War Made New, by Max Boot

Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why Read War Made New, by Max Boot? -

“...The lethality of weapons increased roughly two-thousand-fold between the Peloponnesian Wars and World War II, between the days of spears and those of tanks, but the dispersion of forces increased by a factor of over four thousand ... Man remained in control, no matter how destructive machines became.”

– Max Boot

While it can be said, and it is a widely held belief, that the nature of warfare is unchanging, the conduct of warfare and the manner in which wars are fought has evolved since its inception, and will remain in a constant state of evolution. In War Made New, Max Boot examines the evolution of the conduct of warfare from 1494 through Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. He does this through the framework of the four key revolutions in history: The gunpowder revolution, the first and second industrial revolutions, and the information revolution. In the profession of arms, it is essential to understand the overarching theme in this book: military organizations that do not seek to constantly evolve and keep pace with near peer competitors will fall by the wayside and watch their stature in the world order diminish accordingly. It is for these reasons that it is important to have War Made New included on the Commandant’s professional reading list.

As career level officers (CWO2/3, and Captain), you will begin to move from the science of your profession and into the art. War Made New details how art has been used to win battles throughout modern history. Early in one’s career, thought processes are mainly based in science. As you progress and become a career level officer, your decisions will be based more in the realm of art, i.e. how can you make better use of open source civilian technology to gain a competitive advantage over your opponent. While you will likely be fully immersed in this type of thought process as a field grade officer and beyond, the transition begins at the career officer level.

It is important to keep in mind while reading this book that it is discussing the manner in which wars are fought - their actual conduct. What it does not do is attempt to re-define the nature of war itself. Several times throughout the text, Boot pays tribute to the fact that no matter the degree of technology or revolution in military affairs, human factors always play the key role. This draws directly back to our warfighting philosophy and doctrine in MCDP-1 – the image of Zweikampf can readily be seen throughout Boot’s text. As combatants are locked in this “two-struggle”, a delicate balance must be struck between reliance on technological advances and the human dimension that makes up the nature of war – success in this endeavor will ultimately carry the day in modern conflict.