



# Senior Officer Professional Digest

Selected readings from the world's military journals

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Compiled by:





## **The CA's Introduction**

**Professional reading is a commitment to our Army's future.**

**The Senior Officer Professional Digest (SOPD) has been designed to assist you to learn more about the issues that will shape the future of warfare. I commend the SOPD to you and ask that you make the time to read the articles and to reflect on their content.**

**P.F. LEAHY**  
Lieutenant General  
Chief of Army



<b>Article</b>	<b>‘The Afghan Model in Northern Iraq’</b>
<b>Author</b>	Richard Andres
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Journal of Strategic Studies</i> , Vol. 29, No. 3, June 2006, pp. 395–422

### SYNOPSIS

In this article, Professor Richard Andres from the US Air University’s School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) examines Coalition operations in northern Iraq during the 2003 US-led war. He argues that according to existing military models, ‘the successes achieved by SOF [Special Operations Forces] and air heavy operations should not have been possible’ in northern Iraq. Yet the air heavy tactics developed during the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan have proven to be as equally effective against fighting Iraqis in the north of the country. In his examination of the US operations in northern Iraq, the author debates the use of the Afghan model in Iraq prior to the US-led invasion, the character of SOF operations in northern Iraq and the effect of postwar stabilisation operations. He concludes by outlining the implications of his study for future operations.

Initially the debate about whether or not to use the Afghan model in the attack on Iraq began in US military circles over ‘going in heavy’ by deploying large numbers of ground troops, or ‘light’ by following the same approaches that worked for US task forces in Afghanistan in 2002. However, the circumstances surrounding the invasion of Afghanistan were not typical. The United States faced strong opposition from its European allies—as well as deep concerns in the US military community—that a large occupying force in the Middle East would generate more support for terrorists and their organisations. Opponents to using the Afghan model in Iraq identified two key questions: How would it work against Iraq’s large army? Would it be more beneficial for the United States to use its own forces or indigenous rebels to control Iraq after the war? In addition, there was widespread pessimism about the role and utility of airpower: the war in Afghanistan focussed on precision airpower to destroy the enemy. In the end, the debate concluded the United States would ‘go in heavy’ and the Afghan model was discarded.



Only days before the war was to take place, Turkey was still refusing to allow Coalition forces access to the border shared with Iraq. This meant that the operations in the north of the country changed overnight. US Special Forces Groups were given no time to plan or prepare for combat and instead were flown at low altitude over Iraqi territory, all the while taking heavy fire from Iraqi air defences. After entering Iraq, the US Special Forces faced three significant problems. First, having been forced to leave much-needed equipment and their vehicles in Turkey, the task force needed to find transportation across northern Iraq. Second, because Turkey would not allow US aircraft to enter Iraqi airspace via its territory, US forces did not have adequate air support. Third, Turkey was intensely apprehensive about the Kurds gaining too much from their involvement in the war.

Despite these setbacks, Professor Andres declares ‘SOF operations in northern Iraq were fantastically successful.’ He argues that ‘a small SOF group working with unskilled indigenous allies and highly constrained airpower defeated a significant portion of Iraq’s army. Moreover, they did so without suffering a single American death.’ Nevertheless, he highlights that following this initial success the United States made numerous political blunders in the region, which significantly weakened its support base: the Kurdish fighters. Without the Kurds to assist US forces, they quickly found themselves the targets of insurgents’ attacks. Andres contends that ‘Such circumstances provide a good deal of support for [the] argument that the United States is not particularly good at occupation operations and should avoid them whenever possible.’

The author concludes that the model used in the northern Iraq—aside from the postwar blunder of alienating its indigenous supporters—proved better than the traditional combined arms model used in the south of Iraq.

<b>Article</b>	<b>‘Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction’</b>
<b>Author</b>	Nora Bensahel
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Journal of Strategic Studies</i> , Vol. 29, No. 3, June 2006, pp. 453–73

## SYNOPSIS

In this article, Nora Bensahel of the RAND Corporation argues that the US prewar planning process for the reconstruction of postwar Iraq ‘was plagued



by myriad problems'. As a result, the operational outcome of the war 'remains very much in doubt more than three years' after President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations. In the time since:

[A]lmost 2,200 US military personnel have died in Iraq, and more than 16,800 have been wounded. More than 153,000 foreign troops remain in Iraq, including 130,000 Americans. Despite continuing military operations, the insurgency continues unabated. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 insurgents are active in Iraq, and are conducting an average of 75 attacks a day throughout the country. The Iraq Body Count estimates that between 33,000 and 37,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed by military operations in Iraq.

