

His prescriptions are debatable, however. Proposals to invest in strategic education are sound, as are his ideas for better leveraging special operations forces and proxies. However, his recommendation to establish a Foreign Legion has dubious merit and is likely to be quickly dismissed by the American public.

In *The Dragons and the Snakes*, Kilcullen aligns with McFate. “It is clear,” he states, “that the utility of the current Western military model as a set of techniques and technologies is fading.” Kilcullen examines the major and minor threats to U.S. interests, namely Russia and China as the major problems or “dragons.” His “snakes” include the current versions of al Qaeda, the so-called Islamic State, Hizballah, and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Early chapters trace the development of these nonstate actors and their active learning from the West’s campaigns to eradicate them. All chapters reflect solid scholarship and trace the evolution of each “reptile.”

Kilcullen’s China chapter is a good overview that is appropriate for classroom use, but it should be augmented with recent work on military reforms (see Phillip C. Saunders et al., eds., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*, NDU Press, 2019) and scholarship on Chinese concepts on “systems destruction” to prepare students for a more competitive People’s Liberation Army. The author makes it clear that Chinese thinking has conceptually enveloped the West and embraces combinations “that lie outside the ken of Western warfighters and thus invoke limited direct military competition.”

Kilcullen’s Russia chapter is equally useful; he offers his own version of gray zone conflict called “liminal warfare.” *Liminal* (Latin for threshold) is a term used in anthropology to capture ambiguity experienced by societies transitioning between two states of being. Kilcullen uses it to capture the transition zones between peoples and their activities that have ambiguous political, legal, and psychological status. Applied to warfare, the term aptly depicts the blurring of guerrillas, militias, terrorists, and resistance movements. The author expertly incorporates various interpretations of

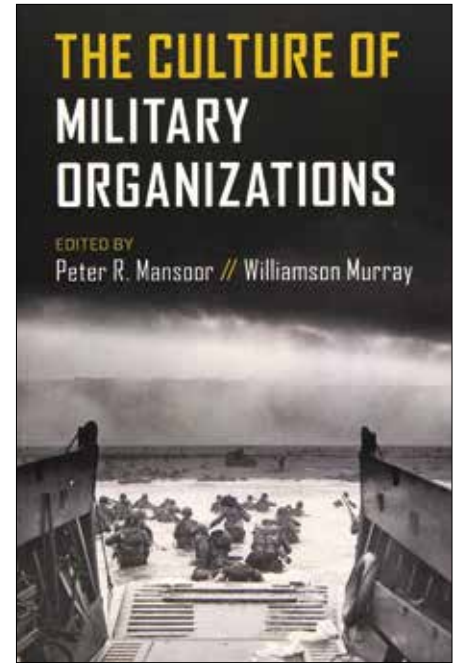
the putative “Gerasimov Doctrine” and how Moscow continues its long tradition of malign measures short of direct military confrontation. To augment this chapter, Oscar Jonsson’s *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines Between War and Peace* (Georgetown University Press, 2019) and Ofer Fridman’s *Russian Hybrid Warfare: Resurgence and Politicisation* (Hurst, 2019) provide supplemental depth.

Kilcullen offers three potential strategic solutions for American strategists in his last chapter, ominously titled “The Ebb Tide of the West.” The first, “doubling down,” is an expensive investment in current technologies to buy capability upgrades to allow the United States to sustain its military instrument for the near term. Accepting decline and managing its impact is captured in Kilcullen’s second approach, in essence rejecting competition and reducing costs. His preferred third option is a form of retrenchment based on offshore balancing. This option is more robust than what is advocated by most academics; it bolsters regional allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, prevents hostile powers from dominating key regions, and ceases efforts to actively promote democracy. Where U.S. interests require intervention against snakes, Kilcullen opts for low footprint operations such as El Salvador. However, offshore balancing undercuts regional stability by the absence of the United States and weakens the alliance architectures that are our strength against dragons. Moreover, with respect to snakes, as Stephen Biddle has argued, low footprint warfare is generally “low payoff.”

These books are written by authors with well-grounded experience in armed conflict, and both writers are engaging. Whether or not the reader agrees with their diagnoses or proposed cures, he or she will come away from reading these provocative texts with a deeper appreciation for the complexities of today’s disorder and what is at risk in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. JFQ

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### The Culture of Military Organizations

Edited by Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray  
Cambridge University Press, 2019  
472 pp. \$99.99  
ISBN: 978-1108485739

Reviewed by Anthony King

It would be difficult to find scholars who are better qualified to edit this excellent new volume of military culture. Having retired from the U.S. Army following a distinguished career, culminating as one of General David Petraeus’s most trusted aides in Iraq in 2007, Peter Mansoor has published a number of books on military history and Iraq. Williamson Murray has been a major figure in military studies for over 30 years, producing, among many other works, the now classic three-volume study *Military Effectiveness* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) with his long-term collaborator Allan R. Millett.

