises and try to stop the eruption of violence. But NRF are not designed to conduct stabilization and similar missions. It could do that, but their main business is fighting. The discussions and doubts expressed after the NRF participation in Pakistan relief mission, are a good indicator showing for what purpose these forces were created.

Because of the pressure from Washington, the NATO transformation, and especially the creation of NRF, is the main questions on the NATO agenda. It means that all NATO institutions more or less are concerned with the creation of military structures capable to win a battle. But what about winning the war? In this case NATO is in a better position than the U.S. The advantage of an Alliance is that despite the dominant role of the U.S. other member countries also have strong positions. The United Kingdom, Germany, and France have their own military traditions. Therefore these countries might be more critical about a transformation scenario proposed by Americans. At the same time these countries, because of their rich military experience and knowledge, may propose alternatives to the American's ideas. Also the existence of NATO's political institutions is important factor, which gives insurance that a victory in the battlefield could be transformed strategically into success.

The mission in Afghanistan for an Alliance is important because it helps to sidetrack the attention of member countries from NRF formation. At this moment NATO has two main goals – NRF formation and the mission in Afghanistan. NRF will give forces the capabilities to win battles. On the other hand the experiences of Afghanistan will give necessary knowledge of unconventional warfare, stabilization missions, and etc. All this is an optimistic scenario. But everybody knows about the problems of the mission in Afghanistan. This mission and the success of the NRF formation will be the main indicators showing the effectiveness of NATO as a military alliance.

Speaking about the influence of American way of war to the NATO transformation, few words might be added. Concentration with a formation of the NRF means that less attention is paid to the development of capabilities that might be needed for other kinds of operations. Having in mind that NATO is a huge bureaucratic structure, it will not be easy to change one policy to another even if the political will of such a change does exist. American military tradition might effect NATO through its member nations. An alliance is very good mediator between the U.S. and European countries. It is not only a forum, where countries may exchange ideas and learn from each other's mistakes,

⁶³ NATO C3 Technical Architecture Volumes <http://194.7.80.153/website/book.asp?menuid=15&vs=0&page=volume1%2Findex%2Ehtml> 15 07 2007.

but it also has institutional and administrative power directly or indirectly to thereby force member states to transform their armed forces in a particular way. However it also means that if NATO someday will decide to develop different capabilities and military formations, member countries will be a very big obstacle to do this. Defense reform is very long and most importantly – a very expensive process and one which cannot be changed in one day.

3. The American Way of War and Lithuania's Defense Reform

As small country, Lithuania can not afford the luxury and make experiments with their defense reform, or to have various other capabilities. Its financial and human recourses are very limited. Therefore the decision concerning Lithuania's future armed forces is particularly important. Maybe it is not worth investing into transforming the army into expeditionary forces. Maybe Lithuania must pay more attention and develop niche capabilities (civil-military co-operation specialists, experts of psychological, human intelligence operations, etc.)

At this moment it is clear that a defense reform in Lithuania is in progress. The question of the armed forces professionalization de facto is decided. The defense community more and more speaks about transformation. Especially these talks became very intensive after NATO started to push harder on these questions.

It is clear, that global military trends have reached Lithuania. As was said Lithuania, after the reestablishment of independence, started creating armed forces which were suitable for the Cold war period, but not for post-cold war era. More serious changes in the military sector occurred from 1999-2000 which accelerated after 9/11 events and membership in NATO. The armed forces gradually changed their focus from territorial to collective defense and preparing for overseas missions. All this might be considered as a clear example that contemporary western and American military ideas do have their audience in Lithuania. The reduction and professionalization of the armed forces, and concentration on qualitative, not quantitative aspects – all this is proof that western military trends are put in practice there - and the U.S. is dictating these trends. It could be argued what impact to all these military trends is doing to other Western countries, but the United States is the biggest military power in the world and that means something. All other countries in a lesser or a bigger extent are copying the U.S. and of course, countries with richer military history and traditions are capable to transform, and adapt American ideas to their particular needs. However other countries mostly are doing technical copying and do not try to understand how and why these new doctrines, ideas, structures and technologies appeared. Lithuania belongs to this group. Being a young country it still does not have the tradition of critical thinking and this applies to the military sector too. We are trying to copy, adapt for our own needs, but we are not asking why we should do this and in that manner. We still have to learn not to be afraid to ask such kinds of questions.

Having in mind the tradition of American way of war and its influence on NATO transformation it is possible that in the future Lithuania will have to meet a lot of challenges. It could be said, that Lithuania unconsciously transforms its armed forces and prepares them to win future battles, but not wars.

Simplified American military tradition could be described by such words—shoot first, ask later. It is important to have in mind that Americans think that military solution is an alternative to diplomatic negotiations. It means that there is big possibility that in the future the U.S. might be involved into various military conflicts. Such single sided policy and tradition could be named “venturesome”. The war in Iraq could be named as a “big venture”, which Washington started very hastily and did not consider all possible options. For Lithuania which declares that the United States are its strategic partner it is useful to know what weaknesses its partner has. It also might be very useful for preparing Lithuania’s position for NATO political discussions.

