

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 31
Number 2 *Parameters Summer 2001*

Article 15

5-7-2001

Review Essays

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Recommended Citation

R. C. Nation, Andrew Scobell & Samuel J. Newland, "Review Essays," *Parameters* 31, no. 2 (2001), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.2043.

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Review Essays

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Kosovo So Far

R. CRAIG NATION

The production of instant histories is a risky business. Absent the reinforced impartiality that distance from events can provide, lacking access to a full range of sources, and without the ability to place events into a historical continuum that includes both cause and consequence, overnight evaluations are nearly always plagued by serious misconceptions and condemned to a short shelf life. These flaws plague all three of the works under review here to a greater or lesser extent. The authors and editor have produced useful interim assessments of the Kosovo conflict, but their conclusions were cast in the months immediately following the cessation of hostilities in June 1999.

Ivo Daalder and Michael O'Hanlon view events through a narrow, inside-the-beltway focus in *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*. Their work is what it aspires to be--the policy wonk's guide to Kosovo. It will be difficult to produce a better book devoted to the anatomy of Western decisionmaking--the authors have interviewed an impressively wide range of US and NATO officials, and their analysis succeeds in bringing the reader inside the confusing and approximate world of strategic choice. Unfortunately, conclusions concerning the conflict itself are equally confusing and approximate. The book is structured around three core questions--Could war have been avoided? Did we win? and Why did Milosevic ultimately capitulate?--for which the only fair answers at present are maybe, it depends, and who knows. This does not make the attempt to address the questions irrelevant, but it should impose a kind of caution. Although critical of the way in which the war was waged, Daalder and O'Hanlon argue forcefully that it could not have been avoided in view of the aggressive intent of Belgrade, and they go to considerable length to assert that in the end "we won." This is a self-evident conclusion in one sense, and an unnecessary one in another. Judging the long-term consequences of any military engagement requires at least some time to see how events play out. The subsequent fall of the Milosevic regime, under popular pressure conjured by disillusionment with Serbia's defeat, is an important part of the story. Unfortunately, it came to pass after the publishing deadline.

In *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, Tim Judah casts his net wider in an attempt to examine the historical genesis of the conflict and its larger meaning for Serbs and Albanians as well as for the West. His analysis is sophisticated and his book is extremely well-written, making it relevant to a wider interested readership. Of the several general studies of the Kosovo conflict that have already appeared in Western languages, this is probably the best. Judah stays distanced from all parties to the conflict, including the Western Alliance. He provides a useful sketch of the evolution of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) from its "Enverist" roots in the early 1980s to today's Kosovo Defense Force, described by the author as "the KLA in mothballs." Most important, he is open to alternative explanations in cases where we must await the opening of archives or more extensive public testimony by responsible figures to draw definitive conclusions.

Judah takes a sharply different approach from Daalder and O'Hanlon to the key issue of the extent to which NATO bombing may actually have provoked a Serbian decision to initiate the mass expulsion of Kosovar Albanians (thereby worsening the humanitarian crisis that air strikes were designed to prevent). *Winning Ugly*, citing anonymous sources, represents the exodus as the consequence of a premeditated, systematically prepared, and ruthlessly executed Serbian

strategic plan. Judah's conclusion is more nuanced: "Haphazard expulsion plans . . . coupled with . . . the 'we'll f--- them' attitude, plus fighting, terror, a lack of food and all the other circumstances of the war led to the exodus." The former explanation is more flattering to NATO, but the latter is more appropriate given our present level of knowledge. The strategic consequences of Serbian actions are less controversial. Judah, Daalder, and O'Hanlon all agree that by provoking the exodus, whether purposefully or haphazardly, Milosevic cast down a gauntlet that the Western Alliance could not fail to pick up, solidifying public opinion in support of the war effort and virtually ensuring his own eventual defeat.

