

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 51 | Number 4

Article 11

Winter 11-17-2021

Book Reviews

USAWC Press

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [Industrial Organization Commons](#), [Military and Veterans Studies Commons](#), [Military History Commons](#), [Military, War, and Peace Commons](#), [National Security Law Commons](#), [Other Public Affairs](#), [Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), [Policy Design, Analysis, and Evaluation Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), [Public Administration Commons](#), [Public Affairs Commons](#), [Public History Commons](#), [Public Policy Commons](#), [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

USAWC Press, "Book Reviews," *Parameters* 51, no. 4 (2021): 115-151, doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3096.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

Book Reviews

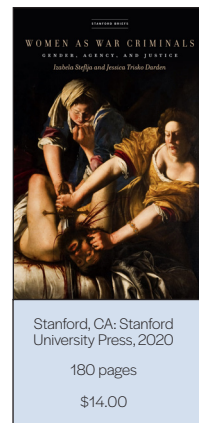
ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY

Women as War Criminals: Gender, Agency, and Justice

By Izabela Steflja and Jessica Trisko Darden

Reviewed by Dr. Heather S. Gregg, professor of military strategy,
US Army War College

Holding perpetrators of war crimes accountable became a focus of post-conflict justice in the twentieth century and has continued to be a critical component of war termination today. Despite several high-profile post-conflict tribunals, ranging from the genocide in Rwanda to the bloody conflict in the former Yugoslavia, few women have been brought to trial as war criminals—and even fewer have received sentences equal to their male counterparts. *Women as War Criminals* investigates this contrast, seeking to understand this bias and its underlying conditions and “provide a more holistic approach to women and justice” (9).



At the heart of their argument, Izabela Steflja and Jessica Darden contend “women as war criminals go unnoticed because their very existence challenges our deeply held assumptions about war and about women” (3). They focus on the social and political contexts that produce gender and racial stereotypes and note women are often victims of violent conflicts. For this reason, post-conflict justice has focused on bringing perpetrators of these crimes—most often men—to trial and overlooked the possible role of women. These stereotypes describe women as inherently peaceful, nurturing, and motherly and assume women engage in atrocities either because they are monsters or they have been manipulated by male leaders, thus denying the women agency in their acts. Steflja and Darden also highlight the growing body of literature supporting the *Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* and its emphasis on women as peacemakers and not perpetrators of violence—another bias downplaying the role of women as perpetrators of war atrocities. Ultimately, gender-based stereotypes about women help explain the paucity of women brought to justice as war criminals.

The authors test their argument through four short cases of women brought to trial for war crimes across several cultures and conflicts: Biljana Plavšić, the former president of the Bosnian Serb Republic (Republika Srpska), and her role in directing mass murder and rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Pauline

Nyiramasuhuko, former minister for women and family development in Rwanda, and how she facilitated the rape and murder of women in the Rwandan genocide; Lynndie England, a former enlisted US Army Reserve soldier, tried by Army courts-martial for violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in connection with the torture and prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, Iraq; and Hoda Muthana, an American-born Yemeni woman who emigrated to Syria and joined ISIS.

Steffja and Darden examine the women's court cases, noting where gender stereotypes were used as a defense. For example, all four women used the defense of being mothers to challenge their charges, implying the nurturing nature of mothers could not allow for murder, rape, or torture. Interestingly, Plavšić used this defense—having no children of her own—as “the Mother of the Serb nation” in Bosnia to seek a lesser charge and sentence (11).

Critically, each of the defenses centered on the women being manipulated by men to perpetrate war crimes, including Nyiramasuhuko, who ordered the rape of fellow women in Rwanda, and England, whose courts-martial focused on her intellectual challenges and coercion by male soldiers. From these cases, the authors conclude: “A man made me do it’ remains a plausible defense” (122). In other words, these women were presented as lacking agency and were thus not responsible for their actions. Despite this fact, each of the women defended their actions outside of court, including in media interviews, memoirs, and biographies.

Notably, Steffja and Darden propose racial bias also played a role in the verdicts and sentencing of the perpetrators. Nyiramasuhuko, a Black African woman, is the only woman still in prison. Muthana, an Arab Muslim, remains in Syria for her ISIS affiliation and has not been granted permission to return to the United States. By contrast, Plavšić and English, both White Western women, are free; therefore, the authors surmise “white women can negotiate plea deals, but Africans certainly cannot, not even the Christian Nyiramasuhuko” (127).

Women as War Criminals concludes “women war criminals are a long-standing phenomenon” requiring greater attention in post-conflict literature (121). The implications of the authors’ research are important to understanding the role women play as active and willing participants in war and holding them accountable for the atrocities they choose to commit. It points to the need for the *Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* to include the role of women not only as peacekeepers, but as war makers. Finally, the book offers a cautionary note on the use of gender-based stereotypes in trial defenses: women can and do perpetrate war crimes and should be held accountable.

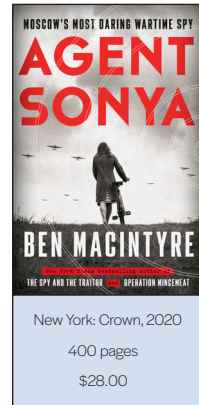
BIOGRAPHY

Agent Sonya: Moscow's Most Daring Wartime Spy

By Ben Macintyre

Reviewed by Dr. W. Andrew Terrill, professor emeritus, US Army War College

Ben Macintyre's *Agent Sonya* is an insightful and important biography of Colonel Ursula Kuczynski, who went by the code name Sonya throughout her long and eventful career as a spy for the Soviet military intelligence (GRU). She was born in 1907 into a wealthy German family, with a father who was sympathetic to communism and supportive of the Soviet Union. At 17, she described herself as a member of the German Communist Party and participated in a number of communist events. Macintyre often simply calls her Ursula due to her use of false identities and various surname changes through marriage. He describes her as a brilliant, ambitious, adventurous, and risk-addicted operative who was dedicated to her craft as a Soviet intelligence agent.



Ursula's transformation from a communist activist to a Soviet agent occurred when she traveled to Shanghai, China, with her first husband. Like most European expatriates, Ursula lived in the privileged international settlement portion of the city and had little contact with the Chinese. In her community of expatriates, she met the "radical American writer, Agnes Smedley," whose work she greatly admired (18). Smedley worked with Soviet intelligence and felt Ursula was worth recruiting as a GRU operative. Moscow agreed, and Smedley set up a meeting between Ursula and Richard Sorge, the most senior Soviet GRU agent in Shanghai at that time, who would eventually become one of Stalin's most important spies. Ursula agreed to work with Sorge and help the communist cause in any way she could. This agreement was an important commitment as the Chinese Public Security Bureau ruthlessly hunted down both Chinese and foreign communists, and as a German Jew she could expect no help from Nazi diplomats.

Sorge trained Ursula in the fundamentals of clandestine action and encouraged her to take advantage of her penchant for languages and study Russian. Later, she agreed to attend a seven-month intelligence training course in Moscow, despite having to leave her family. After completing the training, Ursula was sent

to Japanese-controlled Manchuria to help arm, supply, and finance communist Chinese resistance forces while evading the ruthless Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai.

Following her successful work in the Far East, Ursula was sent to Poland, where she felt her assignment was little more than serving as a “secret postman” (143). GRU headquarters concurred she was being underused and sent her to Switzerland to recruit her own team of agents to infiltrate Nazi Germany. While she did excellent work there, Moscow later ordered her to leave due to an increased danger of being discovered and even deported to Germany (since she had entered Switzerland on a German passport). With few other options, Ursula divorced her husband and married a British communist and member of her network, Len Beurton. She then left for the United Kingdom, arriving in February 1941 as a legal immigrant and resuming her activities as a GRU agent.

Macintyre notes that unlike Soviet agents, Nazi spies were not active in the United Kingdom between 1939 and 1945 due to the quick detection of their radio transmissions by codebreakers at Bletchley Park. Throughout the war, the Nazi danger remained the central concern for British domestic security force, MI-5, while Soviet espionage was of only limited interest. These priorities helped Ursula advance in her work and become the handler for one of the most important spies in history, the expatriate German physicist and lifelong communist, Klaus Fuchs. Fuchs appeared to the British to be uninterested in politics, except for opposing the Nazis, and correspondingly was allowed to begin working on their nuclear research project in June 1941.

