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Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors, and Hackers:

Writing the History of the Internet

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As was the case with a number of technologies, it seems like the internet was invented before a collective and universally agreed upon public use case was formulated for it. This reading tells the story of how the internet evolved after its first conception, noting some of the first instances of “Packet-switching networks”, as some of the internet’s foundational building blocks. Certain parties wanted the internet to escape it’s military roots, even though many of those roots still exist today (such as the IP address being short for “Internet Protocol”. I find it ironic that people were shocked of the Snowden revelations regarding the NSA’s spying, because it seems like the internet has always been funded by the military, (historically about 75-80%) of it.

This reading addresses the difficulty of creating a network out of incompatible networks, rather than merely connecting computers themselves. It also depicts the “Great man” model of the internet’s birth, hyped up Hafner and Lyon for their literary talents, even though the internet “lacks a true founding figure”. “Contextualist” approaches have long dominated academic studies of the history of technology, but narratives of “great men” of science and technology remain popular, deriving their power both from widespread assumptions about new ideas emerging from particular men of genius”. The author notes of Wes Clark’s intense loyal and nurturing work

ethic, as well as his ability to “make certain jobs he signed up for really get done”. This reading makes me think about legacy. The idea that we’ll all be remembered for specific things, based on abstract contexts and achievements procured during our time on earth. The internet was not created by the wizards who built the tech, but by the “Netizens” who created the culture around it, yet particular “great men” are held on a pedestal for acting as early pioneers. Some recognition for them is certainly due, because their contributions to the internet have permanently changed the world as we know it.