The author has divided this article into three sections: Prewar planning and postwar Iraq—November 2001 to May 2003; Occupying Iraq—The Coalition Provisional Authority and the military, May 2003 to June 2004; and, lessons for the future. From the outset, Bensahel argues that the key problem in Iraq has been the unequal value given to military planning over postwar civilian planning. Military planning for the US invasion of Iraq began in November 2001, but by August 2002 civilian planning had barely started. Although President Bush's humanitarian relief plans were extensive, by comparison postwar reconstruction plans were not.

Bensahel believes that US officials made two key assumptions that undermined the entire operation. First, they assumed that the United States would be greeted as liberators, not occupiers. Second, they assumed that the Iraqi Government would continue to function after the ministers and their closest advisors were removed from power. 'The problem,' she argues, 'was that no planning occurred for scenarios where these assumptions might not hold.'

After a prolonged series of setbacks for civilian reconstruction officials, the Bush Administration placed the Department of Defense (DoD) in charge of civilian planning for postwar Iraq. Although the US DoD has not had any experience in managing postwar reconstruction since the Second World War, the author argues that the main reason for the Administration's decision was probably an attempt to unify command. Even then, interagency communication and cooperation was largely non-existent.

In conclusion, Bensahel argues that the most important lesson to be learnt from the US experience in postwar Iraq is that an interconnected relationship exists between the military and political objectives, which



needs to be better understood by decision-makers across the board (civilian and military). In addition, the military needs to be prepared to take on a greater role in postwar stabilisation activities. She argues that military leaders need to integrate these responsibilities and tasks with their preparations for combat operations.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Did We Over Americanise British Military Thought?'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Paul Harris
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>British Army Review</i> , No. 139, Spring 2006, pp. 27–38

### SYNOPSIS

In this article, Paul Harris of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst explores how American military thought has effected Britain's way of military thinking. In particular, Harris examines Britain's use of American terminology and concepts. The author's concern is that British military officers may have embraced American ideas too quickly, thereby relinquishing intellectual autonomy. Concepts such as 'Maneuver Warfare', 'Asymmetric Warfare' and 'Effects-Based Operations'—which originated in American military circles and have since flourished internationally—have fundamentally changed British approaches to officer education, warfighting (especially joint military operations) and the relationship between American and British armed forces.

To illustrate that the British may have endorsed some American military concepts too readily, Harris presents an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of two prominent American schools of thought: the AirLand Battle and Maneuver Warfare schools. He argues that there is 'Teutomania' (of German origins) in America's recent military thought. The US military desires quick, decisive victories and, according to Harris, 'the American Maneuvrists seem to [have] become rather besotted with the German armed forces of the first half of the 20th Century. They seem almost to have wished the US armed forces to reinvent themselves as Wermacht.'

However, given the 'special relationship' between the United States and Britain, it is necessary to develop similar modes of military thinking so that joint operations will be successful and effective. Harris argues that '[a] common military vocabulary cannot be used meaningfully without adopting similar patterns of thought about military problems and common



approaches to tackling them.’ He takes care to emphasise that he is not questioning the alliance, rather that it is time to stop suppressing the ideological differences between British and American military thinking. The author declares that ‘we should probably accept, even celebrate, [the differences]. The British Army’s independent thinking should, perhaps, be one of its most vital contributions to our Atlantic alliance.’

<b>Article</b>	<b>‘Nexus of Future Conflict: The Crossroads of ‘Three Block War’ and ‘Fourth Generation Warfare’</b>
<b>Author</b>	Lieutenant James Staples
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>British Army Review</i> , No. 139, Spring 2006, pp. 23–7

### SYNOPSIS

Lieutenant James Staples is an intelligence officer in the British Army. In this article he argues that ‘[t]he nature of future conflict will be determined by the interaction [between] “Fourth Generation Warfare” and “Three Block War”.’ These concepts are increasingly popular in military circles as the means for understanding how war will be fought in the early 21st century. The purpose of this article is to argue that the convergence of these concepts is indicative of the continuing evolution of warfare.