As his research progressed, Fuchs became increasingly unhappy the West was not sharing its atomic secrets with its Soviet ally. This discontent led him to contact Soviet intelligence and offer to obtain secret information on their behalf. Eventually, Fuchs was assigned to Ursula, who supervised his intelligence-gathering activities. She worked with Fuchs for about a year until he was assigned new handlers after he was sent to the United States to participate in the US Manhattan Project. After the war, the British arrested Fuchs when US codebreakers cracked portions of previously indecipherable Soviet messages. Ursula was implicated in Fuchs’s espionage but not conclusively. After several badly bungled MI-5 interrogations and the defection of one of her agents to British intelligence, Ursula and her children successfully fled to East Germany, where she was considered a hero. She died there in July 2000.

Macintyre is a leading contemporary writer on historical intelligence topics, and this book is one of his best. He interviewed all of Ursula’s living family members and numerous other people involved in her story. Ursula’s own writings later in life, which encompassed both fiction and nonfiction, also

proved useful as did declassified MI-5 files and the surviving publicly available records of other intelligence services.

Agent Sonya is interesting because of its detailed consideration of the espionage activities of human spies, although it is clearly outdated on the use of technology. Ursula's career also illustrates how small mistakes in the fields of intelligence, counterintelligence, and general security can lead to serious consequences. There are numerous lessons in the book about how espionage and counterespionage activities should be addressed to maximize their potential for success and how such activities can be bungled.

IRREGULAR WARFARE

Special Operations: Out of the Shadows

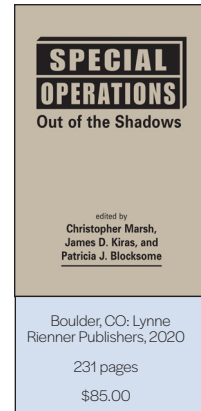
Edited by Christopher Marsh, James D. Kiras, and Patricia J. Blocksome

Reviewed by Major Zachary Griffiths, director, Commander's Action Group,
Special Operations Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve

In the last 20 years, US Special Operations Command has doubled in size and tripled in budget. But has research into special operations kept pace? *Special Operations: Out of the Shadows* introduces academic special operations research to nonspecialists while delving into the field's "debates and cutting edge research" (4). Skillfully assembled by the editors of *Special Operations Journal*, this volume includes updated articles previously published in the journal and newly written chapters.

This publication marks an important milestone in special operations studies—publishing an initial volume of works. *Special Operations* offers a more generalized and American focus than *Special Operations from a Small State Perspective* (2017), which explored Scandinavian special operations. Other special operations research can be found in *PRISM: A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations*—which published Austin Long's "The Limits of Special Operations Forces" and "Special Operations Doctrine: Is It Needed?" by Charles T. Cleveland, James B. Linder, and Ronald Dempsey in 2016—or focused outlets such as *Special Operations Journal*.

Special Operations is divided into theoretical and applied sections. The editors open the theoretical section with a strong chapter on the history of and research into special operations. Then, James D. Kiras in chapter 2 and Christopher Marsh, Mike Kenny, and Nathanael Joslyn in chapter 3 debate whether special operations needs a comprehensive theory. In chapter 4, Kevin L. Parker rejects formalizing a human domain of conflict but calls on other domains to integrate human factors. Homer W. Harkens in chapter 5 offers information on the evolution of special warfare as a concept that both novices and experts will find valuable. Dan Cox's chapter 6 describes terrorism's connection with insurgency and concludes with important recommendations for unconventional warfare practitioners. The theoretical section concludes with Ben Zweibelson's call for greater incorporation of design thinking in special operations in chapters 7 and 8.



The applied section connects special operations with contemporary security issues. Richard Rubright, leading with chapter 9, argues the United States must weigh the costs and benefits of employing proxy forces in pursuit of our goals because of the challenges in controlling their actions. In chapter 10, Charles K. Bartles offers a well-grounded view of the debate over the Gerasimov Doctrine and concludes with a valuable discussion of Russian irregular warfare organizations. Paul S. Lieber and Peter J. Reiley in chapter 11 provide an accessible and practical guide to combating ISIS radicalization efforts with psychological operations grounded in social science. In their respective chapters, James M. DePolo in chapter 12 and Steven R. Johnson in chapter 13 describe the evolution of American foreign security cooperation organizations and how the authorities for military support to countering transnational terrorism have evolved. The editors conclude by offering direction for special operations research, with emphasis on understanding contributions to space and cyber operations.

Special Operations offers a rich bibliography—more than 17 pages—of peer-reviewed articles, history, military journals, military doctrine, and official government publications which provides fodder for future research in a notoriously difficult subject to study. Unfortunately, few authors drew on student papers from the Naval Postgraduate School special operations/irregular warfare curriculum or the service staff colleges. Despite their mixed quality, many of these papers could offer important unclassified perspectives into issues facing operational special operations forces that are ripe for further study.

Unfortunately, as a collective work, *Special Operations* encourages special operations forces to do more without acknowledging the opportunity costs. For example, Zweibelson acknowledges the high costs of leaders investing “their own valuable time” and a “special operations design education [that] needs to mirror the long-term operator development glide path” (81, 89). However, he never supports his assertion that “long term deliverables will undoubtedly return on the investment in [unrecognizable] ways” (96). With flat and declining budgets, what areas should be cut to make room for increasing the countering of transnational crime or increasing design thinking? *Special Operations* neither articulates targets for cuts nor makes compelling cases for the new ideas.

The individual chapters vary in quality and scope, a tension exacerbated by aiming for both novice and expert audiences. Generally, shorter chapters, like those by Parker on human factors and Harkins on special warfare, were more engaging and challenging than their longer counterparts. Similarly, Lieber and Riley structured their psychological operations chapter around utilizing a compelling method to defeat ISIS radicalization. In a few places, the authors descended into jargon (see “change poet” on page 85), but terms were generally defined and acronyms minimized throughout (85).

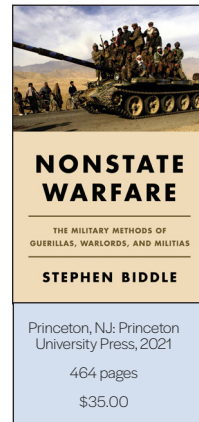
Acceptable for novices and experts interested in the field's debates, *Special Operations* will inspire students in developing their research projects and reveal new perspectives to academics studying irregular warfare and related topics.

Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerillas, Warlords, and Militias

By Stephen Biddle

Reviewed by Ben Wermeling, defense and operations research analyst

For much of the twenty-first century, the American military has spent considerable effort fighting nonstate actors such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This effort has sparked considerable scholarly and military interest in nonstate actors among the United States and Western countries. Much of the resulting literature assumes nonstate actors primarily wage guerilla or irregular warfare. In recent years, though, some nonstate actors have used methods associated more with conventional warfare. In the Donbas War, for example, Ukrainian separatists fought from entrenched positions using heavy weaponry, including tanks and artillery, to hold ground. Stephen Biddle explores these variances in military behavior in *Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerillas, Warlords, and Militias*.



Biddle's central argument asserts the military methods of nonstate actors can be predicted by their internal politics and perceived stakes in conflict, as well as the state of military technology available. Early chapters elaborate on this theory. First, Biddle describes a spectrum of military behavior based on common understandings of irregular and conventional warfare and provides a system to code this behavior by considering factors such as the willingness of combatants to contest territorial control and their distinguishability from noncombatants.

The sophistication of military technology plays a substantial role in determining optimal behavior along this spectrum. Increasingly, lethal weapons provide incentives for both state and nonstate militaries to employ methods closer to the midspectrum. Such weapons require militaries to operate from concealed and covered positions in dispersed groups, as opposed to massed formations, to limit casualties. Demands for greater dispersion make it more challenging for states to concentrate their usually larger militaries to crush nonstate forces that

try to contest territory, making relatively conventional methods more viable for nonstate forces. In particular, Biddle contends the proliferation of precision-guided weapons, like anti-tank missiles, since the late-twentieth century has given nonstate actors a much better capability to contest territory.