William Buckley's *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Intervention* focuses on legal and ethical issues. It is a collection of no less than 66 essays of extremely diverse quality, ranging from seminal analysis to pointless opining. Many of the contributions were written with the conflict still under way, and convey serious misperceptions as well as occasional misinformation. Readers may want to approach the volume selectively. Buckley's "contending voices" unfortunately produce a kind of cacophony rather than a structured approach to core issues. The ethical and humanitarian concerns that are the book's focus are significant, and will be a vital aspect of international approaches to armed conflict today and tomorrow. For that very reason they deserve a more rigorous treatment than Buckley's somewhat indulgent volume provides.

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Review Essay

Flashpoint Asia: The Most Dangerous Place?

ANDREW SCOBELL

"The most dangerous place in the world today . . . is the Indian subcontinent and the line of control in Kashmir." -- President Bill Clinton, March 2000.

"Korea is the single biggest flashpoint. . . ." -- Admiral Dennis Blair, CINCPAC, March 2000

"The situation [in the Taiwan Strait] could lead to a crisis more dangerous than any of the other crises." -- Dr. William Perry, April 2000.

Where is the world's most dangerous place? The odds-on favorite would be an Asian locale. While conflicts in the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa persist with varying intensities, with the exception of the Middle East these flashpoints appear unlikely to explode into a major interstate war. Certainly a strong case could be made for any one of the following three: the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait, or the Vale of Kashmir.

Yet one could argue that Asia as a continent is a dangerous and volatile neighborhood. Asia contains seven of the ten largest militaries in the world and four of the world's seven declared nuclear powers, not to mention several failing states whose dismemberment or collapse would reverberate across the continent. This essay considers five books, all but one of which focus on a specific flashpoint or sub-region.

The exception is *Parallax Visions*, a fascinating collection of essays on late-20th-century Asian history and contemporary Asian affairs written by Bruce Cumings, one of the foremost academic experts on US-East Asia relations. A maverick scholar, Cumings is likely to be at odds with many in the defense intellectual community, but he deserves to be heard. As the United States confronts a complex and unpredictable post-Cold War Asia, his is precisely the kind of thinking about US involvement in the region that military and civilian strategists must contemplate if they are to come to grips with the new realities there. *Parallax Visions* forces the reader to revisit unpleasant dimensions in the Pacific War and to reconsider how we view North Korea. Chapter two should be required reading for any lesson on just war--particularly the sections on how the Pacific War began and ended. Chapter five, meanwhile, should be read by anyone seeking a fuller understanding of the standoff on the Korean peninsula.

On the subject of Korea, a thick volume by Australian journalist Adrian Buzo concentrates on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. *Guerilla Dynasty* examines what lies at the heart of the more than half a century of tensions on the Korean peninsula: the nature and security calculus of the Pyongyang regime. In the course of displaying his encyclopedic knowledge of North Korea, Buzo demonstrates that the regime is much more than a fragile one-man dictatorship teetering on the brink of collapse. Pyongyang is in fact a highly institutionalized and heavily militarized party-state with considerable staying power, what Buzo calls the "Kimist system." These elements help explain the smooth father-son leadership transition from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il, the pervasive influence of the military, and the resilience of the regime in the face of protracted economic crisis.

Guerilla Dynasty was written before last year's dramatic North-South rapprochement on the peninsula and thawing in Washington-Pyongyang relations--a remarkable turn of events. The summit between South Korean President Kim Dae Jung and his North Korean counterpart Kim Jong Il, the family reunions, Vice Chairman Jo Myong Rok's visit to Washington, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's trip to Pyongyang all occurred within the span of six months. While there has been a significant decrease in the likelihood of a war, and while the long-term outlook on the peninsula is hopeful, this book provides several important admonitions. First, the North Korean regime is unlikely to shed its militaristic bent easily. True to its guerrilla roots, core legitimizing values, and systemic orientation, Pyongyang will be extremely resistant to relinquishing its nuclear or missile programs or to reducing the size of its armed forces. Second, significant reform in the north under this regime is likely to be glacial and may well be left to Kim Jong Il's successor. "Kim is unlikely to be an agent of change." Third, the party-state cannot continue to exist indefinitely because it is faced with a systemic crisis and hence is inherently unstable. As a result, "convulsive forms of change" are very possible. This is not to say that it will be impossible for Pyongyang to reform its system and moderate its approach to national security but, rather, to underscore the barriers to either of these changes occurring in the short term.