To demonstrate his point, Staples traces the development of Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) from the first generation during the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century to its current understanding in relation to insurgency theory at the beginning of the 21st century. The second concept of a three-block war is closely associated with warfare during the early 1990s. It was widely thought at the time that the principles of three-block war would continue to dominate conflicts in undeveloped countries well into the next century. Instead, Staples argues that conflicts today, such as the insurgency in Iraq, are good examples of three-block warfare being fought with 4GW principles. Senior US commanders agree; General Charles Krulak, former Commandant of the US Marine Corps, says that *‘the future [of conflict] is not the son of Desert Storm, but the stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya.’*

The Iraq conflict demonstrates that the insurgents’ choice of tactics since the early 1990s not only emphasises the continued evolution of modern warfare but also the amalgamation of various conceptual premises. Staples concludes that ‘[it] is not the case that a totally new way of warfare is upon



us ... 4GW is the latest step in the continued evolution of insurgencies, with the prime aim of trying to achieve a political aim through varied and limited means against a conventionally superior opponent.'

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Twenty-First Century Warfare – Twentieth Century Rules'</b>
<b>Author</b>	John Reid
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>RUSI Journal</i> , Vol. 51, No. 3, June 2006, pp. 14–17

### SYNOPSIS

In his address to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in April 2006, John Reid, Secretary of State for the British Home Office, voiced his concerns regarding the utility of contemporary international law in today's current international strategic environment. He draws attention to the current international legal framework and questions whether it adequately covers the areas of international terrorism, strategic pre-emption, and humanitarian intervention.

Reid acknowledges none of these issues are straightforward. His purpose is to reiterate that the United Nations, as well as Britain's adherence to international law, remains at the heart of British foreign and defence policies. His intention is to strengthen these institutions as much as it is to ensure their continued relevance. For these reasons, Reid encourages wider debate on these issues: 'The laws of the twentieth century placed constraints on us all which enhanced peace and protected liberty – we must ask ourselves whether, as the new century begins, will they do the same?'

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Coercive Counter-Proliferation and Escalation: Assessing the Iran Military Option'</b>
<b>Author</b>	James Devine and Julian Schofield
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Defense &amp; Security Analysis</i> , Vol. 22, No. 2, June 2006, pp. 141–57

### SYNOPSIS

Against the backdrop of nuclear talks between the United States and Iran, this article assesses the military options and political consequences of Washington launching a preventative war against Tehran. The authors,



political scientists from Concordia University in Canada, argue that while it may be possible to destroy Iran's known nuclear facilities, Tehran possesses the advantage of 'escalation dominance'. This means that rather than confronting the United States militarily, the Iranians could use existing crises in the Middle East region to destabilise world order further. Therefore, the fallout from such an attack could be far more damaging for the United States than the initial war against Iran itself. Considering these scenarios, the purpose of this article is 'to examine the military feasibility and immediate political consequences of US preventative operations against Iran.'

Devine and Schofield argue that it would be 'extremely costly' for the United States to attack Iran at this time. To support their assertion, the authors dedicate the majority of their article to discussing the cost/benefit ratio for the United States by discussing in length how they believe a preventative attack on Iran would unfold. The authors have taken considerable effort to account for the political and military objectives of the United States—such as destroying Iran's nuclear facilities and the process of a friendly-regime change in Tehran—as well as any possible consequences that may arise at each phase of their plan. Although the US military could successfully achieve these objectives, the authors warn that their 'losses would be much higher than the 2003 US attack on Iraq because of the better motivated Iranian soldiery, the mountainous terrain, the geographic size of Iran and the large opposing army.' Also, '[the US military] would face a more complex set of political problems in ensuring a relatively stable transition to a more pro-American regime.'

If the United States were to attack Iran at this time, especially while Washington still has numerous invested interests in the region, the authors believe that 'a combined Iranian policy of attrition at home and compellance abroad' could have a negative impact on America's interests in the Middle East. Devine and Schofield conclude that:

'In addition to the intrinsic value of human life lost ... the US [before launching a preventative attack] also needs to calculate the political repercussions, both in the region and in the larger Islamic world. The impact on world oil prices may also be prohibitive.'



