Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why *Another Bloody Century*? –

*To present an emerging American way of war as the exemplar of future warfare would be to commit the same mistake as to confuse a new Ferrari with the future of motoring. Most people will not drive Ferraris, and most soldiers and other warriors will not pursue their deadly quarrels in ways prescribed by an American way of war.*

--- Colin Gray, *Another Bloody Century*

1. **Why this book is on the CMC’s Reading List?** If the past is any indication of the future – and it usually is – then the 21st century will witness its share of carnage. With this thesis, Dr. Gray’s book provides a thought-provoking, historical perspective on how to think about future war. The book includes a comprehensive treatment of evolving threats, including international terrorism, as well as emerging domains of cyber and space. This book is of natural interest to the Marine Corps – a service that has survived in large part because of its ability to anticipate and to prepare for future threats. Moreover, thinking about future warfare is now more important than ever given that fiscal constraints are likely to reduce the Marine Corps’ size and force structure.

2. **Why is this book important to you?** Gray’s book is useful for officers to gain insights into the many hazards and pitfalls associated with the future. Some of his own predictions, especially with respect to the future use of WMDs, are chilling. Others are more reassuring, such as his assessment on Al Qaeda’s decline. But all are thought-provoking. Likewise, officers will gain a newfound appreciation for history, since it provides the only guide – though an imperfect one – to thinking about the future. The author cautions against embracing grand narratives to explain military developments (e.g., Fourth Generation Warfare), since they collapse upon close inspection. At its core, the book embraces a Clausewitzian framework, emphasizing the political nature of war.

3. **Things to think about.** In reading *Another Bloody Century*, officers should consider how well current U.S. force structure reflects the doctrinal emphasis on irregular warfare. Since Gray’s book was published in 2007, readers should also consider his arguments in light of subsequent developments. In particular, readers should assess how the Arab Spring, civil war in Syria, the Russia’s seizure of Crimea fit with the author’s thesis. Further, readers should carefully consider Gray’s contention that U.S. dominance relative to the rest of the world is eroding. This prediction may well be true, but it is not necessarily true. Past predictions along these lines have proven false, many of them underestimating U.S. resiliency. The author himself emphasizes that the future is not predetermined, emphasizing that it “remains to be made, to be constructed by people, including by people in conflict who will strive to make a future that they prefer.” Marines will no doubt play an important role in shaping this future.