Crisis in the Taiwan Strait is a collection of thought-provoking papers by experts analyzing the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, compiled by one of the most astute observers of East Asian geopolitics. The overall tone of Zhao Suisheng's edited volume is sobering, dramatically captured in the foreword where Andrew Nathan contends that the Taiwan Strait remains "one of the most dangerous hot spots in the post-Cold War world." The anxiety of the contributors seems justified by developments since the book's publication. A mini-crisis blew up in mid-1999 when the words of then Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui inflamed the sensibilities of Chinese leaders. This incident was overshadowed by the March 2000 election of President Chen Shui-bian, which signaled a landmark development in terms of both Taiwan's democratic development and cross-strait politics. Chen's victory was a shocking result for Beijing because it marked the ouster of the incumbent Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) and the assumption of power of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, a party historically committed to Taiwanese independence. China was concerned enough to issue a White Paper on Taiwan policy weeks before the election. The document added a third justification for the use of force: in addition to a declaration of independence by the island and intervention by foreign military forces, China now officially views deliberate procrastination on negotiations as grounds for a military operation against Taiwan. The calm in the Taiwan Strait is probably temporary: Beijing has been on its best behavior since

Chen's election to help ensure China is successful in its quest to join the World Trade Organization at the earliest possible date.

National unification with Taiwan is so central a national security objective to Beijing and one that has been so hyped during the past decade that China's leaders are under pressure to show tangible progress. The return of Hong Kong and Macao in 1997 and 1999, respectively, and the attendant official buildup surrounding these events only serve to highlight the lack of real progress on realizing unification with Taiwan. Moreover, China's leaders believe they have been very patient, most reasonable, and extremely generous in the terms they have offered Taiwan but, in return, have received only deception and deceit. Taiwanese leaders, in the view of China's rulers, have sought to subvert Beijing's good-faith efforts and have covertly gone about pursuing independence in collusion with the United States. The bottom line is that China does not trust Taiwan: President Chen Shui-bian is seen as totally unreliable.

In this context, a look back at the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis is instructive. You Ji's chapter in Zhao's volume is the best single analysis of the Chinese domestic political dimension of the crisis to be found in the English language. Your nuanced and masterful explication debunks many of the myths surrounding the crisis. Meanwhile, Chinese scholar Chen Qimao's contribution to *Across the Taiwan Strait* is the most articulate and authoritative scholarly elaboration of Beijing's position on Taiwan available anywhere. Chen's chapter makes very clear that the road ahead is fraught with challenges. Even under the best of circumstances, if the two sides sit down to talk, negotiations will be "difficult, arduous, and protracted." In a worst-case scenario, where China and Taiwan fail to reconcile and do not begin to negotiate, the result would most likely be war. In an intermediate scenario, what Chen considers "very possible," the strait would be racked by "continuous tensions." Editor Zhao, in one of his three contributions, similarly views a future whereby "the cross-strait relationship [may be caught in] a vicious cycle of peace and coercion."

The matter of a military conflagration in South Asia is directly addressed in *War at the Top of the World*. Veteran reporter Eric Margolis takes the reader to some of the most remote and inhospitable terrain on earth--Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, and Tibet--to visit the battle zones. Margolis writes vividly and persuasively about the civil war in Afghanistan and the low-intensity conflict in Kashmir. His concern over the specter of a larger war between India and Pakistan, possibly escalating to a nuclear confrontation, is frighteningly plausible. Chapters 10 and 14, aptly titled "The World's Most Dangerous Border" and "The Hatred of Brothers," highlight the potential of a larger conflict, underscore the frailty of Pakistan, and address the likelihood of recourse to nuclear weapons in the event of a crisis.