<b>Article</b>	<b>‘Assessing Iraq’s Sunni Arab Insurgency’</b>
<b>Author</b>	Michael Eisenstadt and Jeffrey White
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Military Review</i> , Vol. LXXXVI, No. 3, May–June 2006, pp. 33–51

## SYNOPSIS

The authors, both from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, bring a wealth of practical experience to their examination. Eisenstadt, in the US Army Reserve, served in Central Command and as an Adviser to the US State Department, and White served 34 years in the Defense Intelligence Agency, including the Middle East Military Assessments Office. Their appraisal of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq traces its origins from the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime: the Baathists had prepared for a popular war against the invaders but also were ready to put down a coup or popular uprising. The postwar resistance built quickly because ‘The first insurgents were also able to draw on [pre-existing] relationships, networks, and structures’.

In several ways, the insurgency is different to many that have gone before:

- The insurgents could quickly exploit Iraqi power structures, such as tribes, religious institutions, etc.
- Due to limited Coalition intelligence and preparation, the insurgents were ‘relatively unfettered’, which allowed them to ‘gather momentum quickly’.
- The plethora of weapons and munitions meant they were well armed from the outset.
- The insurgents had access to regime funds and looted monies.

By examining the many factors of the insurgency, such as the demography of Iraqi Sunnis, the role of religion, geography and economics, the article follows the evolution of insurgent activity. Complete with graphs of ‘military’ operations, including breakdowns of types of attacks and their effectiveness, the tactics and efficacy to influence the ‘thought world’ of the Sunni Arabs is critiqued. The authors conclude with several observations, including:

- ‘the insurgents have little appeal beyond the Sunni Arab community’;



- ‘many Sunni Arabs are ambivalent towards the insurgency’;
- improving the economic environment can reduce attacks ‘done by freelance insurgents on a commission basis’;
- political improvements can shatter the ‘unity of purpose among insurgent groups’; and
- the ‘extreme beliefs and brutal tactics of the jihadists have alienated erstwhile allies’, making them ‘vulnerable to attempts to isolate them from local and external bases of support’.

<b>Article</b>	<b>‘British Leaders and Irregular Warfare’</b>
<b>Author</b>	Colonel David Benest, Defence Academy
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>British Army Review</i> , No. 139, Spring 2006, pp. 7–11

### SYNOPSIS

In this article, the author builds on the premise ‘that irregular warfare is not a new phenomenon’ and he ‘explores the British experience of [political, military and police] leadership’. The ‘British Way’—the principle of minimum force to achieve the stated aim—is based on ‘British culture, educational system, religion, rule of law tradition and liberal democracy, open to scrutiny by a free press’. Irregular warfare demands that leaders, facing moral and legal dilemmas, require ‘a strong ethical and moral “compass” as a guide to policies and actions.’ For the author, a strategy is required to win irregular wars, but the critical ingredient ‘is the influence of leaders’ in the ‘three legged stool’ of the political, military and civil spheres. ‘Prior selection’ of leaders is paramount, more important than the training and education they receive.

Tainted ‘by the experience of one particular (and successful) counter-insurgency ... Malaya is often quoted as [a] “how to do”’, but the conditions of that campaign were both unique and benign. Yet, according to the author, it was only the introduction of General Sir Gerald Templer, the British Military High Commissioner, which improved the situation:

His reform of the police, the introduction of the district committee structure, his equal opportunities policies over race, his technical innovations such as the introduction of helicopters and the cessation of



jungle bombing, all played their part. But above all it was his personal qualities that deserve attention.

However, Benest observes that the British have also kept poor leaders in command during irregular wars. He examines the role of Herbert Kitchener in the Boer War, Ireland during the War of Independence, the military commander in Kenya during the 1952 Mau Mau Uprising, and Lieutenant Colonel Colin Mitchell's oversight of Aden (now in Yemen) in 1967 as examples of poor leadership with dramatic consequences. He concludes his article with a plea for improving strategic-level officer selection.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Stealing Al Qaeda's Playbook'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Jarret M. Brachman and William F. McCants, Comment/Response by General Wayne A. Downing (Retd)
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Studies in Conflict &amp; Terrorism</i> , Vol. 29, No. 4, 2006, pp. 309–21

### SYNOPSIS

In the ongoing international effort to combat terrorism, Jarret Brachman and William McCants of the Combating Terrorism Center at the US Military Academy, argue that the best approach to identifying the movement's strengths and weaknesses is to examine jihadi texts for their tactical and strategic insights. In doing so, the United States will be better informed to the jihadis' way of thinking. The authors argue this approach is efficient because: 'In a sense, members of the jihadi movement have put their team's playbooks online.' It is well known that terrorists regularly use the Internet to communicate with one another as well as make contact with budding new recruits. To demonstrate their point, all of the jihadi texts the authors draw upon in this article are available over the Internet; three of the four can be found in Arabic on Al Qaeda's electronic library.

