

NATIONAL CULTURE AND WARFARE—WHITHER DECISIVE FORCE

A Review Essay by

DAVID J. ANDRE

Decisive Force: The New American Way of War

by F.G. Hoffman

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Few subjects have more sharply divided military officers from political elites who lack combat experience than cultural influences on both our national style of war and on the kind and the degree of force best suited to U.S. interests. *Decisive Force: The New American Way of War* by F.G. Hoffman rekindles this debate. If he is correct, the chasm separating our civilian and military leaders may be widening. Hoffman's aim is to "trace the development and evaluate the merits of a 'New American Way of War' embodied in the Decisive Force concept." Three suppositions drive the book. First, that there is a new way of war that is subtly different from the one expounded by Russell Weigley in *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. Second, that the lessons of Vietnam and later were oversimplified or erroneous. Third, that civil-military relations are in "subliminal crisis" because of a long-term deterioration of understanding between the government and society at large.

Decisive Force surveys changes in our approach over the last few decades and traces their consequences for civil-military relations through case studies of Vietnam, Lebanon, Panama, and the Persian Gulf. While the book's conclusions are reasonable, they are remarkably anticlimactic. It seems as if the author, on reaching his final objective after a hard-fought campaign, has second thoughts on what he has done along the way.

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Hoffman reminds us that the American style of war reflects a strategic culture—its history, geography, economy, et al.—that is, its collective learned sense of self. Not only does this culture determine a society's approach to warfare; it delimits the range of alternative styles. For example, Americans have been chided for not performing like the *Wehrmacht* or the Israeli Defense Force. Our Armed Forces have not conducted themselves like other militaries simply because collectively we are not of German or Israeli or any other single background. One's view of what Hoffman, Weigley, and others say about national culture, style in war, and use of force is strongly influenced by an internalized sense of just what makes us unique. Hoffman's synopsis of American political culture, military culture, and related desiderata provides some useful background.

Annihilation

The book's major argument is summed up in its first supposition: a new American way of war has emerged that is only subtly different from Weigley's annihilation conceptualization, said to have been operative from the Civil War through World War II. Hoffman traces Weigley's "concise taxonomy" of two strategies: annihilation, based on destruction of an enemy's military capability; and attrition, exhaustion, or erosion. Our Armed Forces, we are told, have preferred the former as have other militaries down through history; thus its place as the traditional American way of war. Hoffman observes that though this is "somewhat of an overgeneralization . . . it is a useful one."

Weigley devised his either/or taxonomy a quarter-century ago. As a way to introduce such a broad subject to rank amateurs this stark dichotomy may have something to recommend it. But it is less helpful in framing the debate among defense policymakers and military professionals.

Martin Blumenson observed that World War II was the last time—and one of only three in our history—when this Nation consciously pursued a policy of total victory (the others being the Civil War and Indian wars). Citing campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, and elsewhere, Blumenson, writing in *Parameters* (Summer 1993), reaches a conclusion that is hard to reconcile with Weigley's earlier conception.

Surprisingly, the top Allied echelons only occasionally attempted to knock out the enemy. The basic Allied motive was instead geographical and territorial. The intention was

to overrun land and liberate [occupied] towns. . . . Seizing [enemy capitals], the Allies believed, was sure to win the war. On the way to the Axis capitals, the Allies defeated the enemy.

This approach seems removed from Grant and Sherman, the wellsprings of Weigley's annihilation model.

As theorists tend to impugn the destruction of enemy military capability through offensive action, a view well represented in *Decisive Force*, Blumenson concludes from a combined analysis of the European and Pacific theaters:

Ultimately, the drive toward the enemy capitals was empty. . . . What decided the outcome of the conflict in each theater was the destruction of the enemy forces. Had the Allies . . . bent their energies to that end from the beginning, chances are that they would have gained the final victory in Europe before 1945.

As with the so-called maneuver and attrition schools, annihilation and attrition are not just overgeneralizations; they are often misrepresentations of a complex reality which defies meaningful generalization. History teaches us that these constructs are not so much polar opposites, but rather only two cases among many. With enlightened leadership they have been executed simultaneously and sequentially and tailored at each level to suit the situation, all in a mutually reinforcing way.

Clausewitz stated that "in war, many roads lead to success." Listing several, to include the destruction of enemy forces, he cautioned that "if we reject a single one of them on theoretical grounds, we may as well reject all of them and lose contact with the real world."

