How the Afghanistan War Influenced the Content of Armed Forces & Society: An Editor’s 20-year Reflection

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• 13 commentary on Afghanistan war
• this paper part of this special issue
• How did the War influence the content of AF&S?
Journal like a forest

Editor Steward of forest

Afghanistan War
Event that could change the forest
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Dates</th>
<th>Influential Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2001</td>
<td>Attack on US by terrorists</td>
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<td>October 2001</td>
<td>US and British Air campaign in Afghanistan to root out al-Qaida</td>
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<td>Operation Enduring Freedom</td>
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<td>December 2001</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) begun (Multinational force) Mandated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>by UN</td>
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<td>March 2003</td>
<td>Iraq war begins</td>
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<td>August 2003</td>
<td>NATO takes over ISAF –.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>ISAF expanded to cover the whole country. Nation building mission</td>
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<td>2007 - 2008</td>
<td>Insurgency grows</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>New counter insurgency launched 40,000 new troops</td>
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<td>December 2011</td>
<td>Iraq war ends</td>
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<td>December 2014</td>
<td>ISAF ended as did NATO’s responsibility.</td>
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<td>January 2015</td>
<td>NATO launched Resolute Support Mission - training the Afghan security forces</td>
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<td>February 2020</td>
<td>US and Taliban sign agreement to withdraw international forces by May 2021</td>
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<td>August 2021</td>
<td>Withdrawal of forces. Evacuation of 120,000 people airlifted from the Afghanistan</td>
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<td>airport.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Postmodern Military

- Volunteer Force
- New missions – small wars
- Multinational divisions –
- led international organizations
How was this test reflected in the pages of Armed Forces & Society?

How did the forest change?
• Reviewed all titles every volume (2002 – 2021)
• Printed abstracts of Afghanistan related articles
• Sorted the abstracts into piles (topics that adhere)
• Labeled the piles
• Used labels to do search of website - find additional articles

My reflections as the decision-maker
Key themes

- Lives of service members
- How military organizations responded
- Public Opinion
- Civil Military Relations
- Dark Outliers
Lives of Service members

Veterans Literature
• Traditional themes Transition to civilian life with
• greater emphasis – PTSD, Disabilities and suicide
• more papers on women veterans

Military Families (highly cited)
  Emphasized the stress associated with multiple deployments

Physical and Mental Health
• Prior to war, seldom got a paper on health – Major shift (2015- 2021)
• Physical & Mental health
• Cross category complication – Health of veterans, service members, contractors
How the Institution Responded  AVF smaller force

Reserve forces

• Marked uptick in this topic -- Two special issues (2011/2021)
• Topics began to mirror the force – retention, health, family
• Transmigrant

Contractor – private security

• Effectiveness of contractors, hidden costs as move closer to deployed forces
• Missing voices -- motivation, medical care, new veterans
• Unique data – contractor deaths  （secret proprietary info）
How the Institution Responded

Small, Unconventional, Multilateral War

- changing mindset
- Soldiers’ role, diplomat, peacekeeper...
- Relationships with host nationals – interpreters/linguists
- Management challenges
Public Opinion

• Public support or lack of support for war

• Returning veterans media characterization
  Hero
  Victim

• Veterans’ reaction to media characterization
Civil Military Relations

Janowitz – greater applicability

• pragmatism
• small war context
• Constabulary force
Dark Themes

- Green on blue murder
- ISAF caused civilian casualties
- Torture
- War traumatized offenders – Military Catch 22
How did the forest change?

Multiple deployments
• Veterans/military family (Health)
• Volunteer Forces - major adjustments (PTSD health)
• Reserve forces/contractors

New missions – small wars
• Multinational
• Management challenges/roles
• Janowitz perspective compatible
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Call for additional commentary/Papers
References


