

## WAR'S OTHER NAME

A Review Essay by

AUDREY KURTH CRONIN

### The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism

by J. Paul de B. Taillon  
Westport, Connecticut:  
Praeger, 2001.  
208 pp. \$62.50  
[ISBN: 0-275-96922-3]

### Terrorism Today

by Christopher C. Harmon  
London: Frank Cass, 2000.  
316 pp. \$24.50  
[ISBN: 0-7146-4998-8]

### Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy

by Paul R. Pillar  
Washington: The Brookings  
Institution, 2001.  
272 pp. \$26.95  
[ISBN: 0-8157-0004-0]

Even before September 11, one of the surest ways for an author to find a publisher was to use the word *terrorism* in the title of a book proposal. The widespread American interest in terrorism and counterterrorism attests to a deepening sense of vulnerability that began with the attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993, the Alfred P. Murrah Building in 1995, and the use of a weapon of mass destruction, sarin gas, in a Tokyo subway, also in 1995. The euphoria following the Western triumph in the Cold War has been replaced by a foreboding that it is only a matter of time before further catastrophic terrorist acts occur on American soil, perhaps using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

Highly visible threats from publicity-seeking villains such as Osama bin Laden, promising to kill Americans anywhere on the globe, have increased the anxiety. Images of *USS Cole*, a \$1 billion warship crippled by inexpensive explosives, underlined the danger. The rubble that was once the World Trade Center added an exclamation point. Merely the threat of attack has proven to be a potent form of terrorism. Before this year Congress had already increased funding for counterterrorism, even though the annual number of international incidents

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*USS Cole* following terrorist attack.

U.S. Navy

during most of the 1990s was half that of the mid-1980s.

The three books under review here address terrorism and counterterrorism from different directions and on different planes of intellectual discourse. Beginning with the narrowest focus, J. Paul de B. Taillon of the Canadian Royal Military College describes a specific tool of response to terrorism, military missions by British and American forces. Some of *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism* is devoted to an abbreviated review of the maturation of American and British irregular forces. The chapter on U.S. capabilities is more fluently written than that on their British counterparts; however, the comparison of the historical development of their respective operational doctrine is insightful. The culture of each nation's forces is described in the context of low-intensity conflicts: Malaya, Oman, and Northern Ireland for Great Britain, and Korea and Vietnam for the United States. The Americans do not fare well by comparison. The British learned to immerse themselves in the intricacies of local culture, follow orders rigorously, win over local populations, and remain mindful of the political context of localized military operations. The Americans, despite a long early history of unconventional warfighting on the frontier, focused on applying massive firepower and inflexible, formalized combat plans. From Central America to Vietnam, U.S. cultural insensitivity on

the ground was exacerbated by an attitude of benign superiority, impatience, and an overreliance on technology. The differences of approach between the Army and the Marine Corps are discussed, with the Marines winning more approval. Misperceptions of the role of Special Operations Forces, particularly in the anti-elitist peacetime Army, get considerable ink.

This unflattering portrait of the American experience is followed by two comparative case studies of hostage-rescue missions: the successful 1980 Special Air Service rescue of hostages in the Iranian Embassy siege in London, and the unsuccessful American Delta Force attempt to retrieve captives from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Given the choice of cases, it is no surprise that the United States is again revealed as needing to reevaluate its planning methods, intelligence, and proficiency in understanding circumstances on the ground. The book's conclusions are sound but general, including enhanced international cooperation and sharing of intelligence (especially among Western Allies), more emphasis on human intelligence, forward-basing of Special Operations Forces, and better secure communications.

It would be interesting to speculate on how the author might revise his assessments based on the recent performance of Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan.



Khobar Towers.

DOD

Clearly, their capabilities have evolved since the aborted Iranian hostage rescue. After the war against the Taliban there will be less reluctance to employ these forces.

A more broad-ranging study entitled *Terrorism Today* by Christopher Harmon analyzes the threat as it has evolved since 1990. Couched in terms of moral indignation, this book is essentially a call to arms for Westerners against domestic and international terrorists. It is an ambitious work: for example, the author describes six types of political objectives that prompt actions by terrorists (anarchism, communism, neofascism, national separatism, religion, and pro-state terrorism), three types of strategies most commonly used (political, economic, and military), and numerous types of weaponry and training employed. Harmon, who is on the faculty of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, is a proponent of snatch operations against terrorists, asserting that U.S. decisionmakers are unduly hindered by fear of retaliation even though “a gentle policy of forbearance has not protected Americans.”

