The Meaning of Total War
Interviewer

So for the transcriber, Dr., please tell us your name and spell it, and then your present title.

Roger Spiller

Well, my name is Roger Spiller, S-P-I-L-L-E-R, andâ€”

Interviewer

And R-O-G, not R-O-D-G.

Roger Spiller

R-O-G-E-R, thatâ€™s right, andâ€”

Interviewer

Presently you are at Kansas University, though, is it?

Roger Spiller

Iâ€™mâ€”since supposedly retiring from the U.S. Army Commandant General Staff College in 2005, Iâ€™ve been teaching graduate courses at the University of Kansas.

Interviewer

Iâ€™m going to ask you to move the microphone down a little closer to Rogerâ€™s head, because he has a soft, solemn voice.

Roger Spiller

Sorry.

Interviewer

No, itâ€™s quite niceâ€”itâ€™s just we need to get the microphone closer to get every little breath.

Roger Spiller

Okay.

Interviewer

Itâ€™s going to be drifting.

Interviewer

And I would point it towards his head, as if it wereâ€”

Interviewer

Okay.

Interviewer

Speak a little bit, Roger.

Roger Spiller

Okay, howâ€™s this? Sound a little better?

Interviewer

Point theâ€”actually, point the microphone down towards his head, as if it were a dagger.

Roger Spiller

Well, I donâ€™t have a present title. Theoreticallyâ€”

Roger Spiller

Great.

Interviewer

Then create one. Grand Poobah ofâ€”

Interviewer

Now speak, Roger. Tell me your favorite moment of 2010.

Roger Spiller

Favorite moment of 2010?

Interviewer

Yes.

Roger Spiller

Waking up in the hospital.

Interviewer

Howâ€™s this sound, better?

Interviewer

Sounds much better now, yeah.

Roger Spiller

Okay.

Interviewer

Iâ€™m looking at the bars from here.

Roger Spiller

Okay.

Interviewer

So again, itâ€™s good. Just come on and check and make sure the microphone itself is not in this frame, and I think weâ€™ll be good.

Interviewer

I donâ€™t see the mic.

Interviewer

Okay, good.

Roger Spiller

Doesnâ€™t look like I have a hat or anything?

Interviewer

No.

Roger Spiller

Good. Okay.

Interviewer

But it would look good on you.

Interviewer

As a term of art, war termination is of fairly recent vintage, having made its appearance in legal studies during the First World War. Before that, what did theyâ€”how did they refer to the ends of wars? Why was the phrase â€œwar terminationâ€ created then?

Roger Spiller

Myâ€”

Interviewer

I know this is from your essayâ€”Iâ€™m just addressing it for the record.

Roger Spiller

Sure. My suspicion is that it was a part of the evolution of the laws of war, which had really made their appearance with the Lieber Code in the American Civil War. And the international community had taken an interest in the termination of war, how war is finishedâ€”not only how they were conducted but how they were finished. And this led to a kind of, oh, a minor school of literature and international laws of war to ensure that justice was done on all sides. The ultimate hope, of course, was that war could be prevented all together.

Roger Spiller

Of course, this coincided at the same time with the rise of the world peace movement, the most famous part of which were the great Hague conferences at the turn of the century.

And, ultimately, right after the conclusion of World War I, the establishment of the League of Nations, which notably the United States did not sign up for.

Interviewer

What were theâ€”the first Geneva Accords were when?

Roger Spiller

The first Geneva Accords?

Interviewer

Yeah. First World War?

Roger Spiller

The Secondâ€”Second World War.

Interviewer

Second World Warâ€”there were no Geneva Accords before that.

Roger Spiller

No, theâ€”

Interviewer

I thought there was a first round after the First World Warâ€”there wereâ€”

Roger Spiller

Well, the League of Nations wasâ€”

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Roger Spiller

Was put together in Geneva.

Interviewer

Right. But the League of Nations actually did any codification of the laws of war, or no?

Roger Spiller

Yes, and there have always been sort of informal agreements, especially after World War I, Western governments were concerned by the use of poison gasâ€”

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

Roger Spiller

And the use of airplanes to bomb civilian populations.

Interviewer

Right.

Roger Spiller

And unfortunately, some nations were getting experience in advance doing that, notably the Italiansâ€”

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

Roger Spiller

In North Africa. And so there was a great deal of concern, especially in the U.K., which was vulnerable to air attack. It was I think Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister in the 1930s, who said â€œthe bomber will always get through.â€ And what they were getting through to was not war industries, it was the civilian population itself. This idea that in order to win a great war you had to break the will of the enemy people, so the people become a target. Whether it was a legitimate military target or not is another question.

Roger Spiller

So by the turn of the century, some people were beginning to interest themselves on howâ€”if we were so unfortunate as to have a war, how that war might be limited both in duration and in the cost and destruction of the war. So there was a great interest in mitigating the effects of war in some way, whether by means of law or by means of technology, or simply common agreement that it was in no oneâ€™s interest to engage in some form of warfare.

Interviewer

When do peopleâ€”when does the popular voice becomeâ€”is it consistent with the rise of democracy in the twentieth century that the popular voice becomes significant as a tool for ending or beginning wars?

Roger Spiller

I think there was a great public change of mind in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century about what war was, about the nature of war, about how war should be conducted. Before World War I, and maybe even before that, if you asked the educated man on the street in the Western nations whether war was inevitable he would say, â€œYes.â€ Whether war was a natural phenomenon like a thunderstorm that you couldnâ€™t predict and you would have difficulty controlling or impossible to control, he would say, â€œYes.â€

Roger Spiller

After World War I, the answer would have been â€œnoâ€ to both of those. So the publicâ€”the public was increasingly interested in war in the nineteenth and certainly in the twentieth century. The two great revolutions in warfare in the nineteenth century, one of which is always talked aboutâ€”the technological or industrial revolution, but another one isnâ€™t addressed, hasnâ€™t been addressed so systematically, and thatâ€™s the democratic revolution.

Roger Spiller

With the emergence of the idea during the Napoleonic Wars that the entire nation would go to war. That to the degree possible you would mobilize every asset you had to protect vital interests of state and nation. And it was the revolution that gave some substance to that idea of mobilization. Technological advances, material advances of all kind, went hand-in-hand to encourage the idea of what was called â€œtotal mobilization.â€ It was a notion that came to be very popular in Europe, especially Germany, after World War I. In fact, it was General Ludendorff who coined the term â€œtotal war.â€

Roger Spiller

And by total war, he meant the complete mobilizationâ€” militarization of a society for the purposes of war. So you have these competing impulses. On the one hand, there are people such as the English barristers, who are writing about international laws of war and how to terminate war equitably to sort of overcome the mistake of starting the war to begin with. And on the other hand, you have this other impulse toward total war.

