

**The Harmon Memorial  
Lectures in Military History**

Number Forty-Five



**The West at War and the  
Burdens Of the Past**

*Victor Davis Hanson*

United States Air Force Academy  
2002

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*California State University at Fresno*

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## **THE HARMON LECTURES IN MILITARY HISTORY**

The oldest and most prestigious lecture series at the Air Force Academy, the Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History originated with Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon, the Academy's first superintendent (1954-1956) and a serious student of military history. General Harmon believed that history should play a vital role in the new Air Force Academy curriculum. Meeting with the History Department on one occasion, he described General George S. Patton, Jr.'s visit to the West Point library before departing for the North African campaign. In a flurry of activity Patton and the librarians combed the West Point holdings for historical works that might be useful to him in the coming months. Impressed by Patton's regard for history and personally convinced of history's great value, General Harmon believed that cadets should study the subject during each of their four years at the Academy.

General Harmon fell ill with cancer soon after launching the Air Force Academy at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver in 1954. He died in February 1957. He had completed a monumental task over the preceding decade as the chief planner for the new service academy and as its first superintendent. Because of his leadership and the tensions of the Cold War, Congress strongly supported the development of a first-rate school and allotted generous appropriations to build and staff the institution.

The Academy's leadership felt greatly indebted to General Harmon and sought to honor his accomplishments in some way. The Department of

History considered launching a lecture series to commemorate his efforts, and in 1959 the Harmon Memorial Lecture Series in Military History was born.

The Harmon Lecture series supports two goals: to encourage the interest in military history and to stimulate in cadets a lifelong interest in the study of the history of the military profession. The lectures are published and distributed to interested individuals and organizations throughout the world; many are used in courses at the Academy. In this way, we continue to honor the memory of General Harmon, who during his lifetime developed a keen interest in military history and greatly contributed to establishing the United States Air Force Academy.

## **LIEUTENANT GENERAL HUBERT REILLY HARMON**

Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon was one of several distinguished Army officers to come from the Harmon family. His father graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1880 and later served as Commandant of Cadets at the Pennsylvania Military Academy. Two older brothers, Kenneth and Millard, were members of the West Point Class of 1910 and 1912, respectively. The former served as Chief of the San Francisco Ordnance District during World War II; the latter reached flag rank and was lost over the Pacific during World War II while serving as Commander of the Pacific Area Army Air Forces. Hubert Harmon, born on April 3, 1882, in Chester, Pennsylvania, followed in their footsteps and graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1915. Dwight D. Eisenhower also graduated in this class, and nearly forty years later the two worked together to create the United States Air Force Academy.

Harmon left West Point with a commission in the Coast Artillery Corps, but was able to enter the new Army air branch the following year. He earned his pilot's wings in 1917 at the Army flying school in San Diego. After several training assignments, he went to France in September 1918 as a pursuit pilot. Between World Wars I and II, Harmon was among the small group of Army air officers who urged Americans to develop a modern, strong air arm.

At the outbreak of World War II, Brigadier General Harmon was commanding the Gulf Coast Training Center at Randolph Field, Texas. In late 1942, he became a Major General and head of the 6th Air Force in the Caribbean. The following year General Harmon was appointed Deputy Commander

for Air in the South Pacific under General Douglas MacArthur, and in January 1944 assumed command of the 13th Air Force fighting in that theater. After the war, General Harmon held several top positions with the Air Force and was promoted to Lieutenant General in 1948.

In December 1949 the Air Force established the Office of Special Assistant for Air Force Academy Matters and appointed General Harmon its head. For more than four years, Harmon directed all efforts at securing legislative approval for a U.S. Air Force Academy, planned its building and operation, and served on two commissions that finally selected Colorado Springs, Colorado, as the site for the new institution. On August 14, 1954, he was appointed first Superintendent of the Air Force Academy.

Upon General Harmon's retirement on July 31, 1956, the Secretary of the Air Force presented him with his third Distinguished Service Medal for his work in launching the new service academy and setting its high standards. In a moving, informal talk to the cadets before leaving the Academy, General Harmon told the Cadets that the most important requirements for success in their military careers were integrity and loyalty to subordinates and superiors. "Take your duties seriously, but not yourself," he told the Cadets.

General Harmon passed away on February 22, 1957, just a few months before his son Kendrick graduated from West Point. The general's ashes were interred at the Air Force Academy's cemetery on September 2, 1958. On May 31, 1959, the Academy's new administration building was named Harmon Hall in his memory.

## VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

Victor Davis Hanson was educated at the University of California, Santa Cruz (BA 1975) and the American School of Classical Studies (1978-9). He received his PhD in Classics from Stanford University in 1980 and farmed full-time for five years before returning to academia part-time to initiate the Classics Program at California State University, Fresno. Currently, Dr Hanson is Professor of Classics and Coordinator of the Classical Studies Program at CSU-Fresno.

In 1991 he received an American Philological Association Excellence in Teaching Award, given yearly to the country's top undergraduate teachers of Greek and Latin. He was a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, CA, and a Visiting Professor of Classics at Stanford University (1991-1993). Professor Hanson was a Visiting Professor of Military History at the US Naval Academy for the 2002-2003 academic year.

Dr Hanson has written articles, editorials and reviews for the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *International Herald Tribune*, *American Heritage*, *American Spectator*, *Policy Review*, *The Wilson Quarterly*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *Washington Times*. He has been interviewed on nine occasions on National Public Radio and has appeared on the PBS "Newshour." He writes a column bi-weekly about contemporary culture and military history for *National Review Online*.

He is the author of some sixty articles, book reviews, and newspaper editorials on Greek, agrarian, and military history as well as contemporary culture. He

has written or edited eleven books, including: *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (1983); *The Western Way of War* (1989); *The Ancient Greek Battle Experience* (1991); *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (1995); *Fields Without Dreams: Defending the Agrarian Idea* (1996); *The Soul of Battle* (1999); *The Land Was Everything: Letters From an American Farmer* (2000); and *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (2001). He co-authored with John Heath *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* (1998), and, with Bruce Thornton and John Heath, *Bonfire of the Humanities: Rescuing the Classics in an Impoverished Age* (2001). His *The Wars of the Ancient Greeks* (1999) was the first volume to appear in John Keegan's edited multi-volume history of warfare.

Professor Hanson lives and works with his wife and three children on their sixty-acre tree and vine farm near Selma, California.



# **The West at War and the Burdens of the Past**

14 November 2002

*Victor Davis Hanson*

*California State University at Fresno*

During the current events that have transpired since September 11, 2001, contemporary commentators and pundits have sometimes voiced notes of pessimism about the ability of the United States to reply forcefully and successfully against our enemies the terrorists and their supporters. Before the events of October 7, we were warned about the ice, cold, and high altitude of Afghanistan, reminded of the inadequacy of the Northern Alliance and the brutality of the Taliban, told we did not appreciate the nuances of everything from jihad to Ramadan, and finally were admonished to turn to history and learn of the fate of the British and Russian armies in Afghanistan. Vietnam always seemed to lurk not far in the background, and supposedly presaged that a quick victory was deemed to be nearly impossible. Yet after our stunning military successes in

Afghanistan, once more critics, learning little from past errors, are presently warning about a Vietnamese-style military quagmire to come in Iraq, as well as arguing that we are in a stalemate with al-Qaeda. All that can be said of such cultural pessimism is that it is as predictable as it has proven to be incorrect.

In contrast, few observers have reminded the American people that their institutions, history, and heritage offer grounds for optimism in the war against the terrorists and their supporters, and that our government, economic system, values, and larger culture result in a type of war making that has proven across time and space to be unusually lethal.

In our peace and affluence, we Americans of this complacent age have forgotten the lethal superiority of the Western way of war—the Greeks losing only 192 at Marathon, Alexander the Great destroying an empire of 70 million with an army of 40,000, a murderous Cortés wrecking an imperial people of 2 million in less than two years, or a small band of British redcoats ending the power of Cetshwayo and his Zulus for good in less than a year. The arsenal at tiny sixteenth-century Venice—based on principles of market capitalism and republican audit, despite a West torn by Catholicism,

Orthodoxy, and Protestantism—launched far better and more numerous galleys than those of the entire Ottoman navy. We are not supposed to say such things, but they are true and still in play, and so give us pause for reflection upon the prognosis of the present military crisis.

The historian Thucydides believed that democracies were the most adept governments at war making. He wrote that Classical Athens had not been defeated by Sparta, but lost its war only to the combined efforts of more or less the entire civilized world of the Eastern Mediterranean in concert—Sparta, democratic Sicily, and at times imperial Persia. If we can expand the classical definition of democracy to include consensual governments and parliamentary republics of landowning citizens, then Thucydides seems to be correct—Republican Rome, Swiss cantons, the Renaissance Italian city-states, Victorian England, and democratic America projected military power far beyond what their rather limited territories and populations might otherwise suggest.