This is a remarkably comprehensive survey and a helpful reference, including valuable resources such as basic information about the major international organizations and a glossary of terrorist groups at the end, but it suffers from two flaws. First, only a few months after publication, it is significantly out of date. The sources seem to be mostly three or four years old, which in a field with numerous innovations (particularly in funding, homeland security, and international cooperation) is unfortunate. For example, on homeland

security he references Marine Corps planning guidance from 1997; a great deal has happened since. On international counterterrorism he writes of infighting between FBI and CIA agents overseas that has been significantly reduced in recent years. And on the problem of controlling terrorist access to funding he says nothing at all about important international developments such as the International Convention on the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which was opened for signature in January 2000. One can sympathize with the difficulties of getting academic books published in a timely way; yet it remains true that this volume is not the best source for relevant information despite its title.

The second major flaw is the book’s politically superficial view of the world. There is no effort to substantiate broad statements such as: “Global instability has increased since 1990, and that may increase terrorism. But on balance, it has not.” What does instability mean? Surely at a time of American predominance, when we no longer need to worry about imminent nuclear war with a peer competitor, it is at least arguable that this is a much *more* stable world. Another example: “North Korea has been and remains today Asia’s most flagrant supporter of clandestine international violence. This is the view in the region—not a mere obsession of Washington.” Although Kim Jong-il may terrorize his countrymen, he has appeared to make progress in negotiating with the United States about removing

North Korea from the list of states sponsoring terrorism. Moreover, while helping the Japanese account for abducted citizens remains a serious sticking point in normalizing Pyongyang-Tokyo relations, the debate centers on coming to terms with past rather than recent terrorist acts. Washington does not sound very obsessive here, attitudes within the region have evolved, and as for North Korea being the most flagrant state supporter, is Afghanistan not part of Asia?

Most frustrating is chapter 5 (Misconceptions), which takes superficial statements such as asserting that terrorism is “mindless” and that terrorists are “mostly male” and sets them up as straw men to attack. Any scholar familiar with terrorist studies knows there is considerable evidence that terrorist behavior is the product of logical if twisted thinking. As for whether most terrorists are male, the author writes, “The general perception that nearly all terrorists are males is untrue. It cannot be supported by surveying the numbers of men versus women in the active contemporary insurgent and terrorist groups.” But where is the promised survey? What follows are vague estimates and anecdotal examples of specific female perpetrators, not hard data. A rigorous study of the numerical prevalence of women in terrorist organizations would be interesting indeed; but it is not provided. The book leaves the reader with essentially the same passionate words with which it began: “[Terrorism] is a moral challenge to legitimate political and social life.” But little additional insight is given into the complexities of meeting that challenge.

By far the best volume for a broad understanding of American responses to terrorism is *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* by Paul Pillar. It presents a nuanced, sophisticated, and timely discussion of the range of options available to the United States, placed firmly in the context of competing and overarching foreign policy goals. Pillar was deputy chief of the Counterterrorist Center at CIA, and his experience and depth of knowledge are obvious. More impressive is his ability to place that practical expertise within a broad intellectual framework. In a field crowded with work of variable quality, his book calls on the best and the brightest to take up the quest of counterterrorism.

The author admits at the outset that “Terrorism is a challenge to be managed, not solved.” The platitudinous calls for *victory* against this evil are swept aside: fighting terrorism itself may not always be the top national priority, and even when it is, the seemingly strongest coun-

terrorist policies may not be the most effective. This is not an apologia for terrorism, only a plea for more intelligent responses: "an argument that counterterrorism requires more finesse and, if not less fight, then fighting in a carefully calculated and selective way." He offers a clear presentation of counterterrorism not only from a tactical and operational perspective, but as a strategic long-term interest of the United States.