Roger Spiller

Both schools were aiming in directions that were unattainable. I mean, they were ideals more than the realities of war. Always impose limits on its conduct. And thatâ€™s one of the things that I especially wanted to talk about in this essay.

For the People, By the People
Interviewer

Well, it seems as though it coincides with war being fought when there is more at stake for the mass of the citizenry that they are brought into it.

Roger Spiller

Thatâ€™s right. Itâ€™sâ€”for a limited war, an expeditionary war, you sort of go to war with what you have. But for a national war, one that engages the national interest, the whole population is in some wayâ€”in some way involved. Although the United States, even in World War II, which was the most completely mobilized the country has ever been, in the United States an enormous number of able-bodied men, who in other countries would have been eligible for active military service, were held back for purposes of industrial productionâ€”a tremendous lot.

Roger Spiller

We could have drafted into service upwards of I think eight or nine million people, and yet our enlistmentâ€”ourâ€”I should say our draft standards were such that we rejected several million people, who in other countries would not have been forgiven military serviceâ€”on grounds of mental or physical deficiency, or some other ground. So we were nowhere near the top end of our mobilization, even though, in American history, it was the most we had ever done. And during the Civil War, the South, the Confederacy, did manage to mobilize an astonishing 80% of its military-age males, notâ€”

Interviewer

With the exception ofâ€”

Roger Spiller

Not counting the slaves.

Interviewer

Right.

Roger Spiller

But the warâ€”

Interviewer

Till the very end.

Roger Spiller

Till the very end, grew so serious that even President Davis recommended to the Confederate Congress that slaves be used for military service in return for a promise of freedom, and the Congress was not buying that at all, so.

Interviewer

But it seems as if the need to maintainâ€”forgetting, for the moment, citizen-soldiersâ€”but citizen supportâ€”

Roger Spiller

Yep.

Interviewer

Is a critical factor of war that can lead to a war termination, in the terms of which weâ€™re talking about it at this conference.

Roger Spiller

Itâ€™s true even in the kind of global war we fought in World War II. Itâ€™s most prominent in limited warsâ€”Korea, Vietnamâ€” in which the public is either not completely involved, or not convinced of the justice of the war. So the age of modern war really begins in 1945, and you see the workings of public opinion, and the policymakerâ€™s attentiveness to public opinion, intensifying. And thatâ€™s a process which has continued to intensify, fed by nothing other than the revolution in communications thatâ€™s occurred since the 1950s.

Roger Spiller

Thereâ€™s just noâ€”thereâ€™s no precedent for that sort of thing. And now, almost every day is an electronic referendum on the conduct of war. We may not be very interested in it day-to-day, or citizens may not be very interested in it, but they know about it. Itâ€™s hard for them not to be exposed to what is happening in Iraq or Afghanistan. Whereas ten years ago, the average citizen would have had trouble locating them on a map, now, they know where Baqubah is, orâ€”

Interviewer

Well, it is a vivid picture, too, right? As opposed toâ€”

Roger Spiller

Itâ€™s a dramatic picture. Itâ€™s fed by image.

Interviewer

Right.

Roger Spiller

You donâ€™tâ€”you know, in news, you donâ€™t go looking for places where nothing happens. Itâ€™s only when the exceptional happensâ€”thatâ€™s what news is. You donâ€™t fillâ€”you donâ€™t go looking for images of normal traffic on the interstate. You go for the multi-car wrecks.

Interviewer

Itâ€™s notâ€”itâ€™s â€œman bites dog,â€ not â€œdog bites man.â€

Roger Spiller

Yeah, something like thatâ€”yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewer

Well, theâ€”but nonetheless, another mitigating factor to this has to be that for most of the twentieth century, we had conscription.

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

But since 1973, we had an all-volunteer armyâ€”

Roger Spiller

Right.

Interviewer

So that public opinion takes on a more diminished role, Iâ€™d imagine, if itâ€™s not the sons and daughters of theâ€”if thereâ€™s no notion of an acceptance of risk.

Roger Spiller

Yet the heightened technical capacities of public media ensure that the emotional impact on the general population is every bit as intense, maybe more so, than the mass wars of World War II and World War I. I was involved in a project a few years ago, a film project a few years ago. We were discussing how the ordinary citizen in America received war news. How was the ordinary citizen informed about the progress of American forces in the fighting theaters of war?

Roger Spiller

Well, they got letters. When it was really bad news, they got telegrams from the War

Department, if they were missing, wounded, or killed. But once a week, MovieTone News and News of the World were playing at the local theater. And these are wonderful to look at now for how little they informed the audience, but in those days, that was the information. So it was eitherâ€”it was either in the newspapersâ€”again, highly censoredâ€”MovieTone News or some company like that, or private communicationsâ€”rumors, friends, letters from friends of friends who knew Joe on the Front in the Bocage of France after D-Dayâ€”that sort of thing.

Roger Spiller

So if you compare theseâ€”if you like, the input of information about war to the public citizenry in letâ€™s say 1944, to the amount of information coming to the citizen now, the individual citizen, and also to the number of individual citizens, each one of those pieces of news carries with it an emotional impact. And it affects the audienceâ€”it affects their opinions. No matter how intellectual they are, theyâ€™re going to be emotionally influenced by it. And the policymaker who attempts to ignore that, ignores it at his perilâ€”the American policymaker, that is.

The Spiller Doctrine: The Black Swans of the War
Interviewer

How influenced is something like the Powell Doctrine by that reality, do you think?

Roger Spiller

Notâ€”

Interviewer

Or in a sense, you cannotâ€”repeating the Powell Doctrine as being massive forceâ€”

Roger Spiller

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer

Used for very clearly stated aims.

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

Quick, and out, and therefore less likely to endure the kinds of hardships that come through and are vivified byâ€”

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

Public image.

Roger Spiller

Well, itâ€™s a very appealing idea. Itâ€™s, of course, a product of the Vietnam War experienceâ€”in many ways, a reaction to it. The other problem is you donâ€™t get to chooseâ€”you sometimes donâ€™t get to choose which wars you fight. And the Army certainly doesnâ€™t get to vote, and neither does the Chief of Staff of the Army, nor the Secretary of Defense. That decision rests with one person only.