Margolis is on shakier ground, however, when he talks of India and China being "on a geopolitical collision course." The odds of a war between Beijing and New Delhi are slim because both governments recognize it would be folly--a war in the Himalayas is a no-win situation for all concerned. Moreover, the leaders of both countries have more immediate concerns: China with ethnic minorities in its border regions, unrest in Central Asia, and the Taiwan Strait, while India is preoccupied with Pakistan and domestically with economic development and ethnic tensions. Furthermore, relations between India and China in the wake of the nuclear tests of May 1998 are much better than most experts would have predicted. The prospect of an intensification of the low-level conflict between rebellious Tibetans and Chinese occupation forces seems small for the foreseeable future, and the chance of such a confrontation escalating into a war between China and India seems highly unlikely. Thus the basis for Margolis's assertion that "the two great powers . . . must eventually fight for mastery of Asia" seems to be journalistic hype rather than sound analysis.

The nuclear dimension in South Asia is more comprehensible as a result of George Perkovich's painstaking research and lucid writing. *India's Nuclear Bomb* is a tour de force study that underscores the necessity of appreciating the internal dynamics leading a country, in this case India, to pursue its own Manhattan Project. Perkovich highlights the critical role played by a group of scientists and bureaucrats in this undertaking--what he dubs the "strategic enclave." His persuasive thesis is that New Delhi's quest for nuclear weapons was primarily driven by domestic politics. The uneven pace of this development was determined by the predilections of successive prime ministers and the desire of top scientists and bureaucrats for international prestige and status that were believed to spring from possessing nuclear weapons. Because the logic driving India's acquisition of a nuclear capability does not jibe with US assumptions about the proliferation dynamic, it calls into question Washington's arms control strategy. Those seeking to understand India's long and plodding journey to nuclearization should read the entire volume. Those who are simply interested in the larger lessons the case study offers for countering proliferation need simply read the conclusion.

The fundamental fear of many analysts is that the ongoing tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi, the frequent localized skirmishes between Indian and Pakistani troops, and the ongoing struggle between Muslim militants supported from Pakistan against Indian security forces in strife-torn Kashmir could easily escalate into a full-scale conventional war and ultimately into nuclear war. The concern seems valid given the poor command and control over nuclear forces in India and Pakistan, and in the absence of good intelligence both sides could stumble into a war as they almost did over India's "Exercise Brasstacks" in 1986-87 and again in 1990 over tensions in Kashmir.

Each of the flashpoints--Korea, Taiwan, and Kashmir--presents a different kind of danger to Asia and the United States. Significantly, all three represent the legacies of half-century-old unresolved civil conflicts. For the moment, Korea poses the most immediate danger to the United States, since US forces continue to be deployed at the tripwire of the 38th Parallel. The outbreak of hostilities in Korea would automatically embroil the United States in war. The Taiwan Strait is a flashpoint of growing tensions. While the use of force against Taiwan does not directly threaten US forces, it does threaten to draw US forces from the Pacific Command into a Beijing-Taipei conflict and escalate into a larger conflagration between Beijing and Washington. A war over Kashmir, meanwhile, does not threaten to directly involve US forces or vital US interests. The most serious fallout (figuratively and literally) would be in the event of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan. The first-ever "hot" war between nuclear powers would be devastating in terms of the death and destruction wrought on the region and the damage to global nonproliferation efforts. Anyone interested in gaining a sound grasp of contemporary Asian security is urged to consult the five books under review here--the investment will be richly rewarded.