Of particular value is Pillar's evaluation of the current popular focus on chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological weapons. Without minimizing the dangers, he stresses the recent sensationalizing of the issue, especially the tendency to confuse the conceivable with the likely. He points out that the technical obstacles to such attacks are not small and that casualties might therefore be relatively few. Recent anthrax attacks in the United States seem to bear this out. He worries about the alarmist nature of much recent discussion, which also applies to concerns about cyberterrorism. He is not denying the possibility and dangers of attack; but he urges against distorting counterterrorism funding to deal with the threat *du jour*, even as more traditional dangers employing conventional means continue to be more probable and potentially devastating. Moreover, Pillar argues eloquently about the indirect costs of stirring up public anxiety, not least of which is the surge in hoaxes. Again, the anthrax offensive bolsters his case. This sort of balanced, informed discussion is a much needed antidote to the recent spate of alarmist publications in the field, which unwittingly support the main goal of most terrorists.

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## JUNGLE FIGHTERS

A Book Review by

JOHN W. GORDON

### Burma 1942: The Japanese Invasion

by Ian L. Grant and Kazuo Tamayama  
Chichester, West Sussex: The Zampi Press, 1999.

416 pp. £ 25.00

[ISBN 0-9521083-1-3]

### Fire in the Night: Wingate of Burma, Ethiopia, and Zion

by John Bierman and Colin Smith  
New York: Random House, 1999.

434 pp. \$29.95

[ISBN 0-375-50061-8]

Surely the China-Burma-India theater must stand as one of the most challenging and exotic locales of World War II. For the British and U.S. ground forces who contended with the Japanese in the unforgiving jungles and the pilots who flew the dangerous Hump route over the Himalayas, theirs seemed a forgotten war at the far end of a long supply line and of less interest to the home front than closer and more familiar theaters. Somewhat the same thing could be said of the Japanese by mid-1944. They too were fighting a campaign increasingly isolated and irrelevant to the battles that would decide the fate of the empire.

From the Allied point of view, the theater offered problems of command, joint and combined warfare, logistics, contentious personalities, and difficulties of high-level cooperation not elsewhere equaled. It was also unique in that it was the scene of the largest single experiment with special forces during the war. Two recent books reexamine this difficult and controversial theater. In *Burma 1942: The Japanese Invasion*, Ian Grant and Kazuo Tamayama consider the Japanese offensive that, coming hard on the heels of British defeat in Malaya, again confounded the British by suddenly taking Burma, regarded as the key to India and the back door to embattled Nationalist China. In *Fire in the Night: Wingate of Burma, Ethiopia, and Zion*, John Bierman and Colin Smith assess the role of Major General Orde Wingate, daring leader of the Chindit special force operations, and his battle behind Japanese lines.

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Kyaukpyo Camp.

U.S. Army

The great contribution of Grant and Tamayama is their description of the offensive through the actions of the soldiers involved, using a wealth of largely untapped official sources, operation orders, estimates of the situation, and other individual and unit records. The Japanese assault, which began with air attacks in December 1941 and a ground thrust a month later, caught the British unprepared. Never believing Burma to be a likely arena of war, they lavished most of their forces in the Far East on the ill-fated defense of Hong Kong and Singapore. Commanders also overestimated the capacity of British and Indian units. The Japanese quickly seized Rangoon—the port through which all supplies and war matériel, to include lend-lease equipment, was sent to China—as well as a chain of crucial airfields. Lieutenant General Shojiro Iida, Fifteenth Army commander, consistently outperformed his opponents. These included by now not just the British and Indians, but also the Chinese who were at least in theory operating under the command of Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell, chief of staff to Chiang Kai-Shek. The British fired one general and replaced him with Sir Harold Alexander, to be named commander in the Middle East by Winston Churchill half a year later. New generals or no, in three months Japanese troops had pushed the British and Stilwell back into India. Iida and his subordinate commanders found the British to be road bound and

slow to shift units to threatened points. They exploited these qualities with aggressive outflanking tactics that let their lightly equipped infantry slip through the jungle to get behind British positions. Iida thus secured a strategic buffer, a wealth of oil and other resources, and the isolation of the Chinese. He also added to the Japanese reputation as fierce and unstoppable jungle fighters.

Hard pressed, the Allies decided to experiment with special forces, intended to raid, gather intelligence, and work with indigenous guerrillas on the flank or behind enemy lines. Small units of this type found approval not only with Churchill but also with President Franklin Roosevelt. British General Sir Archibald Wavell, who particularly backed the special operations approach, arranged for Wingate to organize a special unit. As Bierman and Smith show, Wingate was regarded by some as a natural successor to T.E. Lawrence in the business of mounting operations behind enemy lines. Wavell had known Wingate since before the war when he worked



Gurkas parachuting near Rangoon.