Interestingly, senior leaders of the jihadi movement are encouraging their members to do the same in their fight against the West. Abu Bakr Naji, for example, who wrote *The Management of Barbarism* in 2004, appears to have been inspired by his readings of American literature (which was translated into Arabic) when writing his ideologies. Naji urges his followers to study Western works on management, military principles,



sociology and political theory to ‘borrow strategies that have worked for Western governments and to discern their weaknesses.’

Brachman and McCants conclude with six general observations based on lessons learned by Umar Abd al-Hakim (also known as ‘the pen jihadist’), but who is most widely known by his *nom de guerre*, Abu Mus’ab al-Suri. Each observation by Suri is followed by a recommended course of action by the authors, whose purpose is ‘to counter or exploit the jihadis’ messages and actions.’ In summary, these observations are:

- Local regimes must work together against the jihadis.
- In the past jihadis have failed because they have ignored ethnic minorities and tribes.
- Former jihadi fighters have not felt a personal connection with their leaders.
- Jihadis did not win wider support from the Islamic world because the Muslim population did not understand who they were, what they wanted to accomplish and why they used violence to achieve their goals.
- It would be counter-productive to use lies or exaggerate in order to win public support.
- Previous jihadi campaigns suffered from a lack of strategic thinking and religious legitimacy because they alienated their religious leaders.

The authors emphasise that these observations only scratch the surface of possibilities that exist within this approach. The fundamental lesson to be learned is that jihadi leaders openly publish their work; it is there in plain sight for *anyone* to use.

In response to this article, General Wayne Downing (retired) argues that analysts inside and outside the US Government already do this. However, in his experience ‘the most useful texts have not received attention. And of those that do, there are often useful pieces of information that get overlooked’. This occurs for two reasons. First, there are excessive amounts of texts available, making the selection process highly subjective. Second, important and useful pieces of information are overlooked because many analysts are new to this literature and do not know what to look for, thus jeopardising the integrity of the overall approach.



<b>Article</b>	<b>'The Word of Command: Communication and Cohesion in the Military'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Anthony King
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Armed Forces &amp; Society</i> , Vol. 32, No. 4, July 2006, pp. 493–512

### SYNOPSIS

It has long been believed that informal male bonding is the key to optimising the combat effectiveness of soldiers as well as the key to tight unit cohesion. For the most part, the literature available on this topic also supports this assumption. In this article, political scientist Anthony King argues that the formal practice of collective drills and effective communication is a better approach to attaining combat readiness and better military performance because it does not rely on good personal relations between individual soldiers. The author's purpose is not to dispute the importance of personal relations in this regard, but to argue that beliefs which hold informal bonding practices to be the most effective practice may be in fact misleading.

To support his position, King draws upon recent sociological studies of military performance in various armed conflicts, demonstrating that shared values and collective training create greater social cohesion than informal practices of personal relations. 'Interestingly,' he writes, 'there are many counterexamples where intimate comradeship between primary groups has not in and of itself produced effective military performance.' The author concludes that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the training and collective drills of soldiers, as well as the focus of any future analysis.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Doom and Demography'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Nicholas Eberstadt
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>The Wilson Quarterly</i> , Vol. 30, Issue 1, pp. 27–31

### SYNOPSIS

Nicholas Eberstadt is an academic in Political Economy with the American Enterprise Institute. Eberstadt takes issue with the 'ominous and recurrent reports of impending demographic doom'. He argues that



Americans, in particular, seem prone to taking seriously each new warning of imminent catastrophe. He speculates whether this might be due to 'America's hunger for ... numbers'. The author points out that these dire demographic projections are often wrong and miss the basic direction of change. He argues that the world today is 'incontestably *less* poor, *less* unhealthy, and *less* hungry that it was 30 years ago. And this *positive* association between world population growth and material advance goes back at least as far as the beginning of the 20th century'.