And even when Western governments at times were not entirely consensual, classical egalitarianism and distrust of totalitarianism were never really forgotten. The Holy Roman Empire, the

Spain of Philip II, and eighteenth-century European monarchies, while not models of enlightened constitutions, never reached the degree of authoritarianism found among the Aztecs, Ottomans, or Chinese dynasties. Dark-Age notions of personal freedom and patronage, the *Magna Charta*, and Spanish legal codes were reflections of a tradition not comparable to that found in non-Western regimes of the age.

Western military prowess is often reflective either of constitutional government or of a tradition of individuality and egalitarianism that survived even within the more narrow confines of monarchy and aristocracy. No historian claims that there is a 2,500-year heritage of uninterrupted democracy, or that the West shared unquestioned military superiority during every decade from Pericles' rule to the present age. But the evidence of reappearing prowess at arms is suggestive. Classical Greeks repelled invasions from the much larger empire of Persia, well before Alexander the Great destroyed it. The Mediterranean was for half-a-millennium a Roman lake. And even when Africa and Asia returned to eastern rule under Islam during the supposed nadir of the West, Europe itself remained secure from most attack. The Crusades were a logistical and operational miracle—

it was inconceivable that Saladin could have piloted a similarly sized armada into the Atlantic to wage *jihad* in Paris or London.

For a few weeks in Austria the Ottomans threatened Europe—but only due to the internecine squabbling of Protestantism, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism, not to mention the invaders' parasitic borrowing of Western munitions, sea craft, and military organization. By the 16th century, the die was cast. The continual improvement of military technology and exploration and colonization of the Americas and Orient ensured the Western hegemony that continues to the present day, characterized by the preeminence of Europe and America, joined in the last few decades by Japan, Russia, and India, which have sought to westernize their militaries in varying degrees.

Many other factors explain the military dynamism of the West, but the fountainhead of its success is this propensity for European states and their descendants to embrace personal freedom and some degree of consensual government. When societies are free, then citizens fight as soldiers with a clear sense of rights and responsibilities. So at Salamis, Athenian sailors rowed to the chants of "Freedom," later gave their individual *triremes*

names like “Free Speech,” “Freedom,” “Right,” and “Democracy,” and voted for their generals— something unknown in the Persian army where soldiers were whipped and commanders summarily executed.

Similar expressions of egalitarianism reappeared among Roman yeomen in the dark days of Hannibal’s invasion, and G.I.s at the Battle of the Bulge. Because such fighters believe that they have had a say in the conditions of their own service, and that their officers are agents of their own elected representatives, they fight most often with the assurance that no one has shanghaied or coerced them into service in battles for the profit and pleasure of a small elite. Cortés is often dubbed an autocrat and worse. In fact, in comparison to Montezuma, he was a leader among equals, as the conquistadors bickered among one other, were subject to suits and writs, and in council hectored and advised their *caudillo* about the proper strategy of storming Tenochtitlán. Spaniards, not Aztecs, proved themselves to be the more flexible, spirited, and innovative soldiers in the vicious fighting for Mexico City.

By the same token, consensual governments ensure a standard set of military laws and regulations

that soldiers can trust to be uniform and applicable to all—whether they are statutes that regulated service in the legions or the contracts that bound seventeenth-century European soldiers. Such confidence is not merely an abstract assurance, but reminds fighters in the heat of battle that every man in the phalanx, legion, square, and bombing squadron is subject to more or less the same treatment, therefore creating armies that either stand or fall together. That legacy survives in the West even in the present age of professional armies, and explains why American pilots or Special Forces commandos enjoy rights and responsibilities unknown among the draftees in the conscript armies of North Korea, China, Cuba, or Iraq.

In that regard, free societies have developed a markedly different idea of military discipline than their adversaries in Asia, Africa, and the pre-Columbian Americas. Obedience is more likely to be defined by staying in rank, keeping in time, advancing and retreating on orders, spearing or shooting in unison, and maintaining cohesion and order along a line. What is behind this propensity for group order? Again, once fairness and freedom are common, then soldiers are more likely to define their own bravery and duty by the success of their

company, not of themselves. From the Greeks onward, it was always more likely for a Westerner to be commended for his efforts at keeping a shield chest high, saving a comrade in arms, or plugging gaps in the line than for collecting captives or amassing kills. Aristotle remarked how different were warriors outside of the classical Greek city-state who kept tabs on the numbers of their slain victims.