U.S. Air Force History Office

with Jewish guerrillas in Palestine. He later dispatched Wingate to win back Ethiopia for Haile Selassie. Early in 1943, Wingate led the brigade-sized unit he had formed and trained in a series of raids behind the Japanese lines in the jungles of Burma. This force, known as the Chindits, sustained high losses (particularly from disease) but was judged to have performed so well that Churchill took Wingate to the Anglo-American conference at Quebec. There, the United States pledged its own special force, unofficially known as Merrill's Marauders, and an "air commando" comprising fighters, bombers, and other aircraft to provide aerial support to ground forces.

Wingate himself received resources for an expanded effort to go back into Burma in early 1944. This time the Chindits and Marauders would be transported by gliders or advanced in separate columns to seize key road, rail, and air-

field targets. These columns would be supported by air-dropped supplies and by fighters and medium bombers that could be called down to attack the Japanese. Intending to place a stranglehold on the lines of communication in the enemy rear, the Allies found the task to be easier said than done. British and American forces sustained high losses, chiefly due to disease and exhaustion, and Wingate was killed in a plane crash. Later in 1944, General Sir William Slim, then the British commander in Burma, lured the Japanese into a battle of annihilation at Imphal. He then shifted over to the offensive and retook Burma.

To begin assessing the eccentric and unusual character of Wingate and the special force experiment that he commanded presents a serious difficulty. Early writings treated him as unorthodox but brilliant, the genius of a new form of warfare that tradition-bound generals failed to understand. Others were less kind. The official British history, *The War Against Japan* by Major General S. Woodburn Kirby, who had served as a senior staff officer in that theater, condemned Wingate as a prima donna and his operations as overrated and of little value. Even more scathing were the remarks in the best-selling memoir, *Defeat into Victory* by Field Marshal Lord Slim, in which he said that the experiment with special forces was wasteful and actually harmful since it advanced the idea that only elite "super-soldier" groups could take on the toughest missions.

The contribution of Bierman and Smith draws upon all previous studies of Wingate as well as official papers. They acknowledge his strengths. Wingate's raids raised British spirits and undermined Japanese morale. Even more important, his last deep-penetration effort forced the enemy into the fatal decision to attack Slim at Imphal, which led them to destruction by conventional rather than special forces.

To reach a verdict on Wingate, readers will have to await the appearance of the sort of rigorous book that Grant and Tamayama produced, this one concentrating on the 1943 and 1944 campaigns and similarly based on official documents. Only such a work can unmask what assessment Japanese commanders were actually making at the time about Wingate and his operations. Until then, the last word on this "man of genius who might have become a man of destiny," as Churchill put it, must be regarded as yet to be written.

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## PAINFUL JOURNEY INTO THE PAST

A Book Review by  
LEWIS SORLEY

### Honor Bound: American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia, 1961–1973

by Stuart I. Rochester and Frederick Kiley  
Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1999.  
706 pp. \$39.95  
[ISBN 1-55750-694-9]

### The Long Road Home: U.S. Prisoner of War Policy and Planning in Southeast Asia

by Vernon E. Davis  
Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 2000.  
613 pp. \$58.00  
[ISBN 0-16-050381-7]

Decades in the making and products of the Historical Office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, two recent books are hallmarks of scholarship and objectivity on a controversial and painful subject. *Honor Bound: American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia, 1961–1973* by Stuart Rochester and Frederick Kiley concentrates on the experiences of American captives taken during the Vietnam War, while *The Long Road Home: U.S. Prisoner of War Policy and Planning in Southeast Asia* by Vernon Davis addresses the concerns at command levels and in Washington. Given the necessity for covering much of the same ground, the two works are remarkably complementary. Read in conjunction, each provides insights and detail that illuminate the account found in the other.

The dominant public image of prisoners in the Vietnam War is undoubtedly that of downed American airmen being held at the Hanoi Hilton, the Hoa Lo prison in the North Vietnamese capital; but *Honor Bound* also covers the satellite facilities in the country as well as the circumstances of captives held in Laos and Cambodia and the especially unfortunate prisoners confined on the move in remote parts of South Vietnam.

During the Johnson administration, Averell Harriman at the Department of State had primary responsibility for the

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Repatriating POWs  
from Hanoi, 1973.