Speaking about the armed forces, this possible American “venturesome” outlook might be dangerous for Lithuanian soldiers, together with Americans serving in overseas missions. Again, Iraq might be the case⁶⁴. The mistakes, done during preparation for his mission later backfired. The attacks of the insurgents and terrorists were unpleasant surprises for Americans and nations, which sent their soldiers to Iraq.

Lithuania at this moment gives more attention to the development of capabilities which will be more suitable to take actions in missions where strategy of annihilation will be employed. The reform of the motorized infantry brigade “Iron Wolf”, its logistical support is the main concern for military planners⁶⁵. Also, like in many other countries after 9/11 special operations forces have strong backing in the Ministry of defense⁶⁶. However such kinds of forces mainly participate in the fights, but not in the stabilization missions and etc.

The biggest challenge for Lithuania in the future will be the creation of a balanced armed forces, finding ways and resources for the development of

⁶⁴ Among defense experts was a very popular anecdote when after taking the Baghdad Donald Rumsfeld turns back and asks generals – “And what next?”

⁶⁵ Krašto apsaugos ministro gairės 2008–2013 m. [Guidelines of the Minister of National Defence 2007-2012] (in Lithuanian); Krašto apsaugos sistemos plėtros programa [National defence system’s development program], (in Lithuanian); Baltoji Lietuvos gynybos politikos knyga, 2006 m., [White Paper Lithuanian defence policy 2006] (in Lithuanian).

⁶⁶ BNS, Lietuvos „žaliukai“ - Amerikos karinės vadovybės dėmesio centre [American military leaders are interested in Lithuania’s special operation forces], 2006 m. gegužės 10 d. (in Lithuanian); Bačiulis A., Samuolytė V., „Misija Afganistane“ [Mission in the Afghanistan], Veidas, 2002 m. rugsėjo 26 d. nr.39 (in Lithuanian); BNS, Lietuvos “žaliukai“ - patikimą reputaciją pelnę kariai, teigia JAV generolas [American general: Lithuania’s special operation forces are very respected], 2006 m. balandžio 29 d. (in Lithuanian); BNS, Lietuvos Specialiųjų operacijų eskadrono misija Afganistane - generalinė repeticija prieš įsiliejimą į NATO greitojo reagavimo pajėgas [Participation in Afghanistan mission for Lithuania’s special operations forces is general repetition before becoming part of NRF], 2004 m. lapkričio 12 d. (in Lithuanian).

capabilities suitable for post-conflict missions. Having in mind the forecasts about future threats and the nature of the conflicts is clear that the need of various stabilization missions will increase. Terrorism, shortage of water, fertile lands, increased migration in such regions as Africa, Near East, and Central Asia will increase tensions between states and even might cause conflicts. Crisis in Darfur is a model and example of the future conflicts. It is very likely, that Lithuania, as member of NATO and European in the future will participate in resolving these conflicts.

Therefore the mission in Afghanistan is very important. The experience and lessons learned in this mission will be very useful for preparing and training soldiers for future missions.

It also important that not only Lithuania's armed forces should be prepared for the future missions. The institutions of the government and political leaders must also be ready and have to know how successes in the battlefield transform into the strategic advantage. For that reason, it is very important to develop necessary skills, strengthen cooperation among institutions and make their work more effective. Assessing the present situation it might be said, that situation in this field is not very promising and encouraging⁶⁷. All this must be done if we do not want that the efforts of our soldiers could be wasted in vain. Lithuania has to learn to use military means and to understand their usage in a broader context, otherwise Lithuania's military tradition could be named as a "way of battle", but not as a "way of war".

Conclusion

R. Kagan in his latest book named Americans as a "dangerous nation" because they always were practicing aggressive foreign policy and used military means very often. The researches by other scholars, like Boot, only confirm this idea. Therefore it is very unlikely that the U.S. suddenly will change its old habits and traditions. It will remain a "dangerous nation" and military means will be considered as essential for conducting foreign policy.

However the American military tradition, which during centuries was affected and influenced by many factors, might be called as a way of battle, it means that for Americans warfare equals war. The incapacity of American politicians and soldiers to understand that military actions and fighting is only one part of the war is a matter of the great concern. American history has many examples showing how the U.S. failed tactical success in the battlefield, to transform it into the strategic victory. This is the most important lesson which must be kept in mind by other countries, including Lithuania when they are dealing with United States.

⁶⁷Račius E., Maskaliūnaitė A., Šlekys D., Urbelis V., *Tarptautinės antiteroristinės kovos iššūkių Lietuvai analizė* [International fight against terrorism and its challenges for Lithuania], Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2007 (in Lithuanian).

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