Midspectrum warfighting requires coordination and specialized, interdependent roles to be effective. Not all nonstate actors will be able to master complex techniques such as combined arms operations or fire and movement tactics. Nonstate actors with more mature institutions and high perceived stakes in conflict are more likely to implement midspectrum methods and perform them effectively. Mature institutions allow greater trust and coordination among the elites and their factions within nonstate groups. Additionally, if elites perceive high stakes in the conflict, such as their possible death or imprisonment, they are more willing to incur the expensive costs of training personnel in midspectrum warfare.

The case studies—selected based on their ability to test the theory—are well chosen: Hezbollah, Jaysh al-Mahdi, the Somali National Alliance, the Croatian National Guard, the Serbian Army of Krajina, and the Viet Cong. Biddle's choices will lead to greater confidence if the theory predicts outcomes correctly and more accurately than prior theories. Other explanations of nonstate actors' military behaviors include whether they come from tribal cultures that supposedly encourage irregular warfare or the degree of materiel superiority their state opponents possess. To gather sufficient granular detail to code military behavior, Biddle conducted interviews with participants in most of the conflicts analyzed.

The varied case studies offer interesting insights and comparisons while providing solid evidence for the new theory. Several examples are instructive. Hezbollah comes from a tribal background and receives Iranian support, much like Jaysh al-Mahdi did before its disbandment. Despite facing the powerful state militaries of Israel and the United States, the military methods of the two groups differed significantly. Hezbollah had mature institutions and perceived high stakes in the 2006 Lebanon War, which facilitated the organization's remarkably conventional methods in battle, unlike Jaysh al-Mahdi.

When the Americans intervened in the Somalian Civil War, the Somali National Alliance fought more conventionally on the margin despite hailing from a tribal society and fighting a superpower. American efforts to kill insurgent leadership drastically raised the stakes of the war compared to the earlier skirmishes to loot resources.

The Viet Cong, as described in the last case study, was a sophisticated organization fighting for existential stakes; however, it waged predominantly guerilla warfare. When the Viet Cong attempted more conventional warfighting

in the Tet Offensive, American forces inflicted severe losses. The light 1960s-era weapons (from a time before widespread precision firepower) could not stop massed state forces from overrunning the Viet Cong's positions with relative ease.

The book concludes with inferences about future warfare. Given the proliferation of increasingly lethal weaponry, both state and nonstate actors still face increasing incentives to converge on midspectrum military methods, further narrowing differences in behavior. In this probable future environment, Biddle suggests the US military adopt a lighter, updated variation of its legacy force structure with more dismounted elements, rather than a more radical transformation that focuses on very irregular or conventional forces. This structure would maximize the military's capability against the modal future opponent while maintaining the residual ability to fight enemies using methods toward the edges of the spectrum of military behavior.

Nonstate Warfare is timely since nonstate actors in recent decades have used more conventional military methods and little research has attempted to explain the differences in nonstate military behavior. Biddle's thorough coding methodology to operationalize military behavior offers a more precise understanding of warfare than the guerilla/conventional dichotomy, replacing vagueness with conceptual clarity. His well-researched case studies strongly support his theory. An area for minor improvement would be a more significant differentiation of assessed wartime stakes, which would provide a more nuanced analysis. Though beyond the scope of the book, a theory explaining nonstate warfighting before the twentieth century would also be valuable.

The book's main insights, that state and nonstate actors face similar incentives and that their chosen military methods differ in degrees rather than categories, have important implications for both military professionals and scholars. *Nonstate Warfare* is highly recommended reading for both groups.

MILITARY HISTORY

Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World

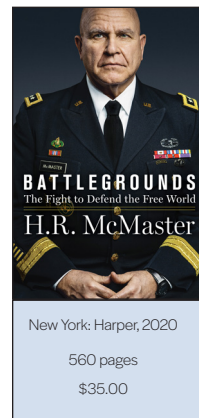
By H. R. McMaster

Reviewed by Dr. John C. Binkley, adjunct professor of history,
Loyola University of Chicago

After four tumultuous years of the Trump administration, the Biden-Harris administration needs to reset American foreign policy. H. R. McMaster—a retired US Army lieutenant general and the former national security advisor to President Donald Trump—addresses this issue in *Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World*. He clearly notes any reset of American foreign policy must focus on a group of important battleground nations that will decide the direction of America's future in the world, as well as the state of democratic institutions in the United States and the West.

While McMaster may have been tempted to write a tell-all book memorializing his experiences in the Trump administration, he rejected that opportunity to write a primer which outlines the direction of an American foreign policy reset. In doing so, he focuses on what he considers key battleground arenas: China, Iran, the Middle East, North Korea, Russia, and South Asia. He also recognizes collateral arenas such as environmental and climate politics and the future role of democratic institutions, all issues a Biden-Harris administration cannot ignore.

McMaster, who received a PhD in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is well known for his seminal study of the Vietnam War, *Dereliction of Duty* (1997). Consequently, as a historian and foreign policy practitioner, he analyzes each battleground and reviews the historical background of each battleground arena to understand the policy situation as it existed at the end of the Trump administration. In each case, he finds American foreign policy over the last several administrations, and in some cases over much longer periods of time, was fundamentally flawed. While each battleground arena has its peculiarities based on historical and geographic dynamics, the underlying reasons for the flawed policies are twofold: a tendency of American policy to be driven by *strategic narcissism* and, conversely, an absence of *strategic empathy*.



Strategic narcissism is “the tendency to view the world only in relation to the United States and to assume that the future course of events depends primarily on US decisions or plans” (15). Strategic empathy is the ability to appreciate the desires and goals of other nations and their people and to understand these groups can affect policy regardless of America’s desires. This two-sided policy failure has warped America’s ability to understand the dynamics at work in the battleground nations, placing blinders on American policymakers.

After a historical overview, McMaster discusses how America should deal with each battleground. While the specific proscriptions offered vary from battleground to battleground, there are commonalities among them. First, he suggests American foreign policy needs to be robust and, in fact, very hawkish in nature. In this regard, he is willing to confront adversaries and friends alike. This robust almost aggressive policy is particularly clear regarding China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. He argues the United States should push back against Russian aggression in the Ukraine and Russian disinformation worldwide. Similarly, the United States needs to confront Chinese movements in the South China Sea and China’s theft of Western intellectual and technological property.

In both cases, McMaster makes a great deal of sense. Moreover, his analysis of North Korean interests and motivations for developing a nuclear weapon seems to be spot on. In the case of Iran, he notes the nation must ultimately make a decision: either receive the benefits of a responsible member of the international community or exist in isolation. McMaster understands the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—which the Obama administration hoped would halt Iran’s nuclear arms program and that the Trump administration scrapped—only addresses a symptom of the difficult relationship between Iran and the West. Constant pressure is the only approach that may force Iran to choose the path toward responsibility.

Second, as a student of the Vietnam War, McMaster correctly recognizes the flaws in that war being repeated in Afghanistan and Iraq. These include the failure to develop a long-term strategy, which can gain the support of the American people, and a lack of appreciation for the social aspect of the wars. Having said that, readers might wonder how McMaster would gain public support for what appears to be an open-ended conflict.

Third, McMaster seems willing to apply tough love to erstwhile allies such as Pakistan and the countries of the Middle East. Pakistan’s role as a nuclear power makes its relationship with America more important than the situation in Afghanistan.

Though a good read, *Battlegrounds* has one major flaw—or, in this case, an omission. While McMaster claims to be absolutely apolitical, which partially explains his decision to limit writing about the Trump administration, he actually makes a political choice by virtue of his criticisms of the Obama

administration and what he considers a new left slant of Democratic foreign policy. He sees lack of consistency and trust to be two great problems of American foreign policy. Yet, he seems unwilling to confront the Trump administration for exacerbating these problems. At the same time, while he wants the United States to push back against Putin's aggression, he ignores Trump's obsequious approach toward the Russian leader. In short, while he is readily willing to blame other administrations for their faults, he fails to confront the impact of Trump's actions.