DOD

prisoner of war issue. His approach was to keep quiet about harsh treatment, apparently believing that not offending the North Vietnamese would facilitate negotiations. This stance was anathema to the wives and parents of prisoners, who were becoming increasingly organized as the League of Families under the leadership of Sybil Stockdale.

During the Nixon administration, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird personally took the lead on prisoner of war concerns. His approach, diametrically opposed to Harriman's, embodied a campaign in which a full accounting was made to the public of what was known about the torture, maltreatment, intimidation, and exploitation of prisoners by the North Vietnamese. There was a lot to tell. Rochester and Kiley detail "a systematic program of torture" which "became a standard procedure." The authors lay their case out in grim detail, to include the infamous ropes treatment, in which prisoners were so tightly bound that blood circulation was cut off, forcing their bodies to arch painfully. Crippled men were then left to hang from hooks or forced to kneel for hours on stone floors. Long periods of solitary confinement, denial of food and water, and systematic beatings were common. These were not isolated instances; rather they "became a rite of passage experienced eventually by almost every American [prisoner of war] in the North." Those captured early in the war bore the worst treatment, as well as being incarcerated longer than any other American prisoners in history. The

story of their valiant conduct under such vile conditions, retold in understated but eloquent terms, is inspiring.

The prisoners themselves acknowledge that eventually "all capitulated to some extent." But they had a code of behavior which demanded "the realistic objective . . . of holding out as long as possible, then giving as little as possible, and using the breathing spell that normally followed a period of torture to recover strength for the next bout." There were a few men, but only a few, who failed this test and collaborated willingly with the enemy. That, too, forms part of this comprehensive story.

In the end, these accounts establish conclusively that when Jane Fonda called former prisoners who described being tortured as "liars and hypocrites," it was she who spoke falsely.

The dominant prison camp impulse, second only to survival, was communication. The extraordinary means devised by the prisoners and the risks they took to contact one another—and sometimes

paid dearly for—are well described. In particular, prisoners raised their tap code, in its many manifestations, to an art. Communication was essential to another key factor that enabled the captives to tolerate their ordeal, a prisoner chain of command. Given that their tormentors often kept the most senior prisoners in solitary confinement for months or years, intensive efforts were required to keep the channels open. These efforts succeeded remarkably.

One of the great stories is the meticulously organized and splendidly executed plan for welcoming returning prisoners—Operation Homecoming. Altogether, 600 prisoners were received, aided by literally thousands of medical specialists, air crewmen, communicators, personnel and finance officers, food service teams, public information officers, chaplains, and others serving prisoner needs from reception at Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi through initial processing at Clark Air Base in the Philippines and on to the United States. There were welcoming crowds at every stop followed by ecstatic family reunions, a dramatic contrast to the bleak homecoming for most veterans who served in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese celebrated in their own way, with a National Hate America Day, perhaps not surprising from what Davis describes as the act of "a rigid, aggrieved, abusive, and deceitful yet maddeningly self-righteous foe."

Neither of these books are intended for the casual reader. Densely written and extensively documented (in the aggregate amounting to nearly 1,150 pages of text and over 100 pages of endnotes), they are rich compilations of detailed and factual information. But they are gracefully composed, superbly edited, and fascinating. Their value extends beyond prisoner of war and missing personnel issues, for they provide much on the larger context of the Vietnam War, enemy strategy and psychology, and U.S. decisionmaking mechanisms and personalities.

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## OPERATIONAL ART

A Book Review by  
FREDERICK W. KAGAN

### In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory

by Shimon Naveh  
London: Frank Cass, 1997.  
396 pp. \$59.50  
[ISBN 0-71-46472-76]

A most thought provoking study of the operation level of conflict, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* by Shimon Naveh, deserves urgent consideration in these times of strategic and operational uncertainty. Using a sophisticated understanding of general systems theory, Naveh describes flaws in the 19<sup>th</sup> century understanding of war and the development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century of a military theory based on an appreciation for the complexity and sophistication of modern armies and states. He examines German *Blitzkrieg* in detail to show its very real and important limitations to the operational level of war. Naveh then turns to the development of Soviet operational art in the 1920s and 1930s and the elaboration of that conception in the postwar years. Finally, he examines the development of American AirLand Battle doctrine, epitomized in the 1982 and 1986 editions of Army Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*.