In contrast, at the battle of Plataea (470 B.C.), Herodotus relates that rewards for bravery went to hoplites who stayed in rank, not to those who rushed out to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat ahead of the phalanx. Such allegiance is freely incurred, not coerced—as was the case with Xerxes at Thermopylae, who whipped his soldiers on against the Greeks. In this regard, it is no accident that rarely do suicide-soldiers play a large role in the Western tradition, inasmuch as men have confidence in their own abilities, craft strategies for their survival, and believe that their souls belong to themselves—not to the emperor or distant grandee watching from afar on a peacock throne. There seems to have been nothing like the Jewish *siccari*, the dervishes of the Great Mahdi, the Ghost Dancers, the kamikazes, or the present-day suicide bombers in the West—all of which were soundly defeated by the



discipline and superior training and weaponry of Roman legions, British Redcoats, and American servicemen.

Yet consensual government results in more than just disciplined and like-minded soldiers. The culture of freedom also creates a different type of freethinking individual, one who looks to himself and his immediate group of comrades for solutions rather than the rigid orders of distant priests, strongmen, or divinely appointed kings. At Midway, eccentric cryptographers cracked the Japanese naval codes before the battle even had begun; it is impossible to imagine that such brilliant misfits would ever have been given similar latitude and independence in the Japanese Navy. Once the crippled *Yorktown* arrived at Pearl Harbor, a horde of pipe fitters, electricians, and carpenters swarmed over her in dry-dock to make ad hoc repairs as each team saw fit. She steamed out to Midway 70 hours later—and was instrumental in the American victory at the carrier battle a few hours afterward. Such miraculous repairs were far different from the Japanese reaction to their own damaged *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, which, with far less impairment, emerged from the same battle of Coral Sea—only to sit at the Kure naval base for three months awaiting repairs. The strategic result?

American individualism and a deeply engrained trust in private initiative ensured that there would be three, not two carriers, at Midway, while Japanese rigidity and hierarchy meant that four, not six, Japanese flattops would face the Americans.

Of course, much is made of the superiority of Western military technology—as if such deadly weapons exist in a vacuum and are not themselves reflective of larger social and cultural attitudes toward secularism, free and unbridled speech, and the unrestricted flow of information. In truth, from the Greeks to the present, open societies usually have fielded armies whose weaponry was on par with, or more usually far superior to, the equipment of their enemies. Greek catapults, Roman siege-engines, Byzantine Greek fire, medieval crossbows, Renaissance *harquebuses*, and English men-of-war meant that Western forces (well before the Industrial Revolution) could kill great numbers of their enemies while suffering inordinately small casualties themselves. Why were such deadly weapons—from the hoplite panoply to the A-bomb—usually in the hands of Westerners?

The European scientific edge did not result from the superior brainpower of Western peoples. Nor was this technological dynamism due to

accidents, germs, natural resources, or simple theft. To be sure, the Western world stole, borrowed, or adapted everything from gunpowder to stirrups from its adversaries. But the critical point is not the mere presence in the West of such brilliant inventions—the products of individual genius the world over—but their continual improvement, practical application, and the wide dissemination of the knowledge surrounding weapon production.

Free societies in the West possessed far fewer political or religious scruples about the consequences of the introduction of new weaponry—which is so often disruptive of custom, tradition, and religion. Gunpowder had been a rather impractical amusement in China, but when transferred to the West it quickly was transformed by all classes and peoples into deadly instruments for killing—the only logic of gunpowder procurement hinged on its proven excellence on the battlefield. Every advance in the evolution of fiery weapons—from smokeless powder and flintlocks to rifled musketry and breech-loading rifles—was a Western discovery precisely because only in Europe and America could individuals experiment, tinker, and profit from their designs without fear that their revolutionary products would run afoul of religious or political grandees

worried about the disruptive effects of such novel technology.

In this regard, capitalism—in its most fundamental sense of free markets, private property, profit and loss, dividend and interest going back to the Greeks—when married to secular and free inquiry ensured a constant arms race in the West. Inventors, fabricators, and traders all sought to craft cheaper and more deadly weapons than their rivals—the ethical, cultural, and religious consequences of such breakthroughs be damned. The Ottomans, using their vast resources of the empire, could produce bronze cannon, but not at a rate or quality of their Venetian adversaries, whose tiny city-state has a population only 1/20 the size of the Sultan's domain. After the battle of Lepanto in 1571, Venetian sailors collected the guns of the Ottomans' wrecked galleys—themselves built upon Italian designs—but found them fabricated of such poor quality that they were instead melted down and recast under European specifications.