While readers can agree or disagree with McMaster's recipe for America's foreign policy success, they cannot ignore the issues he raises. Consequently, I heartily recommend the book for anyone interested in the future direction of American foreign policy.

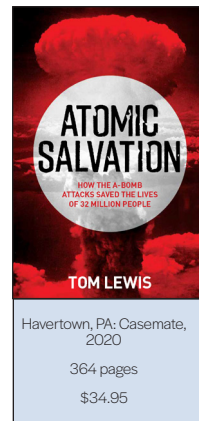
Atomic Salvation: How the A-Bomb Attacks Saved the Lives of 32 Million People

By Tom Lewis

Reviewed by Michael E. Lynch, research historian,
US Army Heritage and Education Center

In *Atomic Salvation*, Tom Lewis explores the question of whether or not the use of the atomic bomb in World War II was necessary to end the war against Japan. Today this question has taken on a moral and emotional dimension, as many people conflate the strength of the two relatively small atomic bombs used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the power of today's nuclear weapons, concluding they were overkill and unnecessary. Reality, however, shows conventional fire bombing raids on Tokyo were far more devastating and caused greater casualties than either of the two atomic bombs. While *Atomic Salvation* purports to be an "exhaustive analysis" of the necessity of using the atomic bomb, it presents little new information (7).

Lewis argues the atomic bomb was necessary and its deployment saved many more lives than it took. Analyzing the potential lives to be saved based on projected daily casualty figures from the fighting in the Pacific and using plans for Operation Downfall, the pending invasion of the Japanese Islands projected to last until the end of 1946, he calculates the potential



casualties for both the Allied and Japanese people would have totaled more than 32 million people.

Lewis reaches the right conclusion, but he does so by repeating—and in many cases excessively quoting—experts who have already reached this conclusion. His extensive reliance on Richard B. Frank's *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (1999), John Toland's *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936–1945* (1970), Edwin P. Hoyt's *Japan's War: The Great Pacific Conflict* (1986), Stephen Harper's *Miracle of Deliverance: The Case for the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1985), and others make it difficult to discern if he has added any new information. Indeed, the bibliography is almost devoid of primary sources. Additionally, Lewis uses Gar Alperovitz as a straw man to attack specious arguments for not using the atomic bomb, which is all too easy to do. On a positive note, he extensively cites the *US Strategic Bombing Survey* and correctly identifies errors within the survey.

The book badly needs additional editing. A good editor could have helped Lewis avoid careless mistakes such as typos, culturally incorrect spellings, incorrect rank or position descriptions, purple prose such as “to say that time was of the essence would be the understatement of the 20th century,” and glitches such as five separate footnotes in one sentence (199).

In addition, Lewis's careless writing led him to make some egregious factual errors. There are many examples, but chapter 18 provides two errors on successive pages. On page 296 Lewis identifies Charles Sweeney as the pilot of the *Enola Gay* (Sweeney flew *Bock's Car* over Nagasaki), and on page 297 he features a globe showing atomic tests around the world. The caption, and Lewis's apparent intention, indicates tests in the United States, but the photograph features Asia. Last, his tendency toward repetition led him to repeat an entire block quote from chapter 2 in chapter 17.

A work of this kind calls for a certain amount of conjecture about what might have happened had the invasion taken place, but Lewis's speculation steered him to hyperbole. For instance, he alleges the American public would have been so outraged if the United States had decided not to use the bomb that “armed insurrection would have been a very real possibility” (250). He also argues President Harry S. Truman had no choice but to use the bomb because “he would have been deposed from office by public revolt or military coup, and a more co-operative leader installed” (250).

While Lewis uses some sources well, he fails to understand the background of some of the authors. Key examples include Paul Fussell, a US Army infantry officer, and William Manchester, a US Marine, whose memoirs and recollections he cites extensively. He treats their first-person accounts respectfully, but seems not to understand they both survived the war and became widely

respected historians. Manchester's experiences as a Marine rifleman are evocative, but Lewis adds little to what Manchester published himself. One of Manchester's best known works is the biography *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880–1964* (1978), which Lewis could have profitably used to explore the issues of war termination and the pending invasion from the point of view of the General of the Army who commanded the Southwest Pacific Theater. In conclusion, *Atomic Salvation* would be twice as good if it were half as long—and if it added new facts to an already well-documented argument.

The American War in Afghanistan: A History

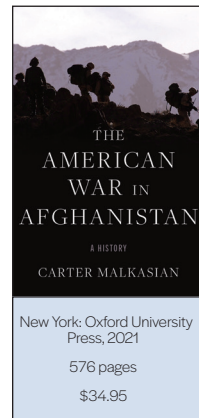
By Carter Malkasian

Reviewed by Dr. John Nagl, visiting professor, national security studies,
US Army War College

Few Americans not of Afghan blood understand the United States' involvement in Afghanistan better than Carter Malkasian, who led the Garmser district support team for nearly two years during the Obama administration. From that experience, Malkasian wrote *War Comes to Garmser* (2013), a small classic of counterinsurgency literature that led Marine General Joseph Dunford Jr., then commanding the effort in Afghanistan, to take Malkasian as his political adviser. Malkasian stayed on as the special assistant for strategy during Dunford's service as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, continuing to focus on the war in Afghanistan, and has now written—what is likely to be for many years to come—the definitive work on the American war in Afghanistan.

Malkasian's analysis begins with America's significant involvement in supporting resistance fighters to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Assisted by the Americans, the Afghan mujahideen demonstrated the fighting qualities that earned Afghanistan the moniker "the graveyard of empires" and defeated the Soviet Union. Included among the mujahideen supporters was a Saudi named Osama bin Laden.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the United States displayed little interest in Afghanistan for a decade. Afghanistan's descent into chaos was snapped partially into order when the Taliban imposed a strict version of sharia law on the troubled country. The Taliban also provided a home base for bin Laden from which he planned and executed the attacks of September 11, 2001. They refused



to hand him over to the United States for justice, resulting in an American invasion that turned into the country's longest war—bin Laden's plan executed almost to perfection, although he did not live to see its final chapter.

Malkasian explores the war in exacting detail, focusing on south and east Afghanistan and the two principal antagonists: the Americans and the Taliban. He covers the initial US invasion, which led to the collapse of the Taliban regime in December 2001, and the critical failure to engage the Taliban in the government that emerged afterward, which he calls a “narrow and inflexible approach [that] contravened diplomatic wisdom to bring adversaries into a . . . political settlement” (76). It proved the first of many missed opportunities. Bin Laden slipped across the border into Pakistan, where he would remain in hiding—but continue to exercise leadership of al-Qaeda—for the next decade.

Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai became the interim—and later the elected—president of Afghanistan and a small force of approximately 8,000 troops from the United States and 5,000 from allied nations, mostly NATO, began building a new Afghanistan that would not again serve as a safe haven for terrorists. American attention turned to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which had played no role in the attacks of September 11 but nonetheless became the next target in President George W. Bush's War on Terrorism. As an insurgency exploded in Iraq, the Taliban took advantage of the lack of American attention and gained strength in Afghanistan. President Barack Obama saw no alternative but to surge tens of thousands of troops to fight against the Taliban insurgency. However, he announced a withdrawal date that reassured the Taliban they could wait the Americans out, leading many to remark, “Americans have the watches, but the Taliban have the time to wait” (various). Vice President Joseph Biden argued against the surge of troops into Afghanistan, recommending a smaller US troop commitment to conduct counterterrorism and train Afghan security forces, but was overruled.

President Donald Trump believed the war in Afghanistan was not in America's interest and repeatedly threatened to withdraw all US troops; his commitment to ending the war led to a negotiated agreement with the Taliban that this withdrawal would be accomplished by May 1, 2021. By then, however, Biden was president; he delayed the withdrawal date first to September 11 and then to August 31, 2021, continuing to commit to that date even as a resurgent Taliban seized power over Kabul on August 15, 2021. A US and international airlift evacuated Americans and many Afghans who had assisted the United States in its longest war outside of the country. After an absence of two decades, Taliban rule returned to Afghanistan.