At the beginning of their new book, Mansoor and Williams suggest that *The Culture of Military Organizations* is intended to address some of the shortcomings of *Military Effectiveness*: “In the three volumes of *Military Effectiveness*,

focused on World I, the interwar period, and World War II, editors Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray . . . posited a number of factors influencing military effectiveness. . . . But organizational culture was not an explicit element of the study and chapter authors, for the most part, did not address it.” This is excessively modest; certainly, I read that collection as a disquisition on military culture. Nevertheless, Mansoor and Murray see the current volume as a corrective to that study.

Like *Military Effectiveness*, the current volume is a scholarly work, but the editors also have a professional practitioner in mind. They do not merely want to interpret military culture but to change it: “One of the purposes of this book is to help military leaders understand how organizational culture forms; the influence culture has on organizational functioning and the development of strategy, operations, and tactics; and how culture changes.”

Mansoor and Murray are correct to address the question of military culture because it is vital to military performance and effectiveness. They are also equally justified in noting the complexity of the term. Because its connotations are multiple, it is a difficult term to apply with any analytic rigor. However, Mansoor and Murray propose a plausible definition of culture at the beginning of the work. They define *organizational culture* as “the assumptions, ideas, norms, and beliefs, expressed or reflected in symbols, rituals, myths, and practices, that shape how an organization functions and adapts to external stimuli and that give meaning to its members.” Organizational culture refers, then, to the often unacknowledged stocks of shared understandings and to the habitual collective practices of military personnel. Culture unites the armed forces.

On the basis of this definition of culture, Mansoor and Murray identify a predicament in which all military organizations find themselves. Since they must order their personnel to kill or, potentially, be killed, armies, navies, and air forces have to be highly cohesive organizations; they must be unified like no civilian company. Yet, ironically, the military requirement for dense culture integration threatens to undermine them.

Precisely because they must be so bound to existing hierarchies, established traditions, and internal commitments, military forces often ignore or wilfully misinterpret their enemies and the threat they pose. Frequently, they reject innovations which in retrospect prove vital because they seem to jeopardize order, discipline, morale, cohesion, and entrenched organizational interests. Like Achilles, the armed forces are tragic organizations, fatally compromised by their very virtues.

Every chapter in this book describes this predicament through colorful historical explication. For instance, David Kilcullen discusses how, in Mogadishu, at 1620 on October 3, 1993, U.S. Task Force Ranger had completed its mission to capture Somali militia leaders when a Blackhawk helicopter crashed over the city. Instead of simply returning to base, the convoy detoured to the crash site to save the pilots and crew. In the following 26 minutes, it suffered 50 percent casualties as it engaged in furious firefights in the city streets. Kilcullen notes, “Rational military decisionmaking is not a sufficient explanation for behavior in what was later dubbed the ‘lost convoy.’” Yet culture may. Bound by an ethos that no Soldier would ever be left behind, U.S. Rangers and special operations forces felt obliged to try to rescue comrades rather than complete their mission. The very cohesiveness of these elite forces led to mission failure in those streets of Mogadishu.

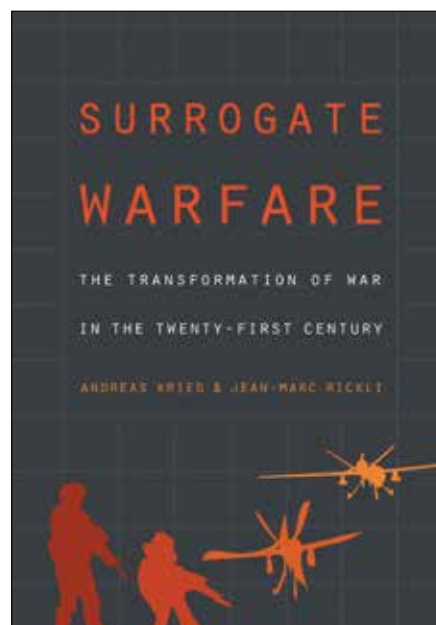
*The Culture of Military Organizations* is replete with insights like this. It explores the predicament of the armed forces from a diversity of fascinating angles. Particular high points include analyses of German (Jorit Wintjes), North Virginian (Mark Grimsley), Indian (Daniel Marston), U.S. Marine (Allan R. Millett), and U.S. Army culture (Peter Mansoor). Most of the chapters in this book use a narrative historical method rather than a critical, analytical framework, and the collection may, therefore, have benefited from drawing more explicitly on sociological and anthropological literature. In particular, although the infamous 1991 U.S. Navy Tailhook scandal is discussed insightfully by John Kuehn, questions of gender, race, and

ethnicity might have been addressed more systematically.

Mansoor and Murray want this collection to be useful to military professionals. It will undoubtedly be of the greatest utility to the brightest and most inquiring officers. However, readers should be under no illusion. This is a scholarly work of the highest academic credentials that military scholars will find both deeply interesting and useful. JFQ

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### Surrogate Warfare: The Transformation of War in the Twenty-First Century

By Andreas Krieg and Jean-Marc Rickli  
Georgetown University Press, 2019  
244 pp. \$104.95  
ISBN: 978-1626166776

Reviewed by Harry Wingo

What do you get when two Middle Eastern subject matter experts decide to update the age-old concept of proxy warfare and explore the potential of machines to serve as surrogates that substitute or supplement a nation’s formal military