The freedom to criticize government also brings enormous dividends during wartime—albeit rarely seen as such in the ongoing fire of battle. Not only do politicians, journalists, and talking-heads of every stripe carefully publicize military operations—

sometimes to the detriment of the war effort itself—but their group wisdom sometimes results in sound advice to the generals. The closely related notion of civilian audit of the military is also a uniquely Western idea that is a dividend of democracy. It is hard to recall a single Greek general in any city-state—Athens, Thebes, or Sparta—who was at one time not fined, exiled, executed, or jailed. Those commanders with the most impressive records on the battlefield—Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, Lysander, and Epaminondas—all were dragged into court to answer auditors (whether keen or stupid) about their military record. These checks and balances were known in advance and served to remind generals that their record was subject to public discussion and to prevent any from usurping power. Fabius Maximus, Cortés, and General MacArthur all clashed with their superiors and their governments—and all ended up angry and unhappy at the expiration of their abbreviated tenure.

Nonetheless, group discipline, free-thinking soldiers, civic militarism, superior weapons, and free speech have not ensured that on every occasion Western armies would win. Given the nature of war, it was inevitable that Western armies would often be caught outnumbered far from home, led by

incompetents, and beset by disease and poor logistics. Indeed the litany of Western defeats from Lade, the Teutoberger Wald, Manzikert, and Isandhlwana, to Little Big Horn, Adowa, and Pearl Harbor attests to this common vulnerability. But freedom allowed Western commanders a greater margin of error, the opportunity in the long run to trump bad weather, insufficient numbers, geniuses like Crazy Horse or idiots like Custer—hence the frequency with which even dramatic defeats remained temporary setbacks, not permanent catastrophes.

Have any of these age-old Western democratic advantages come into play in the present war? Nearly all of them have, and they suggest—if we remain true to our ideals and if our cause continues to be just and to win the support of a voting citizenry—that despite the gloomy prognoses of our pessimistic cultural elite, America will defeat utterly its foes and stamp out terrorism, even if such battles transpire on the other side of the globe and pose logistical and tactical nightmares.

Already we have seen the U.S. Congress meet to vote emergency funding for a host of new forces and deployments—funds available only because an open and free market protects, raises, and

disburses capital. From our GPS-guided bombs to our laptops in the field, it is clear that MIT and Cal Tech give us advantages undreamed of in the Islamic world, whose universities are not free to foster critical inquiry and insist on secular protocols of research. Our soldiers, from every class and background, have been mobilized, according to statute and without any sense of illegality—in sharp contrast to the wretched villagers who were rounded up by the Taliban at gunpoint to serve as cannon fodder against American bombs. Doomed airline passengers first voted on their decision to storm the hijackers to prevent further carnage to their countrymen. Individual rescue workers, aided by sophisticated and huge machines, on their own initiative devising ad hoc methods of saving victims and restoring calm to a devastated city. Pundits from the *Nation* to the *National Review* have not been shy about informing the public and their government that we have either done too little or too much, been too bellicose or too tame, too eager or too reluctant to bomb our enemies. And out of that cacophony our military has listened, distilled criticism, and thereby at times altered strategy and tactics both—the entire time ensuring Americans that it is not running the war for its own pleasure.

So the present fighting in the Middle East must be seen in the long traditions of the Western way of war itself. Over some 2,500 years of brutal warring, the real challenge for a Western power has always been another Western power, not Asian, native American, or African forces—more Greeks dying in a single battle of the Peloponnesian War than all those who fell against the Persians, Alexander butchering more Greeks in a day than did Darius III in three years, the Boers killing more Englishmen in a week than the Zulus did in a year, more Americans falling at Antietam than were killed in fifty years of frontier fighting. We must draw confidence that in the present conflict, America is not fighting England, Germany, a westernized Japan—or even China or India, nations that so desperately and often so successfully seek to emulate our military organization, training, and armament.

Western nations at war from the Greeks to the present are not weak, but enormously lethal—far out of proportion to their relatively small populations and territories. So this frightful strength of the West is not an accident of geography, much less attributable to natural resources or genes. The climate of Egypt of the Pharaohs did not change under the Ptolemies, but the two were still quite



different societies, as the latter achieved amazing levels of cereal production in land supposedly exhausted by the former. Mycenaean spoke Greek and raised olives, but they were a world away from the citizens of the Hellenic city-state that later arose amid their ruins.