Malkasian spreads the blame for America's failures in Afghanistan widely, noting the Russian, Iranian, and Pakistani support for the Taliban, as well as

American impatience, wavering commitment, and failure to understand the Afghan people. Most of all, however, he pays tribute to the Taliban, who “stood for what it meant to be Afghan” because they “embraced rule by Islam and resistance to occupation, values that ran thick in Afghan history and defined an Afghan’s worth” (454). An Afghan government supported by an outside power could not inspire the same degree of cohesion and devotion fostered by the Taliban.

The final reckoning on this fifth war in Afghanistan remains to be calculated. Nearly 2,500 US troops were killed and more than 20,000 wounded; while Afghan casualties are unknowable, the total probably exceeds half a million. Al-Qaeda was dealt a heavy blow, but the Islamic State took on its mantle of jihad and remains a strong presence in post-America Afghanistan. An Afghan people who have experienced democracy and freedom face an uncertain and deeply troubling future. Their eagerness to leave Afghanistan during the troubled final weeks of August suggests the suffering of this unfortunate country will continue for decades to come.

While the American people broadly support the end of the mission in Afghanistan, if not the manner in which it was conducted, there is still no guarantee American involvement is truly over, just as there was no guarantee when the Soviet Union withdrew in ignominy three decades ago. To be ready for that eventuality—and to build a force that is truly capable across the entire spectrum of conflict—military professionals can find no better preparation than a thorough contemplation of Malkasian’s *The American War in Afghanistan*.

Strangling the Axis: The Fight for Control of the Mediterranean during the Second World War

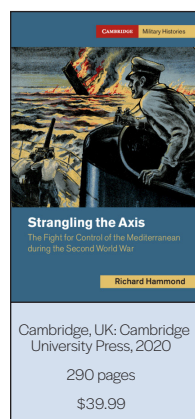
By Richard Hammond

Reviewed by Dr. James D. Scudieri, senior research historian,
US Army Heritage and Education Center

In *Strangling the Axis: The Fight for Control of the Mediterranean during the Second World War*, Richard Hammond takes a wider view of the war on Axis commercial shipping in the Mediterranean during the Second World War. He starts with a very effective introduction, a mere 10 pages, that outlines the following eight chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes prewar strategy and plans, while chapters 2 through 8 are chronological, in increments of five to seven months, starting in June 1940 and ending in May 1943. The conclusion integrates the introduction with the narrative chapters.

The central theme of the book is the lack of a holistic historical accounting of the effects of the Allied war on Axis shipping beyond noting impacts on the land war in North Africa (4, 6). Previous histories have highlighted the impacts of the anti-shipping war on the North African land war, but inadequately. Hammond concludes the increasing efficacy of British anti-shipping operations, attacking not only traditional sea lanes but also coastal shipping, exercised a deadly impact on Axis maritime strength. What the British lacked in capacity—described in detail—they compensated for with their de facto forward positioning for most of the Desert War. Hammond believes the historiography—with its excessive emphasis on the land motor transport—has failed to acknowledge this impact (142).

Hammond's coverage is sweeping and comprehensive. He presents his evidence by building a solid foundation in the relevant Italian and German documents, besides the Allied sources and the historiography. His wider war goes beyond the swirling armor-centric actions in the Western Desert campaign, and analyzes operations throughout the Mediterranean and Aegean regions. Each chapter is well organized, integrating maritime operations with land operations in considerable but concise detail. Hard statistics document Axis sustainment requirements, shipping losses by cause, and supply tonnages lost and delivered. Readers can follow developments in the air, on land, and on



the sea as independent missions became more joint. In a sense, Hammond's commitment to a more holistic analysis provides much in terms of the current joint functions.

His analysis of British efforts includes land-based airpower, naval aviation (both carrier-borne and shore-based), submarines, and surface warships. Interestingly, British political and diplomatic concerns on rules of engagement early in the war limited military options, for example unrestricted maritime warfare, with some lasting through early 1942 (28–30). Worse, British submarines were low-end boats technologically, and they had relatively poor-quality torpedoes and insufficient stocks of the latest designs (46, 71).

Hammond devotes a lot of attention to the fielding of more effective aircraft types, covering other enablers and joint techniques on the opposing sides. For example, he discusses the advance of Allied and Axis signals intelligence, the British introduction of air-to-surface vessel radar, more effective Italian anti-submarine warfare skills, and British use of operational research, such as systems analysis. He also showcases the evolution of command-and-control structures. Unsurprisingly, Malta retains its historical significance.

Sheer attrition cost the Axis not only tons of supplies lost at sea, but also numerous hulls. These shipping losses themselves became a prohibitive cost. New Axis construction and even Vichy acquisitions could not replace the attrition. Hammond states outright Axis shipping losses became precarious starting in September 1942 and precipitated a broader Mediterranean collapse around October 1942 (10, 127, 166). By May 1943, the Axis could not conduct a Tunisian “Dunkirk.” The stubborn Axis defense and successful evacuation of Sicily clouded their dire strategic situation. Abandonment of Corsica, Sardinia, and some Aegean possessions presaged a broader Mediterranean collapse due to their isolation (169–72, 200–3).

Hammond's articulation commendably avoids hyperbole. He admits when the anti-shipping war contributed little to the land war. One example is the initial British offensive against the Italians in North Africa in 1940 and another is the Allied Operation Husky on Sicily (49–50, 191–92).

This review offers one caveat. While Hammond has balanced his narrative with the related land operations admirably, he is perhaps too accepting of the typical criticism of British Army equipment, especially tanks, compared with their German counterparts in 1941 through early 1942. The first tank battles in the Western Desert underlined deficient British combined arms, rather than inferior equipment.

Strangling the Axis raises numerous issues related to security today. The Allied war on Axis shipping in the Mediterranean took place in three domains across the

length and breadth of a sea line of communications. Current developments in great-power rivalry and preparations for large-scale combat operations suggest several potential variations. Maritime power still moves the bulk of physical goods among nations. Future conflict in five domains could commence hostilities well before traditional warfare, for example cyber and space interference with shipping lanes. If traditional warfare breaks out, what vulnerabilities would beckon, both along the sea lanes and to anti-access and area-denial actions at ports of departure and arrival? How should Army multi-domain operations and Joint all-domain command-and-control concepts evolve and prepare?

Loss and Redemption at St. Vith: The 7th Armored Division in the Battle of the Bulge

By Gregory Fontenot

Reviewed by Gregory J. W. Urwin, professor of history, Temple University

Ever since S. L. A. Marshall published his flawed 1947 bombshell, *Men against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*, historians have debated the effectiveness of the US Army in the European theater of operations during World War II. Eminent scholars such as Russell F. Weigley and Martin van Creveld have credited the ultimate American victory to greater numbers, superior artillery and air support, and more abundant resources. Meanwhile a younger generation of historians—including Ohio State University alumni Michael D. Doubler, Russell A. Hart, and Peter R. Mansoor—have argued that while the more seasoned German *Landser* may have outclassed the American GIs in their initial encounters, the Americans learned from hard experience and eventually became a worthy opponent.

A former tank battalion commander and a distinguished veteran of Operation Desert Storm, Gregory Fontenot analyzes the trials and ultimate triumph of the 7th Armored Division from the perspective of a professional soldier. *Loss and Redemption at St. Vith* is a detailed operational history of the US 7th Armored Division during the Battle of the Bulge (December 16, 1944 to January 25, 1945). Drawing extensively on American and German archival materials, with interviews, and correspondence conducted with several veterans, Fontenot grounded his grassroots research on a thorough reading of earlier histories of the Ardennes Offensive, an approach that armed him with an obvious mastery of the subject.



Although Fontenot seems to have discovered his passion for researching military history at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, his book complements the scholarship of the Ohio State University scholars and demonstrates the “underappreciated excellence of the US Army’s average units as compared to the 1944 edition of the German Army” (286). While apologists for the American soldier often highlight the performance of the 1st Infantry Division, the 82nd Airborne Division, the 4th Armored Division, and other elite formations, Fontenot reminds readers that “plain old vanilla draftee divisions” like the 7th Armored Division, the “Lucky Seventh,” bore the brunt of the fighting in the American advance across northwest Europe (285).