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Review Essay

The German Army at War, 1939-1945

SAMUEL J. NEWLAND

Almost from the time the guns fell silent in Europe on 8 May 1945, the world in general and the western world in particular has studied the German army of World War II, and its impressive warmaking potential, with a special fascination. Although more than a half century has passed and the developed nations have moved from mass armies to

smaller and more lethal forces, the interest in both National Socialist Germany and the World War II German army continues unabated. We still see a steady stream of books on the topic. Some are original studies on various aspects of the war, while others are either reprints or translations of works being made available for the first time in the English language.

One recent release which adds to our understanding of Germany in war and will intrigue American audiences is Gottlob H. Bidermann's *In Deadly Combat: A German Soldier's Memoir of the Eastern Front*. The book was originally published privately in 1964 but was available only in German. An excellent translation, with the author providing additional materials, is now provided by Derek Zumbro, giving American readers much greater access to this classic. The importance of Bidermann's memoir to German historians is evidenced by the fact that Dr. Dennis Showalter, a renowned scholar on the subject, consented to write the preface to the English edition.

The allure of this book is in Bidermann's descriptions of the magnitude of the conflict that occurred on the Eastern Front, supported by the individual dramas that played out daily. Bidermann is eminently qualified to provide these descriptions. With the war in the east only a week old, Bidermann was one of the three million soldiers who disembarked on a seemingly endless journey eastward. He began as an enlisted man in an anti-tank gun crew with the German 132d Infantry Division as it moved across southern Russia. His unit fought in this area during the sieges of the Crimea and Sevastopol. With the Crimea in German hands--after a bloodbath for both armies--the 132d was shifted north to the Leningrad front. There it remained engaged until the end of the war, when it surrendered in the Kurland pocket. Bidermann and thousands of his comrades became prisoners of war in Russia, a fate as fearsome as death itself. Bidermann was released from captivity in the summer of 1948, terribly ill but still a survivor.

What distinguishes Bidermann's book are his soldier's insights on the German army and the Eastern Front. Bidermann started the war as a common soldier, a *Landser*, and finished it as a gun captain. He was wounded seven times and repeatedly decorated for valor. Though he finished the war as an officer, however, he came home devoted not to the National Socialist regime but to the men with whom he fought. He wrote the book for the survivors of the 132d. Many, like the author, were still trying to come to grips with the war, the savagery of the Eastern Front, and the misery of captivity under the Soviets. Rather than glorifying the war as Germany's eastern crusade, Bidermann looks at the lives and the feelings of the soldiers as they relate to their adversaries and the battles they fought. As he notes for the reader, some say "one may become accustomed to the threat or constant presence of death," but for Bidermann and his comrades, the cries of the dead and dying, both friendly and foe, "are often heard long after the guns are silent."

Geoffrey Megargee provides another perspective on a different level of war with his new book, *Inside Hitler's High Command*. While any reader who enjoys military history will find this an engaging book, Megargee gives the serious student of military history valuable insight into the German high command. Megargee holds a doctorate in military history from Ohio State University, and he does not disappoint the reader with his thoughtful analysis. From the outset he is focused on providing the reader a clear picture of the German high command, in the process correcting some myths that have been erroneously repeated.

One such myth is particularly persistent. After the war the senior officers of the defeated Wehrmacht, repeatedly interrogated by the intelligence community as well as the US Army's historical services division, promoted the myth that so many of the military failures that befell Germany were the result of Hitler's continual meddling in German military matters. The implication is that if Hitler and his political leadership would have left strategy and the employment of military forces in the field to the professionals, the trained General Staff officers, Germany would have fared much better during her World War II campaigns. Regrettably, over the years innumerable writers have accepted this rationalization for German failures. Skillfully, and with documented sources, Megargee shows that much of this is simply that--a rationalization with little basis in fact. From virtually the beginning of the National Socialist era, Hitler's generals were not in opposition to his schemes but supported him. Even those who would later oppose him and even tried to assassinate him, like Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, initially supported him--and did so emphatically. When Hitler's expansionistic plans began to result in disasters with the overextension of Germany's military forces, however, the rationalization of blaming Hitler for his inept military leadership became commonplace. Megargee admits that for the informed reader of German military history, his interpretation is nothing really new or original. Rather, his contribution is that he researches, organizes, and documents in one book the reality that both Hitler and his generals were responsible for Germany's military failures. Having asserted and documented this fact, Megargee then provides

examples. He shows how poor staff work and faulty assumptions resulted in major errors in the campaign against the Soviet Union as well as in several other campaigns.