Roger Spiller

I think the Powell Doctrine made it all a bit too clinical. I was working in a joint command for a four-star general, one of the so-called CINCs, at the time that the Powell Doctrine cameâ€”well, we saw it in draft.

Roger Spiller

And I objected to it onâ€”we were supposed to write a response, and I wrote the response. I objected to it on those grounds. It wasâ€”that it was entirelyâ€”it was too restrictive a formula. That if the United States followed that formula, essentially it would entail a great deal more risk than otherwise. There are times, such as in the Balkansâ€”

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

Roger Spiller

And our intervention in the Balkans and Kosovoâ€”when itâ€™s not overtly in Americaâ€™s interest to be there. And you mightâ€”at the time even, it was asked, â€œWell, where are the Europeans? And if this is such a problem for the Balkans, where is the European community?â€ Well, they were there, but it wasnâ€™t the same as when America intervened.

Roger Spiller

In that case, it turned out positively, and probably prevented a conflagration and perhaps even a genocide. So it turned out well thereâ€”in Somalia, it turned out very badly. Very badly indeed. In both cases, we violated the Powell Doctrine. Not out of perversity or ignorance, I think, but because it was decided the United States had a moral obligation to intervene in those places.

Roger Spiller

I donâ€™t know how far I would go with moral intervention, the moral necessity of intervention, because itâ€™s a kind of swamp. You have to, in any case, even if youâ€™re a great power like the United States, be very selective about which fights you choose if you do indeed choose them. I think in Somalia, we enteredâ€”and Iâ€™m speaking from personal experience here, notâ€”I was involved, at least on the periphery, in those days. I was in official harness in those days.

Roger Spiller

We entered Somalia for humanitarian reasons. It was a humanitarian mission, and on those grounds, we feltâ€”it was felt we had a moral obligation to intervene. But history didnâ€™t stop, as usual. The conflict evolved, and it evolved in a different direction because we were there. We were another factor in the evolution of the war, and eventually the original mission obsolescedâ€”it morphed, and became something else. It became a

peacekeeping mission, which is quite a different matter altogether. You use different troops, different capabilities, you have different expectations, you have different measures of successâ€”all sorts of things.

Roger Spiller

So the war changed appreciably after we entered, and we did not adjust adequately, so it came to a bad end. So you take your chances, and Iâ€™m not sure that one formula, like the Powell Doctrine, is adequate for all the contingencies the United States faces.

Interviewer

Yet it seems as though the Powell Doctrine is framed, in part, to do the best one can to avoid the kind of uncertainty.

Roger Spiller

Well, one of the underlying assumptions in the Powell Doctrine is that itâ€™s going to be quick and decisive. Use overwhelming force, get in as fast as you can, hit the enemy as fast, as hard as you can, and get out soon. The only problem with expeditions like this, they tend to last a lot longer than we expect them to. This so-called phase four of the operation, that is to say post-hostilities phase, always involves some degree of humanitarian rescueâ€” perhaps reconstruction, perhaps political reformation. That certainly was the case in Panama.

Roger Spiller

Panama was notâ€”the Panama intervention was not a one-off. I mean there was plenty to do after the fighting stopped. But it was the fighting itself that helped shape the peace that followed.

Interviewer

Well, one of the themes of your essayâ€”and in general, I think it seems somewhat a theme to your workâ€”is that it is that war is unpredictable. That there are agents of change, myriad agents of change in all directions.

Roger Spiller

Yes.

Interviewer

And that you cannot prepare, really effectively for what you are going toâ€”what war is going to do.

Roger Spiller

Right.

Roger Spiller

What would theâ€”given that, what would the â€œSpiller Doctrineâ€ be?

Roger Spiller

Intellectual preparation. If thereâ€™s one deficiency, itâ€™s the deficiency of imagination,

asâ€”

Interviewer

As General Dempsey was saying.

Roger Spiller

As General Dempsey mentioned this morning in that film clip. That wasâ€”Iâ€™m very interested. I didnâ€™t talk to him about that before he put that up. But Iâ€”it was very interesting to me that he would choose that as a theme. But I think thatâ€™s dead right.

Roger Spiller

Saying that war is unpredictable and fundamentally chaotic is not the sameâ€”as some people have saidâ€”not the same as a counsel for inaction. The great puzzle isâ€”really the great paradox is that knowing all that, at some point you will have to act. You will act.

Roger Spiller

And you might not like it, and it might be under conditions that you never yourself would have chosen, but you must act to sustain the interests of the nation. I mean thatâ€™sâ€”it goes with the territory. To paraphrase Mao, itâ€™s not a dinner party, and itâ€™s not a seminar.

Interviewer

But when you say â€œintellectual preparationâ€â€”so youâ€™re saying or you could say that, â€œpreparation of the imagination.â€ That itself is not a course of action.

Roger Spiller

Itâ€™s not a course of action, but itâ€™ll govern the action that you choose. If you know, for instanceâ€”if we had understood, for instance, at the beginning of our involvement in Vietnamâ€”if we had understood the roots of the Vietnamese independence movement. If we had understood the historic connections, the historic relationship between China and Indochina, and how much animosity there was between the two. If weâ€™d understood the political landscape with any kind of acuity at all, inside both North Vietnam and South Vietnam, our courses of action would have been different. We wouldnâ€™t have been so blithely confident that we could shoot our way to peace.

Interviewer

You write something in your essay, and I went over it several times, because I want to make sure I understand it. You said that Robert McNamaraâ€”

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

Tried to imagine what he would do if he were Ho Chi Minhâ€”

Roger Spiller

If he were Ho Chi Minh, yeah.

Interviewer

And I sense that your critique of that was that he was taking himself and putting himselfâ€”

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

Into North Vietnamâ€”

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

And saying, â€œWhat would I do?â€

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

As opposed to saying, â€œWhat would Ho Chi Minh do?â€

Roger Spiller

Right. Thatâ€™s exactly right. In every disaster, thereâ€™s always one guy who knows. When the investigations come out of the oil spill in the gulf, Iâ€™ll bet you a dollar we find that there was one guy in BP who said, â€œWait a minute, you donâ€™t want to do it this way. This oil head is not fitted for this kind of operation. There are all sorts of technical problems here.â€ Heâ€™s probably going to be in middle management somewhere, or maybe a technical expert. He may look funny. He may dress funny. He may have bad habits, have a pugnacious personality, be disliked by his fellow employees. But heâ€™s right. And the management blows him off.