When three German armies containing 28 divisions launched Adolf Hitler’s Ardennes Offensive nine days before Christmas in 1944, the Lucky Seventh received orders to proceed to St. Vith. From their position along a strategic road and railroad junction, on what became the northern flank of the enemy penetration, the division denied the Germans the use of the road and rail networks that passed through St. Vith for six crucial days. By midnight on December 18, the Lucky Seventh linked up with the battered elements of other American divisions to cover 52 miles of front line. This tenaciously held, horseshoe-shaped line badly upset German timetables and helped thwart Hitler’s last desperate bid to change the course of the war.

Like other American armored divisions, the Lucky Seventh was a balanced combined-arms formation designed for offensive operations based on fire and movement. It served under the command of Brigadier General Robert W. Hasbrouck, an officer whose tank corps–cavalry school background disposed him to execute the Army’s armored doctrine faithfully. During the struggle for St. Vith, Hasbrouck preferred to conduct an active defense, issuing his subordinates mission-oriented orders and fighting his units as flexible task forces. Strong defensive positions, experienced and aggressive leaders, and a basic adherence to solid doctrine—enhanced by inspired displays of initiative—enabled the defenders of St. Vith to fend off eight German divisions until severe attrition and the weight of enemy numbers forced the surviving Americans to retreat across the Salm River.

In the following weeks, First Army restored the 7th Armored Division to fighting shape, which allowed the unit to join the counterattack on January 20, 1945. After three days of fierce fighting, the Americans retook the previously lost ground at St. Vith and blotted out any shame the division’s personnel felt over abandoning the town earlier in the campaign.

Fontenot claims the initiative exercised by junior American officers and private soldiers played a decisive role in shaping the outcome of the Battle of the Bulge.

He repeatedly stresses the importance of leadership in every situation and emphasizes that a unit's performance depends on the quality of its officers. Additionally, he also admits he considers Hasbrouck the book's central character, although Hasbrouck shares the stage with other American officers whose judgment and adaptability contributed to denying St. Vith to the *Wehrmacht* for nearly a week.

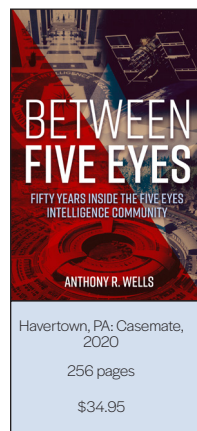
Loss and Redemption at St. Vith is a significant contribution to World War II historiography. It provides apologists with an additional case study to plead their cause and dissects one of the Army's biggest battles in terms that officers serving today can readily understand.

Between Five Eyes: 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing

By Anthony R. Wells

Reviewed by Andrew Ziebell, Army Reserve officer

In *Between Five Eyes: 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing*, Anthony R. Wells attempts to present both a personal story of a fascinating career and a comprehensive history of intelligence sharing. Wells, who began his intelligence analysis career in 1968, shares his deep understanding of the history of intelligence and the relationship between the “Five Eyes”: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Unfortunately, he loses the thread of his narrative quite often, and either the personal angle or the historical angle would have been better discussed alone.



The subtitle of the book refers to the period of time Wells served in—or on the periphery of—the intelligence community. He emphasizes the Five Eyes relationship as a truly special one, yet readers will find a wide range of historical background that falls well outside this scope and adds little to the narrative. Indeed, his description of his early activities with naval intelligence and his role in assessing the Soviet submarine threat conjures up images of Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October* (1984).

While Wells' well-researched historical accounts are drawn from the most authoritative sources, his logic can be difficult to follow. Many chapters are repetitive and appear to have been written separately with little consideration for how they might fit together into a coherent story. In chapter 6, “Intelligence

Roles, Missions, and Operations, 1990–2018,” Wells strays far afield into the history of Bletchley Park during World War II. He details the reading of Soviet messages in the post-war era and the failure to foresee the Chinese intervention in Korea and the Soviet occupation of Prague in 1968. Within the same chapter, readers learn about the importance of signals intelligence—from the Arab-Israeli conflicts to the Falklands crisis to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Overall, Wells delivers little information on intelligence roles, missions, and operations between 1990–2018 and frustratingly less background on his contributions.

Despite the book's title, Wells often refers to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand only in passing or as an afterthought rather than providing concrete examples of their contributions to the Five Eyes. This oversight may be a product of his perspective from the positions he held in the United States and the United Kingdom rather than an intentional slight, but it does disservice to their significant involvement.

Perhaps the greatest shortfall of the book is the lack of coverage given to two of the most significant events of the early-twenty-first century. The shortest chapter of the book, “September 11, 2001 and Its Aftermath,” spends little time reflecting upon the intelligence failures that led to 9/11. Wells also sidesteps the recent debate about the decision by the UK government to accept the US assessment of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction program and his alleged support of terrorist networks, and he mentions the Chilcot Report only once. This omission is unfortunate as the 2016 report—published after a seven-year inquiry—condemned the British intelligence community for not challenging the US findings. Given the space devoted to so many topics far outside the purported scope of the book, this omission is an odd choice.

Despite these criticisms, Wells excels in synthesizing his knowledge and experience to assess current trends and offer predictions about the future. *Between Five Eyes*—in particular the final two chapters on emerging threats and the Five Eyes community in the twenty-first century—is a useful primer on the future of intelligence and the challenges the community faces. This is, after all, the purpose of intelligence gathering and analysis: to confirm what is known, fill in what is unknown, and posit possible outcomes. While Wells provides readers with much information, he unfortunately leaves them with more questions than answers.

STRATEGY

How ISIS Fights: Military Tactics in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt

By Omar Ashour

Reviewed by Dr. Robert J. Bunker, director of research and analysis,
C/O Futures, LLC

Omar Ashour—an associate professor of security and military studies in the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies in Qatar and director of the Strategic Studies Unit in the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies—has written a superb and pithy book on Islamic State (IS, ISIS) warfighting approaches and the organization’s various iterations in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Ashour first reviews the current literature on the Islamic State, focusing on explanations—including variables such as population, local support, and geography—related to “how and why weaker armed nonstate actors (ANSAs) beat or survive stronger armed state actors (ASAs)” (4). He then develops his central research emphasis and seeks to answer: “How did IS fight and why did it militarily endure and expand in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt?” (15–16).

How ISIS Fights is divided into a foreword, acknowledgments, table and abbreviations listings, six chapters, a bibliography, and an index. The foreword—written by Larry P. Goodson, a professor at the US Army War College—highlights the groundbreaking findings and the extensive nature of the fieldwork, interviews, and review of primary sources (ISIS publications and videos) underpinning the research project. The chapters, whose titles betray the tactical subtleties of these specific operational environments, consist of: 1) an introduction which sets out the project methodology and parameters; 2) the Islamic State fighting style in Iraq (Fallujah, Mosul, and Ramadi); 3) the Islamic State fighting style in Syria (Raqqa Governorate); 4) the Islamic State fighting style in Libya (Derna and Sirte); 5) the Islamic State fighting style in Egypt (actually the Sinai); and 6) a conclusion regarding ISIS after territorial defeats and research findings.



The case studies follow a logical and consistent format: context, battlefront(s) focus, offensive and defensive descriptions, battlefront(s) analysis, tactics/innovations, and post-territorial operational environment futures. The notes are extensive and in English, although at times the original Arabic language sourcing is apparent. Ashour clearly understands the tactical and operational nuances of each case study and provides supporting tables to organize the material. Infantry weaponry and suicide-operations—especially vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, given the ISIS deficiency in artillery—play heavily in the various tactical approaches, as does the increasing use of weaponized commercial drones. Ashour also discusses ISIS’s ability to shift rapidly between terrorist, insurgent, and conventional tactics and specific battlefront variations.