Megargee does offer one new and very significant insight, however. He returns to the era of Helmut von Moltke and Alfred von Schlieffen and finds that for essentially a hundred years, the German General Staff promoted the concept that only they were skilled and educated enough to make decisions on military strategies and operations. To the contrary, Megargee correctly concludes that in terms of higher strategy issues, this caste of officers was remarkably inept, particularly when it came to the relationship of ends (objectives) to means (resources). Thus, in their studies they tended to focus on the operational aspects of war rather than trying to improve their global strategy. As a consequence, in the wake of World War I and in preparation for World War II the German army did not question basic strategic assumptions, but rather focused on how they could better wage war through improvements in maneuverability, speed, tactics, and weapon systems. This was a basic failure on the part of the senior German officer corps and their General Staff. Michael Geyer, in his essay in Peter Paret's *Makers of Modern Strategy From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, tells readers that systematic strategic planning stopped in Germany in the late 1930s, but Megargee seriously questions if systematic strategic planning was ever competently done. This book is written for those serious students of the military art.

Louis Kilzer, an investigative reporter, attempts to take readers to another level of war with his examination of the politics and personalities in Hitler's headquarters in his book, *Hitler's Traitor: Martin Bormann and the Defeat of the Third Reich*. Since the war's end, students of the Third Reich's history have been fascinated both by a supposed traitor in the Nazi hierarchy, a Soviet agent code-named "Werther," and the personality and politics of Hitler's Party Secretary, Martin Bormann. Kilzer, with the techniques of his craft, attempts to prove that Bormann was in fact the traitor Werther, who fed countless pieces of information to the Soviets, thus making him one of Nazi Germany's most notorious turncoats.

Bormann remains an interesting personality in Hitler's inner circle. His confidential letters to his wife, published after the war, proved him to be a totally amoral person dedicated only to the maintenance of his personal power and pleasures. That he might have been a Soviet spy is not an original accusation. Earlier writers and members of the inner council of the National Socialist regime questioned Bormann's loyalty. Some, indeed, accused him of being a Soviet agent. Kilzer's book adds little if anything to our understanding of Bormann or to the validity of these charges. A review of the bibliography in many respects reveals why. There are no citations from any German sources other than English translations, and none from any German archive. By and large all of Kilzer's sources are well-used postwar books and studies. Only the "Black Bertha file" in Moscow shows any real original primary research in the overseas archives where any new revelations on this subject undoubtedly lie, if they exist.

As a consequence, the reader is presented with a rehash of the Soviet spy rings that penetrated German security (most notably the notorious "Rote Kapelle" that fed Stalin key intelligence information) and a rather rambling account of Germany's war against the Soviets. In the end, the author attempts to validate that the key spy in the highest echelons of the German command was Martin Bormann. But Kilzer fails to provide proof for his accusations. In the end the proof seems to be: "Who else could it have been?" No smoking gun is produced, a factor that has caused earlier writers to question whether there even was an agent named Werther. The discriminating reader is again left with the same questions that have existed since the end of the war: Was there a Soviet agent code-named Werther? If so, who was he? Was it Martin Bormann, or possibly General Hans Oster, another German officer dedicated to destroying Hitler? We still don't know the answers.

Of the three books under review, two--*In Deadly Combat* and *Inside Hitler's Command*--offer excellent reads for the student of military history. Both of these show that even after more than 50 years, there is still much to learn about our former adversary, the German army of World War II.

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