From the Editor

In this issue . . .

The *Parameters'* staff is still basking in the overwhelming response to the 40th Anniversary edition of the journal. Accolades from around the globe have confirmed just how much readers appreciated the historical tour through the journal's past. As with any edition, however, there are those who find an issue wanting for any number of reasons. Several of the responders suggested that we may have purposely omitted a number of the more recent articles impacting today's strategic environment. I can assure that small group of nonbelievers that selections were based solely on statistics and editorial archives. In an effort to ensure that we had in fact "chosen wisely," we reviewed the selection process and were immediately struck by the number of articles that missed selection by just a few percentage points, especially a number of the more contemporary manuscripts. We have heard the clarion call and recognize it is only just that we share the most popular articles of the past decade. We hope you will appreciate, as we have, the wisdom, insight, and forethought presented.

From Thomas Adams's 2001 article "Future Warfare and the Decline of Human Decisionmaking" to Richard Lacquement's 2011 offering of "Integrating Civilian and Military Activities," readers were provided with insight regarding the challenges and initiatives impacting America's military. Authors examined a plethora of questions related to the international environment and the appropriate role for the US military. Would technology offset the need for maneuver warfare and "boots on the ground"? What is the appropriate role for the world's last remaining superpower in ensuring world peace and tranquility? These are but a few of the conundrums that authors such as Richard Hooker examined. Hooker's "Soldiers of the State: Reconsidering American Civil-Military Relations" (2004), and his 2005 manuscript, "Beyond *Vom Kriege*: The Character and Conduct of Modern War," provided answers to a number of these questions. His work, along with Ralph Peters's 2004 article "In Praise of Attrition," and Michael O'Hanlon's offering of that year, "The Need to Increase the Size of the Deployable Army," addressed critical issues related to the employment of military force in the modern era. What is now accepted as an underlying principle in our strategic lexicon was P. H. Liotta's examination of "Chaos as Strategy," a thesis that was considered purely hypothetical when introduced in 2002.

How insightful can one person be? At the same time Liotta was asking readers to understand chaos as a strategy, William Hawkins was prophesying the future of America's Army in "What Not to Learn from Afghanistan." Readers need to remember that these were the early days of our intervention into Afghanistan. We were a nation at war against an enemy that dared violate the sanctity of our homeland—an enemy that appeared almost immune to the application of overwhelming military force. These were asymmetric threats that many in the leadership of the nation and our armed forces insisted could be met through the limited application of airpower, a few Special Forces, and some light ground forces (preferably foreign auxiliaries). There was no longer a

requirement for capable maneuver forces. These were the days before "surges" and the successes that combined arms teams would eventually reap. Hawkins concludes his prophesy with a profound admonishment—as a nation we need to learn from history and understand that asymmetrical strategies cut both ways—and it is always better to be stronger than weaker when waging war.

If there is one theme that dominated the military genre of the past decade, it was an attempt to comprehend the role played by insurgents and how best to counter their impact. Primary to this discussion was an analysis of the Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency (COIN) manual, FM 3-24. As with any new entry to the doctrine and strategy arenas, the manual and its basic tenets received as much criticism as acclaim. Frank Hoffman's 2007 analysis of the manual and its supporting principles, "Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency?" was instrumental in inspiring the dialogue that continues to this day. The author, critical of the "classical school" of thought related to insurgencies, provided readers with an understanding of the need to revise classical COIN principles if we are to successfully resolve the realities of today's strategic environment. Following Hoffman's analysis was Steven Metz's "New Challenges and Old Concepts: Understanding 21st Century Insurgency." The author took the US military, and particularly the Army, to task for forgetting the counterinsurgency lessons of the 1960s, 80s, and 90s. Metz recalls the prevailing belief of the time was that these relics of the Cold War would pose little challenge in the "new world order" of the twenty-first century. As a result, professional military education and doctrine shifted almost exclusively to the new requirement for "peacekeeping." This would all come to an end one September morning. The author suggests that as the military struggled to quickly regain the counterinsurgency capabilities of the twentieth century, it failed to comprehend that these new threats were distinct from the insurgencies of the past. America was once again deriving new strategies from old conflicts, and again preparing to fight the last war. Following on the strategic theme of insurgencies and counterinsurgency strategy was Gian Gentile's 2009 contribution, "A Strategy of Tactics: Population-Centric COIN and the Army." Gentile assumed a contrarian's view of the population-centric "way of war" outlined in FM 3-24. He detailed his belief that the US military had moved beyond the manual's doctrine for countering insurgencies and was in the process of transforming every soldier into a counterinsurgent. Population-centric counterinsurgency was perverting the way wars should be fought, substituting a strategy devoid of improvisation and practicality. The author espoused the view that population-centric counterinsurgency was simply a military operation, nothing more, and certainly not an overarching strategy.

We sincerely hope readers will appreciate these contemporary assessments of America's political, social, and military affairs during the past decade. Certainly, the value of the works presented is best appreciated when considered in light of when the authors penned their manuscripts. Please enjoy the best of *Parameters* from the past decade. – RHT ❑.