The only real criticism of the book is its highly analytical and dense writing—readers will need multiple reviews of the material to absorb its complexity. This complexity, however, is why the research effort is so highly valued for post-graduate study. A few new acronyms appear in the work: “iALLTR - Intelligence; absorb/recruit; loot; lead; transfer” and “SCCLC - Soften-creep; coalition-build; liquidate-consolidate (modus operandi)” along with a number of improvised explosive device variations such as “HBIEDs – house-borne improvised explosive devices” (vii, viii). Further, readers should remember Jihadi/Salafi terminology is crucially peppered throughout the book and should be embraced as a component of the ISIS reality construct to understand better the opposing force mindset.

Ashour’s research findings focus on understanding ISIS combat performance, utilizing “the four variables of combat effectiveness, military effectiveness, expansion, and endurance” as a conceptual lens (197). This focus highlights ISIS attributes such as fighter-types, unit-cohesion, autonomization, combat-multiculturalism, iALLTR, and SCCLC. A categorization of tactics highlighted in table 6.1 identifies the 16 types identified (206). While the micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors analysis is a bit complex, it pans out with the insights gained.

Of the many research findings provided, this one ultimately stands out: “The organisation rapidly adapted to changing environments and situations” (209). ISIS exhibits a strategic and operational flexibility setting it apart from other ANSAs. Ashour indicates the organizational decision-making process of ISIS—its feedback loop (akin to a tactical level observe, orient, decide, act loop)—allowed constant exploitation of the rapidly shifting battlefront environments where its forces were deployed. The stronger ASAs kept reacting to ISIS adaptations, and thus, constantly lost the operational initiative.

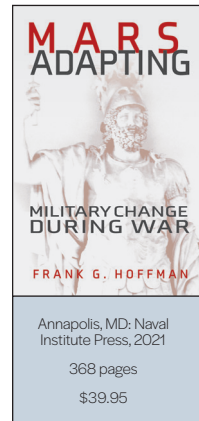
How ISIS Fights is a no-nonsense, compact book that effectively bridges the scholar-practitioner divide in defense and security studies by filling a critical gap in ISIS threat characterization—a global insurgent entity still very active throughout the Middle East, Africa, and other geographic regions. Students at the US Army Command and General Staff College, the US Army War College officer educational levels, and scholars and professionals deeply focused on counter-ISIS research and operations will find it useful. While great-power conflict has rapidly become the new *raison d'être* of US national military strategy, and rightly so, the ISIS hydra—while pretty much dismembered—still has some bite left in it.

Mars Adapting: Military Change during War

By Frank G. Hoffman

Reviewed by Colonel J. P. Clark, PhD, strategist, US Army

In *Mars Adapting*, Frank G. Hoffman—a research fellow at the National Defense University—turns his attention to the question of military adaptation in war. Hoffman was a contributing author to the 2006 Army-Marine Corps Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (2006), coined the term hybrid warfare, and served as a lead author for the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* (2018). Though there has been an increase in attention paid to military change, Hoffman is again blazing a path many others will soon follow. *Mars Adapting* deserves close scrutiny, and readers will be amply rewarded for doing so.



Hoffman's title indicates his principal focus: changes made in response to the surprises of war. Within that context, he considers everything from small local adjustments to significant institution-wide shifts. He examines organizational dynamics similarly. *Mars Adapting* explicitly seeks to fill the gap in bottom-up studies in the literature, but does not exclude the top-down. Some of the most interesting passages examine the complex interactions between local adaptations and those made from on high.

To illustrate the processes of military adaptation, Hoffman employs four case studies drawn from the modern US military experience: submarines in World War II, air power in the Korean War, the Army in Vietnam, and the Marine Corps in Iraq. Inevitably, every author employing case studies faces

difficult choices in establishing the boundaries from which the cases will be drawn and then in determining whether to examine more cases for diversity or fewer cases for greater depth and nuance. In both respects, Hoffman chose well.

Hoffman limits the case studies to the last century of US military experience. While this decision will undoubtedly draw criticism as too narrow a selection upon which to provide a universal guide to military adaptation, this pragmatic choice is beneficial for intended readers. All the case studies occurred within an organizational context similar enough to today's environment to be readily applicable. Cases from militaries with markedly different structures, practices, or cultures—or from the more distant US past when the organizational context was quite different—would have diminished the book's value. For instance, it would be anachronistic to fault the Civil War-era Army for not having an official center for lessons learned, but neither would a detailed accounting of the best practices of the Army of the Potomac be of direct value.

The use of fewer case studies to allow for a deeper examination sets *Mars Adapting* apart from similar books offering more but disappointingly cursory cases. Hoffman's chapter-length case studies, grounded in a mixture of secondary sources and archival research, are the right vehicle to grapple with the complexities of adaptation. Rather than simplistic good or bad examples of adaptation, each case study presents a mixture of results so readers gain a greater appreciation for the interlocking challenges of adaptation. For instance, in the chapter on the Army in Vietnam, Hoffman shows there was an evolution in tactics. That adaptation, however, occurred within a rigid conceptual framework set by Generals William Westmoreland and William DePuy, which locked the units of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, into seeking ways to fight attritional battles more effectively on the enemy's terms. It was adaptation but not of the type that led down a productive strategic path. One critical insight from these cases is that adaptation takes time. Even the most successful instances required 18 to 24 months for full institutionalization.

Hoffman also presents a theoretical framework for military adaptation. Well versed in the relevant literature across multiple disciplines, he offers an excellent summation of the field in the first two chapters. The academic study of military change has been largely dominated by international relations theorists, most notably Barry Posen and Stephen Peter Rosen, and Hoffman gives that school of thought due attention. In developing his theory, he draws more heavily on the scholarship of military historians Theo Farrell and Williamson Murray and the field of organizational learning theory.

Mars Adapting makes two important theoretical contributions. The first contribution is a model for adaptation that accounts for both top-down and

bottom-up change in a process of inquire, interpret, investigate, integrate, and institutionalize. The second contribution is a list of attributes that define any organization's capacity to adapt: leadership, organizational culture, learning mechanisms, and dissemination mechanisms.

Hoffman's model and attributes will contribute to academic inquiries and help practitioners think systematically and rigorously about military adaptation. Both communities will benefit from the case studies, and the nuanced examples within the case studies will stimulate further thought. Perhaps inevitably, the model and attributes seem more descriptive than prescriptive. They provide a useful taxonomy for analysis but do not fully capture why certain leaders or organizations have the creative spark of successful adaptation while others fall short. This is consistent with one of Hoffman's major findings: adaptation is a difficult and complex process.

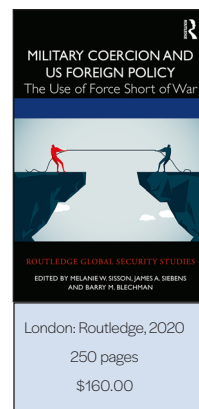
Hoffman fittingly concludes with a set of questions for further exploration, situating the book at the start of a long conversation rather than at its end. *Mars Adapting* is required reading for all scholars and practitioners interested in the questions it raises.

Military Coercion and US Foreign Policy: The Use of Force Short of War

Edited by Melanie W. Sisson, James A. Siebens, and Barry M. Blechman

Reviewed by Steven Metz, professor of national security and strategy,
US Army War College

Coercion is an important component of American statecraft and strategy—vital enough it is taught in the core course at the US Army War College. It first became the subject of rigorous social science analysis in Thomas C. Schelling's 1966 *Arms and Influence*. The central idea of coercion is adroit threats can, under certain conditions, allow states to attain strategic objectives without war. The key is to clarify expectations of the adversary and make them believe there will be painful consequences if they do not comply. Like deterrence, coercion requires capability, communication, and credibility. But, where deterrence is designed to forestall a potential adversary's action, coercion is active and immediate and is intended to make an adversary stop or change its current actions.



In 1978, Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan expanded Schelling's initial concept, publishing a series of case studies assessing when coercion works or does not work. Today's renewed great power competition increases the potential risks and costs of a major war—protracted conflict is always more likely among equal adversaries—and thus makes effective coercion even more important. For this reason, the editors and contributing authors of *Military Coercion and US Foreign Policy* have updated Blechman and Kaplan's efforts with recent case studies.