Roger Spiller

If you go backâ€”this is almost a hypothesis. If you go back to any disaster, military or industrial or otherwise, and dig deeply enough, youâ€™ll find one of these guys. And the trick, I think for the leader is to be sufficiently open of mind to recognize that guy and to take him seriously long enough to consider what he has to say. I did a study of the Columbia shuttle disaster. There was a guy like that in NASAâ€”Richard Roca, thatâ€™s his name. Heâ€™sâ€”he told everybody. He told the middle managers. You know what their reply was? He said, â€œThe heat sealsâ€”I donâ€™t know if theyâ€™re going to stick, but I donâ€™t like the way the film looks of the foam strike.â€

Roger Spiller

You remember the foam that came off the launch vehicle? He said, â€œWe need more photographs. We need to retask our satellites so we can get close photographs, close images, of the affected surface and see what damage has been done.â€ Senior management said, â€œWe donâ€™t want to screw around with the schedule. We have a

tight schedule. Thereâ€™s another launch to follow right after this one. We need to get this bird back down.â€

Roger Spiller

Thereâ€™s always a guy like Roca somewhereâ€”I just know it in my bones. Being intellectually prepared means taking people like Roca seriously, for a minute at least.

Interviewer

I think thereâ€™s two steps to that, right? One is being willing to be changed by what you hear from someone.

Roger Spiller

Sure.

Interviewer

Thatâ€™s one thing. But the second thing is the art of knowing who may be right.

Roger Spiller

Right. Right.

Interviewer

And thatâ€™s some kind of leadership chemistry, right? And General Dempsey mentioned that this morning, too.

Roger Spiller

Well, as you grow upâ€”and Iâ€™ll speak directly to the Army. As you grow up as an officer in the Army, you gradually become committed to a corporate narrative, and it begins to affectâ€”it sets up boundaries to your thinking. Youâ€™re not asâ€”you tend to be less flexible as you go along. Within the orbit, within your immediate orbit, you may be known as a free thinker, but thereâ€™s always a limit about how free you can be.

Interviewer

Itâ€™s an institution of conformity on at least some level, right?

Roger Spiller

Of course, sure, and for good and practical reasonsâ€”

Interviewer

Right.

Roger Spiller

Armies must operate in unison if they can. I mean thatâ€™s, you know. Itâ€™s certainly a pre-democratic institution and a pre-industrial institution, even a prehistoric institution, and it bears all the signatures of those origins. It is a unique subculture, and it is very much a subculture. It has all the signatures of a subculture. Yeah.

Interviewer

Soâ€”

Roger Spiller

And so it enforces certain patterns of thought along its members, which are very difficult to break out. And it is a practical problem. You donâ€™t want a commander whoâ€™s running around willy-nilly, changing his mind every second, â€™cause you have thousands of people who are awaiting your command. If you say, â€œGo left,â€ and then everybodyâ€™s going left, and you change your mind and they go right, to what end? So you have to alwaysâ€”itâ€™s not rocket science. But itâ€™s very difficult.

Roger Spiller

You always have to weigh the practicalities of changing your mind against the necessity of changing your mind and thatâ€™s not an easy task. That takes some practicing, and it takes some thinking about before the event occurs.

Roger Spiller

And I think if thatâ€”what General Dempsey was talking about with regard to the strategic education of Army leaders, if it can somehowâ€”if what happens, eventually, can somehow instill the future leaders of the Army with that talent, that will be quite a step forward.

Interviewer

But here you have men and women who are trained on a certain plane of conformity and then leap into positions of strategic importance.

Roger Spiller

Correct.

Interviewer

That are asked to make decisions, and according to the Spiller Doctrineâ€”just for the momentâ€”to hear the eccentric voice in the crowd and at least give it itsâ€”at least take it seriously.

Roger Spiller

Right.

Interviewer

Howâ€”what would it takeâ€”itâ€™s one thing to hear it and another thing to say, â€œLetâ€™s stop the production of thisâ€”â€

Roger Spiller

Sometimes it takes a great deal of courage. You know, after Pearl Harbor, we could have just built more battleships. We lost two, a few were damaged, and the strike was certainly intended to disable the battle fleet. We could have said, â€œOkay, weâ€™ll delay our entry into the Pacific war a little bit. Weâ€™ll just buildâ€”itâ€™ll just take us a little while to build more battleships, but weâ€™ll get there.â€ And indeed, we could have, and we did build more battleshipsâ€”the Missouriâ€”so.

Roger Spiller

But as against that was the cost of wasting time, and trying to reverse Japanese advances across the Pacific, which had grown just exponentially since the spring. So you couldâ€™ve madeâ€”the American government could have made a very wrong decision at that point. Instead, we took what carriers we had, and they carriedâ€”they really carried the burden of the Pacific War. I donâ€™tâ€™ think that was apprehended by Naval doctrine before World War II, and they did an enormous number of tests and games and simulations about Pacific war, how to fight a Pacific warâ€”a battleship-heavy Pacific war. Some exercises with carrier forces. But the realityâ€”I mean the carriers proved to be much, much more important to the Pacific war than anyone had given them any credit for in doctrine before World War II.

Interviewer

Do you think that theâ€”

Roger Spiller

But there were some carrier fansâ€”

Interviewer

Right. Right.

Roger Spiller

Some carrier enthusaists, that said, â€œThe carrier is the way of the future for Naval warfare. Theyâ€™re the linchpin of advancing our forces across the Pacific.â€ So there were guys out there, but they didnâ€™t have institutional power.

Interviewer

The beginning part of this quarter-century was a time of enormous technological advances, and there was a sense that, Iâ€™m sure then, like we say now, that the future is boundless, and that we have no idea what kind of wars weâ€™re going to be fighting. But it does seem like we haveâ€”the uncertainty has grown exponentially into our own time. Do you look at the future of wars of the twenty-first century as within the scope of the imagination of those leaders in charge right now?

Roger Spiller

I donâ€™t think we know. I donâ€™t think we can know until the event. We can make forecasts, but we may be far wrong. Thatâ€™s the other vexing part about it. If it were all predictable, we would have fixed it a long time ago, wouldnâ€™t we? But again, thatâ€™s not a counsel for inaction. But thatâ€™sâ€”the paradox is even in the face of all this uncertaintyâ€”as the Athenians said in the History of the Pelopennisian Wars, just as they were beginning. They said, â€œWe have to abide their outcome in the dark.â€ War is so predictable.