So our power is not merely an accident of superior technology, much less the weather or the terrain; rather it is found in our very ideas and values. The foundations of Western culture—freedom, civic militarism, capitalism, individualism, constitutional government, secular rationalism, and natural inquiry relatively immune from political audit and religious backlash—when applied to the battlefield have always resulted in absolute carnage for their adversaries. Setbacks from Cannae to Little Big Horn led not to capitulation, but rather to study, debate, analysis—and murderous reprisals. Too few men too far away, a bad day, terrible weather, silly generals like Custer, or enemy geniuses such as Hannibal—all in the long haul can usually be trumped by a system, an approach to war that is emblematic of our very culture.

Neither the genius of Mithridates nor the wasting diseases of the tropics nor the fanaticism of the Mahdists have stopped the heroes, idealists,

megalomaniacs, and imperialists of past Western armies, whose occasional lapses have prompted not capitulation, but responses far more deadly than their enemies' temporary victories. This is not a question *per se* of morality, but of military capability and power. It would have been less hurtful for all involved had the thug Pizarro stayed put in Spain or the sanctimonious Lord Chelmsford kept out of Zululand.

American ground and air forces, with better weapons, better supplies, better discipline, and more imaginative commanders—audited constantly by an elected congress and president, critiqued by a free press—will, if necessary, in fact destroy the very foundations of radical Islamic fundamentalism. Indeed, the only check on the frightful power of Western armies—other than other Western armies—has rarely been enemy spears or bullets, but the very voices of internal dissent—a Bernardino de Sahagún aghast at his people's cruelty in Mexico, a Bishop Colenso remonstrating the British government about the needless destruction of Zululand, or an American Jane Fonda in Hanoi to end the war in Vietnam. The Taliban and the hosts of murderers at bases in Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria may find solace from Western clergy and academics, but have not and they

shall not discover reprieve from the American military.

America is not only the inheritor of the European military tradition, but in many ways its most frightful incarnation. Our multiracial and radically egalitarian society has taken the concepts of freedom and market capitalism to their theoretical limits. While our critics often ridicule the crassness of our culture and the collective amnesia of our masses, they underestimate the lethal military dynamism that accrues from such an energetic and restless citizenry, whose past background means little in comparison to present ambition, drive, and ingenuity. Look at a sampling of the names of the dead firemen in New York—Weinberg, Mojica, Brown, Angelini, Schrang, Amato, Hanley, Gulleckson, and Guadalupe. These rescuers were united not by hue or accent, but, like those in the legions, a shared professionalism and desire for action. So our creed is not class, race, breeding, or propriety, but unchecked energy as so often expressed in our machines, brutal competitiveness, and unleashed audacity—frightful assets when we turn from the arts of production to those of destruction.

With this deadly military legacy rests great burdens and responsibilities, inasmuch as the check on American military power will not rest with our adversaries' planes or tanks—or even suicide cells—but resides in the support of our own citizenry. We are cautioned that to retain such allegiance we must war for causes that represent our values and serve the interest of humanity at large. That is true and has already been seen in the vast changes that are underway in Afghanistan with the forced removal of the Taliban. But just as importantly, we also must avoid the equally dangerous sirens of cynicism, undue skepticism, nihilism even. Our heritage also teaches us that as we grow more free and affluent, we must find a way not to turn inward on ourselves and in our sophistication and smugness decide that our culture is not different—and surely not better—from that of our adversaries. For if we, like Romans of the fifth-century AD, feel that we are either too wealthy, nuanced, or busy to appreciate and defend who we are, then surely we too will meet their same fate.

## PREVIOUS HARMON MEMORIAL LECTURES

1. *Why Military History?* by Frank Craven, 1959
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3. *Pacific Command*, by Louis Morton, 1961
4. *Operation Pointblank*, by William R. Emerson, 1961
5. *John J. Pershing and the Anatomy of Leadership*, by Frank E. Vandiver, 1963
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9. *Strategy and Policy in Twentieth-Century Warfare*, by Michael Howard, 1967
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39. *Shaping Junior Officer Values in the Twentieth Century: A Foundation for a Comparative Perspective*, by Dave R. Palmer, 1996
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42. *The Erosion of Civil Control of the Military in the United States Today*, by Richard H. Kohn, 1999
43. *Making Experience Count: American POW Narratives from the Colonial Wars to Vietnam*, by Robert Doyle, 2000
44. *The Impact of Aircraft Design on Strategy, 1933-1945*, by John Guilmartin, 2001

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