Military Coercion and US Foreign Policy has two purposes: “to provide information about the conditions under which particular types, sizes, and uses of the US military increased or decreased the likelihood of coercive success during the period 1991–2018” and “to determine how uses of the US military were, or were not, integrated with other tools of foreign policy in ways that enhanced or degraded US credibility” (10). As with its predecessors, *Military Coercion and US Foreign Policy* aims to harness social science and history to shape security policy, rather than solely to advance knowledge. The book is more a work of praxis than theory.

The first three chapters lay out the theoretical framework and are followed by five case studies covering Syria, Iraq and Iran, the Balkans, Russia, and China—all written by renowned experts. The conclusions are unsurprising to anyone who has thought seriously about the use of force in statecraft. For instance, what is threatened “can be determinative”; the clarity and specificity of threats and demands affect the outcome; deploying forces into a region from outside it often augments the credibility of a threat; and last, sanctions and military coercion do not “partner well,” since sanctions indicate a willingness to rely on methods of compliance other than force (164–65). For coercion to work, an adversary must feel certain military force will be used if they fail to comply. The intricate psychology of coercion creates challenges for the United States. As the editors of the book explain:

... messages are filtered through the target actor's strategic culture, domestic political culture, and by the temperament, experiences, and predispositions of its leadership. Messages thus inherently are vulnerable to misinterpretation, an eventuality made more likely by the inconsistencies in the statements made by policymakers, particularly when allies are involved, and by a lack of specificity in the nature of threats and demands levied (168).

Put differently, effective coercion requires clarity and consistency—two things US policy often lacks. The book argues coercion will be more important but also more difficult for the United States in an era of great-power competition.

The period covered in the book, 1991–2018, was one of clear US primacy. The failure of coercion—or its clumsy application—was not disastrous as the power disparity between the United States and its adversary amplified the credibility of threats. But with greater parity between the United States and its potential adversaries, particularly China, there will be less room for error and stricter requirements for a threat to be credible. Thus, the book’s editors conclude, “pursuit of US interest in the coming decades . . . will require a discipline in the planning and in the implementation of coercive strategy that the relatively permissive environment of the last 30 years most often did not” (176).

While the book’s contributors are all top-tier security experts, some chapters are better than others. Despite this discrepancy, the editors and authors succeeded in updating the original work of Schelling, Blechman, and Kaplan and provide an updated framework for analysis to inform policy in an increasingly dangerous time. Every senior military leader, foreign policymaker, and strategist should read this book.

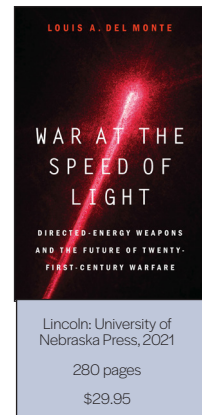
TECHNOLOGY AND WAR

War at the Speed of Light: Directed-Energy Weapons and the Future of Twenty-First-Century Warfare

By Louis A. Del Monte

Reviewed by Jeffrey Caton, president, Kepler Strategies LLC

Louis A. Del Monte's *War at the Speed of Light: Directed-Energy Weapons and the Future of Twenty-First-Century Warfare* is a difficult book to categorize. Akin to the allure of a richly illustrated sideshow tent, the book's glossy cover and dire warnings of future disasters may entice prospective readers. But when the veil is drawn, the interior reveals contents incongruent with expectations. Del Monte claims over 30 years of experience with technology, and his recent books include *Genius Weapons* (2018) and *Nanoweapons* (2017), as well as a book on time travel. Curiously, a search of scholarly and professional publication databases reveals few earlier works.



In the introduction, Del Monte vows to describe “the ever-increasing and revolutionary role of directed-energy weapons in warfare” (1). He posits that “the nature of warfare is changing in three fundamental ways”: through artificial intelligence, directed-energy weapons, and reliance on electromagnetic energy. He promises that “this book delineates the threat that directed-energy weapons pose to disrupting the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD)” (1). Del Monte touches on aspects of these topics, but never delves into a critical dialogue for any of them.

Del Monte divides the book into four major sections. The first section, “The Game of Cat and Mouse,” has three chapters designed to provide historical context. The contents are a hodgepodge of Cold War issues and warfare technology culminating in a review of the Third Offset Strategy (popularized by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in 2014), as well as Del Monte’s construct of a “Fourth Offset” based on alliances, technology, and the threats of Russia and China (47). In sum, the chapter is an unnecessary prelude that forewarns readers of Del Monte’s op-ed approach to the book: personal opinions supported by a medley of facts that favor his narrative. Neither the exercise of critical thinking nor the addition of opposing dialogue are luxuries the author abides.

The second section, “Directed-Energy Weapons,” serves as the 85-page heart of the book, organized into four chapters on laser, microwave, electromagnetic pulse, and cyberspace weapons. The discussion on lasers is superficial and highlights only a few US systems currently under development. Absent is any mention of the successful missile engagements by the Missile Defense Agency’s Airborne Laser Test Bed in 2010. In fact, the entire Missile Defense Agency merits only a single sentence in the book. Instead, Del Monte rehashes a few Soviet-era laser devices (for example, the Sary Shagan facility) covered in better detail in the 1986 DoD publication *Soviet Military Power*.

The credibility of Del Monte’s arguments is often questionable. He summarily dismisses the technological advances of President Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative as irrelevant for directed-energy discussions. Also, Del Monte oversimplifies many complex matters into a *fait accompli*. For example, his reasoning why the United States should fear an EMP attack by rogue nations is the assertion: “President Richard Nixon conducted foreign policy by attempting to convince enemy leaders he was irrational and volatile . . . Nixon was acting. North Korea and Iran are not” (127). Simply put, there is too much tangential conjecture and too little thoughtful analysis.

With regard to cyberspace weapons, Del Monte harangues about Russian interference in US elections and offers a confusing perspective on electronic warfare. His only cyberspace-specific issue is a recap of the 2010 Stuxnet as “the first-ever cyber weapon” (135). Yet, in 2008, Operation Buckshot Yankee transformed how the Department of Defense defends in cyberspace. Also, the 2007 Russian cyberspace attacks on Estonia helped lay the foundation for NATO’s Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. Del Monte mentions neither.

The book’s third section, “Shields Up, Mr. Sulu,” is a thankfully short (23 pages) digression on directed-energy countermeasures and force fields that adds little to the book except more references to *Star Trek*. Del Monte offers only “bug bounties” as cyberspace countermeasures and an anemic four pages to present Army, Navy, and Air Force electronic warfare countermeasures (158). He also offers a lesson in plasma physics and a generic discussion of a Boeing patent for a plasma force-field concept.

The final section, “The Coming New Reality,” covers autonomous warfare, space warfare, and MAD. Within a jumbled three chapters, Del Monte doubles down on his rejection of particle-beam weapons as directed energy. While this is certainly convenient, he fails to recognize the Department of Defense and the rest of the world do consider particle-beam weapons as directed energy. In fact, strategic defense initiative programs successfully

demonstrated particle-beam technologies for directed-energy application in 1989. Del Monte also seems unaware that US space defenses routinely trained for the threat of Soviet anti-satellite weapons as well as high-altitude nuclear detonation and electronic attacks in the 1980s and 1990s.

Del Monte's final chapter, "Not Gambling with the Fate of Humanity," showcases his alarmist nature and shallow knowledge of national security doctrine. He undercuts his discussion of MAD by contorting its underlying premise to be "a belief that small nuclear states, having fewer nuclear weapons, can deter aggression by large nuclear nations" (214). The culminating revelations are Del Monte's whimsical guidelines to "eliminate nuclear weapons . . . use autonomous weapons only under human supervision . . . [and] arm autonomous weapons only with conventional warheads" (221).

War at the Speed of Light makes no serious contribution to the fields of the technical, military, and national security arts and sciences. Simply put, this is a book to avoid in lieu of much better subject material freely available to the public. To be fair, Del Monte has admirers. Indeed, his chapter endnotes appear to be extensive and are a redeeming quality of the tome. Unfortunately, the bounty of information contained in the credible sources is rarely shared with readers. While there is little doubt Del Monte would be a competent high-school physics teacher, the book clearly demonstrates that authoritative discussions of future warfare technology and national security are best left to others.