Roger Spiller

But they were not counseling a lack of response from Athens against Spartan aggression. The Athenians werenâ€™t going to back down, even though they knew the inherent tragedy of what was about to occur, and the uncertainly of it all. Still, they went into the war

very confident that they were going to winâ€”of course they did, you know? They didnâ€™t win, but they could not foreseeâ€”they couldnâ€™t foresee the plague of Athens. They couldnâ€™t foresee how minor results would have great effects. They couldnâ€™t see how some of their victories would have negative effects, and some of their defeats would have positive effects. There was no way of predicting any of that.

In Search of Elusive Victory
Interviewer

Though this is a good segue into going back more directly to the conference title of war termination. The notion of victory, that you say in your essay has become somewhat archaic, or has changed in itsâ€”

Roger Spiller

No, I think itâ€™s limiting. I think it obscures the complexity of what weâ€™re doing. It may once have been possible to think that all wars ended in a great victory that you could paint on a mural. I donâ€™tâ€” on closer examination, if you look at how wars actually finish, and the nature of the peace that follows, you find that victory is not really an event. I mean the end of war is not really an event like victory, I should say, and that its effects can reverberate throughout for years. Just for years.

Roger Spiller

As late asâ€”you know the 1840s the United States was still dealing with questions that had arisen during the American Revolution. The treatment of the native peoples and the expansion to the westâ€”what was then the old northwest. But I mean in the 1840s, weâ€™re still having disputes with Great Britain over boundaries. You know, almostâ€”I mean there was a war cry there for a whileâ€”not a serious one, nothing that took us to the brink of war with Great Britainâ€”but it was this diplomatic crisis of some magnitude. I mean thatâ€™sâ€”I believe itâ€™s more than half a century later?

Roger Spiller

And how many years have we been in a semi-state of war in Korea after the [Korean War] armistice? That was in what, 1953? Over half a century. If someone had come to President Truman just after the North Koreans invaded South Korea in the summer of 1950 and said, â€œMr. President, we have to go to war to defend the sovereignty of South Korea, to prevent its being overtaken by the communist North. The price for this is probably going to be about 60,000 casualties and 100,000 more wounded.

Roger Spiller

â€œAnd oh yes, by the way, weâ€™re going to have to occupy the southern part of the country for the next half century,â€ what do you think his response would have been? He probably wouldnâ€™t have been to happy about this. Probably wouldâ€™ve been reluctant to go. And yet he had, he felt, no choice under the circumstances at the time. He simply felt he had no choice, and that is, indeed, the great paradox.

Interviewer

So, in a sense, what youâ€™re also saying is that wars can really never terminate, or terminate a century later.

Roger Spiller

Well, they terminate in a pace thatâ€™s farâ€”the denoument is much, much longer than we always want to think.

Interviewer

They arenâ€™t necessarily related to battlefield victories.

Roger Spiller

No.

Interviewer

Last campaigns.

Roger Spiller

No.

Interviewer

Or, necessarily related to the original goals of war.

Roger Spiller

And those are alwaysâ€”those are always in a state of motionâ€”always in a state of motion.

Interviewer

You mentioned yesterday that the one thing that is rarely understood is the way that the enemy can change the conduct and the outcome of the war.

Roger Spiller

Yes.

Interviewer

Even the loserâ€”

Roger Spiller

Oh, yes.

Interviewer

Can change the conduct.

Roger Spiller

Losers are not without their resources. Itâ€™s very interesting to look at the end of our involvement in Vietnam from that angle. The United States at the end ofâ€”even though we areâ€”we had telegraphed our intentions to leave South Vietnam no matter what the cost, as President Thieu suspected. We nevertheless had certain advantages we could have played in the peace negotiations. But the Nixon administration was hell-bent on getting out as soon as possible, for reasons of political discord at home as much as anything.

Roger Spiller

And the, you know, the American people were having their vote. Well, the North Vietnamese played that advantage very well, but we had advantages, too. We had enormous, overwhelming strength, that weâ€”mostly what we did was cut back on that strength as fast as we could. I think there mightâ€™ve been other ways to orchestrate our departure from that war, and essentially leave Southeast Asia in a much more equitable way than we did. Itâ€™s still quite an emotional subject, the way in which we left that war. And I think we may get over it in another couple of generations, but not any time soon.

Interviewer

Well, and I imagine you would agree that the way that we left has had an impact on the future wars.

Roger Spiller

It has an impact right now.

Interviewer

Explain that.

Roger Spiller

It has an impact. The shadow of Vietnam hangs over every one of our communications with Hamid Karzai, and with the government of Afghanistanâ€”with our attitude toward the enemy or enemies in Afghanistan and Iraqâ€”with our putative allies in Pakistan. Vietnam is right there behind the curtain.

Roger Spiller

Even more than the first Gulf War. Itâ€™s allâ€”you know, history has a savage way about it. I mean historical memory has a savage way about it. Itâ€™s not symmetrical, and itâ€™s not uniform, and itâ€™s notâ€”itâ€™s not arranged chronologically. You sort of look back and pick the things that impress you the most. Those are the things that tend to influence your behavior in the future. I mean the best analogy is the old Munichâ€”the old Munich and appeasement analogy.

Roger Spiller

How long did Munich play in the political imagination? Even though we fought Korea, and we encountered the Kimoy-Matsu crisis, and the intervention in Lebanonâ€”all that was over and above what was happening in Southeast Asia. Munich held on and held on, and itâ€”

Interviewer

Munich is still holding on.

Roger Spiller

Itâ€™s still holding on.

Interviewer

And it still an impact.

Roger Spiller

Fewer people understand the analogy these days.

Roger Spiller

Right.

Roger Spiller

Butâ€”

Roger Spiller

But you can call somebody a [Neville] Chamberlain nowâ€”people will know what that means.

Roger Spiller

Yeah. Yeah, certain people, yeah. Yeahâ€”an informed reader will know.

Interviewer

You say the great distance between executive decision and military action for which generals often prayed and policymakers cursed shrank rapidly during these years. Can you explain that in a little bit more depth? For the first half, how does generalsâ€”why is it that generals pray for a great distance between executive decisions?

Roger Spiller

Because they have independence.

Interviewer

They want to do their own war.

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

Theyâ€”particularly in American history, they fear the input of a naÃ¯ve civilian.