In considering Weigley's austere bipolar model in light of what Clausewitz, Blumenson, and others have discerned, therefore, the limits of reductionism in the study of warfare are quickly reached. In the present case, for instance, it is concluded that exactly one of only two possible American ways of war, annihilation, has been superseded as the preferred way through something of a variation—and this from an author who expresses alarm at those who oversimplify war by resorting to mere shibboleths such as setting "clear political objectives." In all fairness, Weigley's original taxonomy perhaps should have been refined in view of contributions by others for use in serious comparative work such as Hoffman's.



U.S. Air Force

Thus Weigley's concise taxonomy and annihilation model are at best of limited analytical value as referents for this postulation of national style in war at present.

Decisive Force

Hoffman opines that "the most distinctive element of [the new American way of war] is the principle of Decisive Force." Weigley aside, this point logically requires not only clearly defining decisive force but demonstrating its newness and identifying alternative principles. To his credit, the author leads us partway down this challenging analytic path. He draws a succinct description of decisive force from the *National Military Strategy of the United States* produced in 1992 by the Joint Staff when Colin Powell was Chairman.

Once a decision in favor of military action is made, half-measures and confused objectives may lengthen a conflict, which can waste lives and resources, divide the Nation, and lead to defeat. Therefore, an essential element of our national military strategy is the ability to rapidly assemble the forces needed to win—a concept of applying decisive force to overwhelm adversaries and thereby terminate conflicts swiftly with a minimum loss of life.

To critics, the doctrine of decisive force insisted on "massive and unequivocal application of combat power." The nay sayers included then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin who, by linking it with the six criteria for using combat forces articulated by former Secretary Caspar

Weinberger, saw decisive force as a "checklist approach" and derided its "inapplicability to the challenges of maintaining peace in the post-Cold War world." Hoffman cites only one wargame scenario which indicates that introducing forces quickly to establish an "overwhelming force capability" can cause a crisis-management situation to "escalate faster and farther than intended." Games may suggest many things, but American intervention in Haiti and Bosnia demonstrate that major employments can also quickly stabilize a dangerous situation.

Notwithstanding the official interpretation previously mentioned, decisive force is a much misused and maligned term of art. General Powell believes it has been misinterpreted, pointing out that it neither mandates a fixed approach nor lays down prescriptive rules.

Aside from execution, the best indicator of the preferred military approach to operations is published doctrine. Here Hoffman states unequivocally that, if the Armed Forces are adopting an all or nothing attitude with respect to the use of force, it is not apparent in service or joint doctrine promulgated since the Gulf War. Quite the contrary.

The May 1995 edition of Army Field Manual 100-7, *Decisive Force: The Army in Theater Operations*, has an evocative title. This is the Army doctrinal manual on operational art focused at the operational level. If the Army were going to counter

the worst fears of critics of decisive force, this would be the place. But as inferred from its text, decisive force appears to imply that the Army and its constituent units are a decisive force. FM 100-7 does call for preventing long-term defensive operations by transitioning when practicable to offensive operations that overwhelm and paralyze an enemy by decisive simultaneous strikes throughout the depth of the battlespace. It reminds us that this approach resulted in minimal losses and a rapid strategic conclusion during Just Cause.

But FM 100-7 hardly reflects a "punch for total warfare" or insists on the "massive and unequivocal application of combat power"—certainly not in every operational outing—nor does it add to the crisis by encouraging Army leaders to dispute civilian authority over how much force is appropriate in a given situation. On the contrary. This field manual explicitly addresses the reality of limited resources, the need to phase complex operations (to segment and sequence in time and space based on changes in the nature of the total effort), avoiding enemy strengths by the indirect approach, even precluding actual combat (such as through a stand-alone information war action). Every chapter and the appendix discuss military operations other than war.

In sum, accepting the often overwrought understanding by critics of decisive force requires a leap of logic and fails to note what the military is telling itself and actually does. Unless used with some precision within the context of particular cases and then discussed alongside legitimate alternative styles of operation, the term has little of practical consequence.

Is It Really New?

Decisive force is what makes the new American way of war *new*, goes Hoffman's line of reasoning. For the sake of argument, let us take decisive force at face value in terms of its official definition. Just how new an idea is this?

Without rehearsing American military history, and not promoting the idea that the American military preferred strategies of annihilation up through World War II, there is little novel, per se, about the way of war introduced in *Decisive Force*—certainly nothing to indicate the kind of historical discontinuity one normally identifies to support such a claim.

Looking just at World War II, the attack on Pearl Harbor fixated the country on mobilizing to win. Citing daily journals, memoirs, and official histories,

USS Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Gulf of Tonkin, 1966.



U.S. Navy

Crossing the Sava River, December 31, 1995.