Eberstadt's argues that the 'population explosion' is better termed a 'health explosion'. He highlights that more than half of the world's population lives in countries with 'sub-replacement' fertility, both in the First World (for example, Germany and Japan) and the Third World (eg Vietnam, Myanmar, and Iran). The author points out that the population explosion is clearly over with population growth rates declining in the late 1960s. The new focus for understanding demographics will be 'population graying', 'absent migration' and 'population decline'.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Commanding the Future: Command and Control in a Networked Environment'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Caroline Croser
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Defense &amp; Security Analysis</i> , Vol. 22, No. 2, June 2006, pp. 197–202

### SYNOPSIS

Warfare is about human behavior in a context of organized violence directed toward political ends. So network-centric warfare (NCW) is about human behavior within a networked environment.

*Office of Force Transformation, Washington DC, 2005*

Caroline Croser is a PhD student at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. In this article Croser examines the viability of a small system called Command Post of the Future (CPOF), which was first used by the US military in Iraq. This article is of interest to those grappling with issues of command and control technology in a networked battlespace. In Croser's words, the CPOF is:

a Windows-based advanced command and control (C2) software and hardware suite that operates in two primary modes. First, it geographic



information system (GIS)-style overlay of information (as icons) onto an interactive digital map of the Area of Operations allows a variety of different information sources to be represented simultaneously. Second, CPOF acts as a means of communication between TOCs [Tactical Operations Center].

The purpose of this article is to consider what a networked battlespace might look like and to examine how, or if, the behaviour of people changes when using it. The author argues that the majority of her interviewees, who have used CPOF in theatre, embraced this new system despite some initial trepidation. They reported that ‘collaborative planning was much easier’ and ‘that there was a greater degree of shared situational awareness’ between users in different areas of operations. Interviewees also implied that unsuccessful CPOF users were usually people who could not maintain the fast-pace of the system or navigate quickly enough between its different features.

By drawing upon the American experiences of using CPOF in Iraq, in which it must be noted that CPOF was only a small part, Croser contends that the system adequately supplied the necessary instruments to manage the complex nature of war fought in Baghdad. However, the article does not examine any weaknesses or deficiencies of the CPOF or indicate if any interviewees made negative remarks about the system. (With this in mind) Croser concludes that her study of the CPOF system ‘was a tool that enabled ... [the US military] to navigate its highly complex, multi-faceted and mobile battlespace more effectively.’

<b>Article</b>	<b>‘Has Futurism Failed?’</b>
<b>Author</b>	David Rejeski and Robert L. Olson
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>The Wilson Quarterly</i> , Vol. 30, Issue 1, pp. 14–21

### SYNOPSIS

David Rejeski is the Director of the Wilson Center’s Foresight and Governance Project and Robert Olsen is a senior fellow at the Institute for Alternative Futures. As experts in the field, the authors’ review how anticipating tomorrow—futurism—has emerged from superstition and fiction into a widely practiced discipline. They argue that the ‘serious business’ of forecasting did not begin in earnest until the end of World War



It was when an article titled 'As we may think' by Vannevar Bush was published in the July 1945 *Atlantic Monthly*. In this article, Bush foreshadowed the coming information revolution, including the personal computer, hypertext, digital imaging and search engines. As the then-Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, Bush's overarching message was the need to 'organize the growing scientific enterprise and apply newfound knowledge to an ever-expanding set of national needs'.

The article traces the rise of the RAND organisation and the prodigious talents of Herman Kahn. Kahn was the author of *On Thermonuclear War*, which teased out the assumptions of military planners and confronted them with the consequences of their decisions. The authors also point to the role that overzealous forecasting played in the Pentagon's 'obsession' with body counts in the Vietnam War. In the early 1970s, forecasting was transferred to business, most notably at the Royal Dutch Shell, which developed scenarios anticipating the 1973–74 OPEC oil embargo. However, as critics were able to point to an increasing number of 'failed' prophecies, the discipline declined in the 1980s. The authors highlight that this period coincided with the passing of the discipline's luminaries including Herman Kahn.

With the millennium has come another boom in futurist studies, with many nations commissioning foresight exercises to anticipate the public and private sector implications of post-Cold War order. The authors note that this new period of activity is marked by a deliberate attempt to move away from the dichotomous debates of growth versus no-growth, high-technology versus appropriate technology, and the Left versus the Right. The emphasis is now on a long-term perspective that places sustainability as its core goal and outcomes, such as the 'radical middle', that seek to integrate the best insights of the entire political spectrum.