Throughout these careful historical expositions, Naveh shows that operational art is more than simply the conduct of operations, and that the operational level of war is more than the tier between tactics and strategy. He argues convincingly that operational art is a theory with a content and an objective. In the past, he contends, the conduct of operations focused on massing the largest possible force against the main enemy army and destroying it, although here he puts too much blame on Carl von Clausewitz for a trend that owed more to the development of railways, mobilization plans, and myopic general staffs. Naveh is correct in pointing out that operational art has turned away from its original simple prescription for victory. As developed by the Soviets and partially adopted by the Americans, operational art proceeded from an understanding that the enemy

force was a complex system in which many independent parts work together to produce a combat power far in excess of the sums of their individual strengths. That observation led to the further conviction that destruction of the enemy force could best be achieved not by attacking it head on, strength-to-strength, but by striking at the critical points of linkage between the parts, subjecting the entire body to a shock that would disrupt its synergistic operation, break it into parts, and render each part vulnerable to rapid and decisive demolition.

The concept of operational shock delivered simultaneously throughout the enemy force was the basis of Soviet operational thinking in the interwar years. The Soviets imagined that long-range attack aviation would strike deep into the enemy rear, destroying rail lines and hubs, blowing up bridges, and attacking concentrations of reserves not so much to demolish them as to pin them down and keep reinforcements from aggregating to reestablish coherent defensive positions once the initial forward defensive belt was breached. At the same time, powerful armored forces supported by tactical attack aviation and high-density artillery concentrations would blow holes through forward defenses, facilitating multiple breakthroughs. Finally, exploitation forces, tactically and operationally echeloned to enable continuous pursuit of the defenders, would drive into the enemy rear, engage the reserves pinned down by long-range aviation, and overrun the entire defending force before it could recover its equilibrium and respond coherently. This is almost precisely the sequence of events that occurred in June and July 1944, when in a single operation the Red army completely destroyed German Army Group Center, advancing more than 200 kilometers in three weeks. A similar sequence describes the near destruction of the Iraqi army in 1991.

Since the Persian Gulf War, American military thinkers and practitioners have become ever more convinced that the enemy is a system that can be disassembled and destroyed piecemeal, and considerable reliance on that belief underlies current defense posture and planning. Yet there is a fundamental divergence between current conceptions of how to attack an enemy system and those that worked so well in 1944 and 1991, and it is not clear that recent notions are more sound.

The main advocates for attacking an enemy system are airpower enthusiasts, and the tools they imagine are airpower

tools, whether delivered by Air Force fighter-bombers or Navy Tomahawk land attack missiles. The most articulate spokesmen of this viewpoint follow Naveh in rejecting Clausewitz utterly. They argue that the days when it was necessary to attack the enemy army to win are over and that it is now possible to disaggregate the enemy system by precision strikes on a limited set of critical targets (erroneously identified as centers of gravity). Thus a war can be won quickly, cheaply, nearly bloodlessly, and virtually without ground forces.

This view, however, misses the point of operational art and misreads the history of the campaigns that best exemplify it. The precision strikes of the Gulf War, to say nothing of the imprecise attacks of the Red air force in 1944, did not destroy the enemy forces or even render them helpless by killing critical nodes. Instead, they inflicted severe operational shock that temporarily destabilized and disaggregated enemy capabilities. The ground attack against that disoriented force was then able to kill it quickly and relatively painlessly.

The shock induced by an air only offensive is largely dissipated without the synergy of simultaneous attacks. Unless the political leadership succumbs to the first assault or loses its nerve during a more prolonged bombardment, as Slobodan Milosevic did, the only way a purely air strike can follow up is by seeking to annihilate enemy forces entirely through attrition. The key point of operational art, however, is that the outcome has little to do with the war of numbers, which puts such thinking at odds with current theories relying on airpower and long-range standoff weapons. Many believe that American technological superiority will limit attrition in future conflicts to the enemy, but history offers little support for that judgment. Countermeasures will be developed. Then even the most advanced weapons can be degraded and defeated.

Attrition is a dangerous ally. Yet if the United States continues as it began in the 1980s with the serious study of operational art and focuses on developing concepts that combine operational shock with exploitation of ensuing vulnerabilities, then an enemy's ability to frustrate U.S. forces through operational defects or enemy countermeasures will be greatly reduced. Technological excellence is not incompatible with theoretical excellence. Indeed, one without the other is unlikely to succeed.

JFK

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