Roger Spiller

Itâ€™s not just American history. Napoleon, when he was on campaign in Russia, in order to receive communication from Paris, I think the loop was about two weeks. He had the best communication system in continental Europeâ€”very fastâ€”perhaps the fastest. Probably faster than the Rothschild communication system, which was for the financial network. But it was very fast. It was very advanced for its time. Yet it still was two weeks between decision and action, essentially.

Roger Spiller

And what is it now? One email away, you know? The theater commander will walk around with a Blackberry in his hand, and have a running conversation with his President. Thatâ€™s a pretty tight loop.

Interviewer

With Andy Jackson, heâ€™d make his reputation onâ€”

Roger Spiller

[Laughter] Yeah. Andy wouldnâ€™t be flying towards New Orleans if heâ€™d had a Blackberry. Thatâ€™s what I meant. Itâ€™sâ€”itâ€™s not just the advance of communications. Itâ€™s changed our mentality about what can be accomplished, and sometimes makes us quite unrealistic, because regardless of how much has changed in war, its fundamental elements have not. Itâ€™s still composed of violence and destruction. These things, at the very least, take time.

Interviewer

I was going to say, you think that this, the speed with which decisions mustâ€”the speed with which decisions may be made, now, works negatively upon the conduct of aâ€”the use of deadly force?

Roger Spiller

I do. I wouldâ€”in this instance, in this restrictive instance, Iâ€™d like a lot less efficiency, actually. Iâ€™d like a little lag time, because the stakes are so high, not only for us but for the enemy and the population. And it would be nice to have a little less efficiency in that regard, but weâ€™re not going in that direction. Thatâ€™s not the way war is going. Itâ€™s going the opposite direction.

Interviewer

You say, so itâ€™s â€œAll the more ironic that at the same time the idea shouldâ€™ve arisen that war could be treated as if it took place in a laboratory, grown in a petri dish under strictly controlled conditions.â€

Roger Spiller

Yes. Thatâ€™s aâ€”that really, in a theoretical sense, really seemed to reach its high point during the early â€™60s during the Vietnam War. A lot of it took its inspiration from the works of Thomas Schelling, who wrote veryâ€”a future Nobel laureate in economicsâ€”who wrote veryâ€”several very influential pieces on the management, the strategic management of war, in which heâ€”and a lot of people who followed his schoolâ€”believed that the actions of war themselves were almost incidental to the process of managing the war.

Roger Spiller

That, to use Wayne Leeâ€™s phrase from this morning, military actions were merely bargaining chips. They had no intrinsic value of their own. They were entirely derivative of larger activity.

Interviewer

Well, this is the politics by other means.

Roger Spiller

Yeah, it is. Schelling thoughtâ€”Schelling thought that conflict was nothing more or less than a bargaining process, and this derived from his studies in market economics, especially closed markets in which there were a limited number of competitors. And these negotiations, this bargaining, occurred between elites, locked up in conference rooms without any kind of input from outside it at all. Well, elite markets might work that wayâ€”I donâ€™t thinkâ€”wars are public business, and you canâ€™t close yourself off in a laboratory in order to run them.

Interviewer

How much of this is driven by the human arrogance thatâ€”

Roger Spiller

Hubris.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Roger Spiller

Yes. A great deal of it. But this is part of what makes us human. War is part of what makes us human.

Interviewer

And unpredictability is what makes us human.

Roger Spiller

Yes.

Interviewer

Wars do not begin by accident but deliberately and with purpose. That is how they are fought and that is how they end.

Roger Spiller

The notion that there is an accidental war, thatâ€™sâ€”I donâ€™t know where that comes from. Itâ€™s a very soothing idea, but we do it to ourselves. We may be wrong, but we start it on purpose. We have something in mind. It may be a stupid idea. The cause may be perniciousâ€”may be dreadful. But we start it in the hope that we can advance that cause. I mean thatâ€™s a very deliberate act. Thatâ€™s a choice. Even those who are attacked have a choice. They can submit. They can do other things. They might not likeâ€”the alternatives may not be acceptable to them, so they fight. They defend themselves. And sometimes they succeed.

Roger Spiller

But these are all choices. Thereâ€™s nothing mysterious about this. This is a very human actâ€”a very human act.

Interviewer

Would you say that they end in the same way?

Roger Spiller

They do end thatâ€”they do end deliberately, but not as a consequence of deliberation by policymakers alone, or strategists alone. The idea that you canâ€”you can no longer manage a warâ€™s courseâ€”not all of it. You can some of it. But you can no more manage the totality of a warâ€™s termination than you can the totality of the war while itâ€™s going on. Some factors are beyond your reach to control or manipulate, and thatâ€™sâ€”thatâ€™s the origin of much of the uncertainty, not to mention the interaction between you and your enemies.

Roger Spiller

So thisâ€”the interactive nature of war, and its very broad range of factors that impact on whatâ€™s happeningâ€”those things are not susceptible to control. You canâ€™t run that thing off a computer. Itâ€™s just notâ€”as I said, itâ€™s prehistoric.

Reflections on the Morgenthau Plan
Interviewer

And yet with all this chaos associated with wars, we associate our greatest of Presidents asâ€”I should say every one of what we would call our greatest of Presidents is associated with some war.

Roger Spiller

It may be the greatest test a President could ever face. It may well be. I donâ€™t want to over-dignify war or over-dramatize it. Presidents face great crises of other sortsâ€”crises of ethos, moral crises that are in their way, as important or maybe more important than war itself. But war is pretty muchâ€”itâ€™s high up in the hit parade of things Presidents are faced with.

Interviewer

And yet, you could argue that some Presidents work to avoid war.

Roger Spiller

Oh, yeah.

Interviewer

And were lessâ€”less glorified through historyâ€”Eisenhower, for instance. We seem to becoming more off today.

Roger Spiller

Woodrow Wilson.

Interviewer

Woodrow Wilson.

Roger Spiller

Woodrow Wilson. Yes, not everyâ€”not every President is anxious to go to war. I donâ€™tâ€”I think if one were to ask President Obama, candidate, whether he would rather have taken office during the war or when it was at peace, I think he would choose B. And were it within his power to affect, I think he would like to make the war disappearâ€”only the war is not going to disappear. And so he has a limited range of options, a limited number of roads to go down. And as usual in circumstances like this some of the choices, most of the choices perhaps, are unpalatable. You have to choose between lesser evils.

Interviewer

Talk to me about Morgenthauâ€™s Planâ€”

Roger Spiller

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer

And the wish for wars to end with retribution.

