As we reach the end of U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan, the American joint force is closing one chapter but seemingly opening another. The rapid change of events in Iraq and the ongoing civil war in Syria cannot help but make us wonder if we are perpetually at war. I teach a class at the Eisenhower School on war termination, and despite the many and varied examples of how wars terminate (or not), the “school solution” is ever elusive. We seem to be somewhere between the near certainty of the geometric concepts of Antoine-Henri Jomini and the “it depends” school of such greats as Carl von Clausewitz as we seek to understand both the wars we are in and those we might face in the future.

In a recent Veteran’s Day speech at Georgetown University, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, USA, repeated an important thought for those who believe that military officers study war in order to create war. General McMaster told the audience that military officers are expected first “to study war as the best means of preventing it; and second, to help the American military preserve our warrior ethos while remaining connected to those in whose name we fight.” His view, which all who serve should share, is that the study of war allows officers to understand the costs in blood and treasure before recommending how to respond to threats or actual attacks when asked by civilian leaders. This is not a new requirement for military officers, but is increasingly seen as important for civilians involved in decisionmaking on the use of armed forces in war.

Joint Force Quarterly is here in part to support the idea that the study of war and all of its elements is essential to learning how to avoid war if at all possible, and to successfully and rapidly conclude combat operations as soon as possible and in a fashion that enables transition to a peaceful postconflict situation. This is the fundamental reason why Service and joint professional military education (JPME) schools, their curricula, and their faculty and staffs exist. Moreover, this is the reason General Colin Powell created this journal over 20 years ago: to spur an open debate on issues important to the joint force. Without these platforms to support learning, the intellectual power of the men and women involved in
As you work your way through this issue, consider whether you agree with the arguments. Think about what these ideas can do for your situation or that of your organization. We are interested in your views on these or any other topic related to the joint force. What separates successful organizations from the rest is the degree to which the people in them learn and grow intellectually. *JFQ* offers you the chance to learn about your profession and at the same time help others learn what you know. That is a critical component of the warrior ethos, helping others learn. Let us know what you think. *JFQ*

**William T. Eliason**

Editor in Chief