

Revolutions in Warfare: Theoretical Paradigms and Historical Evidence--The Napoleonic and First World War Revolutions in Military Affairs.

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Andrew N. Liaropoulos

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Abstract

This article provides an alternative view for examining Revolutions in Military Affairs (RMAs), perceiving them both as sociopolitical institutions and as war-fighting models. The weaknesses in the ways in which the RMA theory has been approached are analyzed, resulting in the formation of three different, but parallel, paradigms of the RMA phenomenon (the Social Wave, the Radical Transformation, and the Continuity and Evolution). Two historical case studies, the Napoleonic RMA and the First World War RMA, are used in order



Revolutions in Warfare: Theoretical Paradigms and Historical Evidence— The Napoleonic and First World War Revolutions in Military Affairs



Andrew N. Liaropoulos*

Abstract

This article provides an alternative view for examining Revolutions in Military Affairs (RMAs), perceiving them both as sociopolitical institutions and as war-fighting models. The weaknesses in the ways in which the RMA theory has been approached are analyzed, resulting in the formation of three different, but parallel, paradigms of the RMA phenomenon (the Social Wave, the Radical Transformation, and the Continuity and Evolution). Two historical case studies, the Napoleonic RMA and the First World War RMA, are used in order to draw out the lessons learned regarding past revolutions and to examine the validity of the paradigms.

AS the literature on the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has expanded rapidly in the last decade, RMA has turned out to be a hugely contestable concept. The rationale behind the RMA was originally a grand strategy developed during the Cold War.¹ In the early

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1. For a review of the military-technological developments that took place in the post-World War II period and led to the current Revolution in Military Affairs, see

Andrew Liaropoulos holds a Master's Degree in Intelligence and Strategic Studies from University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and is currently a doctorate candidate at the University of Wales, Swansea, Department of Politics and International Relations, and a Research Associate in the Callaghan Centre for Conflict Studies. Previously he was a Research Analyst for the Scientific Committee of the Hellenic Ministry of Defence, and the Naval War Academy in Athens, Greece.



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[+1 \(410\) 516-6989](tel:+14105166989)
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