Roger Spiller

Hmm. The Morgenthau Planâ€”

Interviewer

Thisâ€™d be Henry Morgenthau.

Roger Spiller

This is Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of the Treasury to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the author, or the patron, if you like, of a plan put together in the Department of the Treasury. I mean it really wasnâ€™t Treasuryâ€™s mission to think about the fate of post-war Germany, but thatâ€™s what it was aimed at.

Roger Spiller

It was a draconian plan, that in general called for the permanent agricultural enfeeblement of occupied Germany. And it came outâ€”it was encouraged, at least in part, by early talk in the Roosevelt Administration during World War II, from 1942-1943, about what to do with the Germans if we won.

Roger Spiller

Of course, those were days in which the outcome of this war was not certain. It was still very much a crapshoot, andâ€”but nevertheless, they were talking about it. And both Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill entertained very punitiveâ€”ideas of a very punitive peace for Germany. And it was out of that mentality, born in the white heat of the war, this policy of unconditional surrender came. And Morgenthauâ€™s Plan was meant to translate the policy of unconditional surrender into a reality on the ground in Germany, by first of all de-Nazifying the population, the male populationâ€”exactly how was not specified. De-industrializing which is completely reducing all the industry in Germany.

Roger Spiller

By those two principal methods, Roosevelt and Churchill were agreed that they wanted to create a post-war Germany that could not in a few years time work a resurgence of its military strength as it had after World War I. So in 1942 and 1943, Western policy makersâ€”and Stalin, tooâ€”are dealing with the problems of war termination that were born in World War I. Theyâ€™re stillâ€”that unconditional surrender is essentially a reverberation of World War I and what Germany didâ€”Germanyâ€™s eventual rearmament after World War I.

Interviewer

Now, did it include the killing of male population over a certain age, as I read?

Roger Spiller

No. Churchill andâ€”one source tells me that Churchill and General Eisenhower discussed, perhaps in a not-very-serious wayâ€”but discussed, executing all general staff officers, German general staff officers, over the rank of Majorâ€”50,000 or so.

Roger Spiller

And that is to say summary field execution without benefit of trial, by discretion of the local commander. Stand them up against the wall as soon as theyâ€™re taken prisoner and kill them. At the same time, Roosevelt wasâ€”again, perhaps jokinglyâ€”talking about castrating all German males of military age. Soâ€”

Interviewer

Interesting it was a racial solutionâ€”

Roger Spiller

The scent of vengeance was very much in the air in 1943 or so. Well, the Morgenthau Planâ€”Morgenthau, who was just as seized with the idea of vengeance as anyone else, maybe more soâ€”gave voice to these impulses with his plan, and talked Roosevelt into approving a draft of the plan in the fall of 1944. Of course, it was a confidential or a classified plan, but it was soon enough leakedâ€”by whom, I donâ€™t know. I donâ€™t know that anybody has said. But Drew Pearson ended up with the Morgenthau Plan, or a summary of it, and published it, I think, in the Washington Post.

Roger Spiller

It was a tremendous outcry, mainly from editorial writers. The American peopleâ€”public opinionâ€”they werenâ€™t so concerned. It didnâ€™t bother them all that much. But opinion writers, such as Walter Lippmann at the time, came out square against it. There was also a movement inside the Roosevelt Administration at the time to counter the pernicious effects of the Morgenthau Plan, because it was believed that as soon as the plan became public, it encouraged stiffer resistance on the part of the Germans on the front.

Roger Spiller

And in fact, the Office of Strategic Services reported from Bern that thatâ€™s exactly what was happening inside Germany. And one American Army officer who had access to the White House said that the Morgenthau Plan was worth 30 German divisions. His numbers, I think, were off, but the point was made well enough, and Morgenthauâ€”even though

Morgenthauâ€™sâ€”the Roosevelt Administration eventually repudiated the substance of the Morgenthau Plan. But elements of it hung on, even after Secretary of War Stimson talked Roosevelt into backing away publicly from the plan.

Roger Spiller

Stimson wanted war crimes trials. Wanted the leaders of Germany to be brought to account before the bar of international justice. He was not opposed to de-Nazification in any way, and he was notâ€”he was not enthusiastic about de-industrialization of Germany. But he came to realizeâ€”as, indeed, did Churchill, who was never really crazy about the de-industrialization element of the Morgenthau Planâ€”that if you reduce Germany to an agricultural republic, there was an additional problem that had to be taken into account. And that was the Russiansâ€”had already made plain their intention to occupy all of Germany east of the Oder-Neisse line, which is all of Germanyâ€™s agricultural land.

Roger Spiller

So you would have several tens of million starving Germans to look after after the war, because there was not going to beâ€”no interchange between the Soviet zone and the other zones of occupation. So there was aâ€”there was a backing-off from the harshest elements of the Morganthau Plan, and as Americaâ€™s occupation policies, post-war policies, worked out, they were muted even more by rising concerns over Soviet aggression and Soviet intentions in Western Europe.

Roger Spiller

And so what you got at Nuremberg was a limited number of leaders who were brought to trial and either executed or imprisoned. And a large number of those imprisoned, even those given life-imprisonment, were out of prison within the next 10 or 15 years. Lower-ranking Nazis, a lot of them, stood no trial at all. And thatâ€™s a far cry from what Churchill and Eisenhower had muted a couple years before.

Roger Spiller

How interesting within that short period of time that such a transformation was made. And I imagine that already there was a deeper understanding that the total surrender that had been demanded of Germany from World War I was one of the reasons why Germany rose in World War II.

Roger Spiller

Exactly. And I think when President Truman succeeded President Roosevelt in the Spring of â€™45, in May of â€™45, that I think Truman instinctively understood that. And, I think, by that time, of course, Henry Stimson had just enormous prestige within the government. You know, heâ€™s dying by inches in front of everybody, and he refuses to retire. If you read his diaries, you can see how heâ€™s kind of triangulating between his deteriorating personal health and the seriousness of the problems facing him, because at the same time heâ€™s trying to moderate what Morgenthau has put in motion.

Roger Spiller

Heâ€™s trying to do the same thing with regard to Japan, and thatâ€™s a story with a completely different twist, but again it all turns on the policy of unconditional surrender.

Atomic Finality
Interviewer

Letâ€™s talk about the story, a little bit, of Japan. The introduction of the bomb at the end of the Second World War.

Roger Spiller

Okay.

Interviewer

Talk about World War termination.

Roger Spiller

Right.

Interviewer

Here is one of the grand statements of war termination.

Roger Spiller

Right.

Interviewer

And one that hangs over the world ever since.

Roger Spiller

Yes. Yes. Again, itâ€™s too simple a picture. A very complexâ€”very complex situation. But there were moves to mute the idea ofâ€”first of all, Rooseveltâ€”and even Trumanâ€”were much less concerned with the post-war fate of Japan than they were of Germany. They just spent more time with Germany than they did with the war against Japan. Inside the Department of State at the Assistant Secretary of State level, there was a fellow named Joseph Grew, who around whom there crystallized a movement of people who really knew something about Japanese life and culture. Who had lived in Japan, who had studied and worked in Japan, who as far as they were able understood Japanese cultureâ€”they knew more about Japanese culture than anybody else in America, probably, with a possible exception of a couple of scholars in universities.

Roger Spiller

And so they took this knowledgeâ€”the policy of unconditional surrender sort of collided with their knowledge of Japan, and how it might be possible to construct a peace. And it would have to be painstakingly constructed, and if you did it the wrong way you would invite even more disaster. So from about late 1942 onward, which is really quite early, Grew and some of his colleagues began to lobby very powerfully. And eventually managed to convince Stimson thatâ€”public opinion polls at the time, enormous numbers wanted just the outright execution of the emperor, for instance. The dismantlement of Japanâ€”the complete partitioning of Japan into little principalities that would never rise again as a unified stateâ€”essentially, the destruction of Japanese culture and life.

Interviewer

And this was because Japan, unlike Germany, had actually struck the United States?

Roger Spiller

Yes, and also because of its conduct during the war, which was judged by Americans as inhuman, bestial, barbaric, so on and so forth. But which, in point of fact, was perfectly consonant with the history of Japanese military culture. They were doingâ€”what they were doing had a cultural basis. It was of relatively recent vintage, as several new works on Japan have pointed out, and it was kind of an ersatz culture, a pseudo-military culture that Japan went to war with, but it was their culture, and they had been working at it. The Japanese military certainly had been working at it very intensely since the ascent of Hirohito to the throne in the early â€™20s. So theyâ€™d had plenty of time to prepare the public.

Interviewer

Whatâ€™s your sense ofâ€”just as an aside againâ€”War Without Mercy, the book?

Roger Spiller

I do like that book. I do like it very much. Itâ€™s been criticized on the grounds that it spins too much around race as a causative factor in our behavior, and in Japanese behavior toward us. There may be some justice in those criticisms, but I think the depth of learning and the complexity of what John has doneâ€”I think thatâ€™ll stand for quite a long time. Itâ€™sâ€”as is so often the case in these academic disputes of interpretation, it really comes down to fairly small differences.

Interviewer

But back to the A-bomb as aâ€”you know, now you have aâ€”talk about war termination, war cannot necessarilyâ€”to preserve the human race, war cannot spin out to its natural end of hostilities. That covers everything going forward, right?

Roger Spiller

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer

You know the Garry Wills book, too, I assume, Bomb Power book. This is aâ€”an agent to this narrative that can never be removed.

Roger Spiller

Thatâ€™s part of the great sea change in, I think, public opinion thatâ€™s occurred in the pastâ€”certainly in the past two centuries, but certainly in the twentieth century. That war cannot be allowed to â€œrun its courseâ€ â€™cause the course it runs toward is the extinction of a large part of the human race. Thereâ€™s another trend which should be recognized, and which should play an important role in all our future considerations about war and peace. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 10% of all those who died in wars were civilians. At the end of the twentieth century, 90% of all those who died in wars are civilians.

Roger Spiller

So at the end ofâ€”statistically speaking, at the end of the century, itâ€™s much safer to be in uniform than out of it. At least there, youâ€™re surrounded by your weapons. But thatâ€™s not a trend I think is going to be reversed, because as you may have heard this

morningâ€”letâ€™s see, whose presentation was it? It may have been Gian Gentile who brought it up, or Joe Glatthaarâ€”the idea that the locusâ€”oh, it was during the Q&A period. The idea that the locus of political authority and political legitimacy wasâ€”in earlier times, the age of limited war, the capital was considered the queen of the chess game. If you took the queen, you took the war.

Roger Spiller

Well, the queenâ€™s changed, and now itâ€™s people, so if youâ€™re fighting for the people, youâ€™re also fighting among the people. And if youâ€™re fighting among the people, the people who are not directly engaged in combat are going to suffer.

Interviewer

And how ironic how that plays in the role Americanâ€”American and world historyâ€”

Roger Spiller

Yeah.

Interviewer

Because we are the ones that declare the people to be sovereign, and here we are. The people sovereign, and we are, in a senseâ€”

Roger Spiller

Right.

Interviewer

More vulnerableâ€”

Roger Spiller

Right.

Interviewer

Because of it, with more power to the people as a mass.

Roger Spiller

And it may well be that the future Army doctrine will turn in the direction of saying that the population-centric warfare is the way of the future.

Roger Spiller

Thereâ€™s a powerful argument to be made for that. It means that our style of warfare will have to change, if thatâ€™s true, in which the minimizing of casualties, not the taking of casualties, not the creating of casualties is the aim. How to express military power in nonviolent meansâ€”that might be the great challenge of the twenty-first century.

Interviewer

Well, as a last question, yeah, explain to me your reactions to the Petraeus Doctrine.

Roger Spiller

Well, insofar as I understand it, Iâ€™m suspicious of any doctrine thatâ€”itâ€™s not because of David.

Interviewer

No, Iâ€™m sure.

Roger Spiller

I donâ€™t think David is promulgating it as an all-for-one solution.

Interviewer

No, I understand.

Roger Spiller

He has a much more artistic brain than that sort of thing implies. But other people will imply, will infer, that this is the only way to go. Like the Powell Doctrine.

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

Roger Spiller

That this is the only way to go, and that we donâ€™t need to think about it any more. I think when we start doing that again, weâ€™re in trouble from not using our brains. Wars, I think, are won and lost and ended in the mind, and theyâ€”and all the missteps begin there. And the missteps, miscalculations to begin the war, the miscalculations during the war, or the victories and defeats in the war, and the calculations by which we end them. They all start there.

Interviewer

Well, then, taking and spinning that out a little further, theâ€”I guess this is no different than the rest of human historyâ€”the fate of these issues is built upon the courage and the character and the soul of the people who make these decisions.

Roger Spiller

War is a human art, above all else.

Interviewer

Thank you very much.

Roger Spiller
Yeah.