U.S. Air Force (Stacey Wyrzykowski)

Blumenson and others have described decisions on strategy and theater operations, involving leaders from the President to field commanders, that turned largely on ending the war quickly yet conclusively, but without unnecessary risk to Allied forces. This led the Allies to play it cautious and shy away from Can-nae-type battles and otherwise miss opportunities to land decisive blows, a fact often lamented by General George Patton. "Only . . . Patton understood the vital need to surround and destroy the Germans at Argentan-Falaise, at the Seine River, or at the Somme River," Blumenson determined some years ago.

There is historical precedent before Vietnam, then, for the U.S. embrace of decisive force doctrine, as briefly outlined in the 1992 *National Military Strategy*. But if *Decisive Force* does not define a new way of war, is there anything in this book that at least differs from past practice? What has changed, Hoffman confirms, is the emergence of a different way of preparing for war well before the event.

Vietnam carried the military, especially the Army, to the brink of institutional insolvency. After the war, this reviewer is reminded that the institutional Army—as contrasted with some of its constituents—did not, as Hoffman maintains, push Vietnam "out of its consciousness" to focus "therapeutically on . . . the Soviet Union." Rather, along with the other services, especially the Marine Corps, it did what the critics had long castigated it for not doing, at least well. As recent works attest, it studied its own history, including Vietnam, as well

as other conflicts, mainly the Soviet Union and Israel. It pondered its very being as a formerly revered institution responsible for national security. Then it applied what it learned, beginning with a vision of where it had to go to meet its sworn obligation to the Nation.

Apparently, much of this pain was for naught since, in the view of Hoffman and others, our military committed original sin by not getting its major lessons quite right. Whatever the critics say about decisive force or other concerns, the era between the fall of Saigon and the Gulf War saw a sweeping institutional transformation that served the United States and its global interests.

Moreover, technology is increasingly lending a different meaning to "reach out and touch someone." But whether this constitutes a new American way of war is a matter of interpretation. It largely turns on whether Desert Storm is viewed as the last war of the old regime or the first of the new. Even five years on the weight of evidence, including official statements by those leading institutional change in the services and the joint arena, suggests that the military is living largely in the past. Albeit with some reassuring exceptions, it still does business more or less as usual.

The rapid pace of technological change is manifest. But the kind of historical discontinuity that usually heralds a truly new way of war will require a more widespread unfolding and, perhaps more challenging, grass-roots acceptance within the military of what has been termed an ongoing revolution in military affairs (RMA), including operational and organizational concepts that more fully exploit new technology.

So the really new way of war based on RMA has yet to emerge, at least full blown. But it inexorably approaches. It still remains to be seen whether the United States will continue to take the lead in conceiving, shaping, and exploiting it.

Alternatives

To argue that the military should abandon its current *preferred* style in war, however it is characterized, requires presenting legitimate alternatives, meaning they are:

- demonstrably different
- readily understandable, not just by theoreticians
- in keeping with American strategic culture
- reflective of the correct lessons of history, including the judgment that more force (not necessarily just numerically larger or even physically applied) usually brings a quicker conclusion and that accomplishing missions without resort to hostilities (as the original heavy Implementation Force in Bosnia) leads to fewer American losses consistent with the outcome sought
- able to be taught and learned in professional schools
- readily operationalized in a military theater.

Any way of war that cannot satisfy these guidelines is unlikely to pass muster with the professional military or public.

At least as contained in *Decisive Force* and listed by Clausewitz, no authority known to this reviewer has advanced a genuine alternative to the current preferred manner of operating militarily, much less a menu of choices. What has often been offered instead is philosophical hand wringing over terms like decisive force, opinions on how the military

should not apply force or otherwise not conduct itself in this or that contingency, and ad hominem attacks against the Armed Forces. The court of professional and public opinion thus awaits legitimate alternative styles.

Other Issues

On balance, *Decisive Force* attempts too much. Discussing the book's structure, Hoffman refers in his introduction not only to the three suppositions and four-stage assessment of the case studies but to other dimensions: emphasis, focus, elements, evaluations, explorations, goals, et al. The result is an uneven book in what it tries to accomplish, much less integrate. The author's goal was "to contribute to ensuring that the decision [to use force] is made wisely and well." But since he deliberately avoided discerning the *correct* military lessons that should have been learned in Vietnam and afterward (versus accumulated *myths*), or even stating why the lessons were so wrongheaded, one wonders how he hoped to succeed.

Hoffman appears to have tried to write two books in one. Looking again at his three major suppositions, the first involves a new way of war, the last a "subliminal crisis" in civil-military relations. The second—the poor quality of military institutional learning after Vietnam—generally is tied to the others. But the first and third, and especially the supporting rationale, do not dovetail well. The author might better have deferred the new way of war issue and dealt solely with the connection between military institutional learning and civil-military relations after Vietnam.

As it is, while replete with anecdotes featuring differing views between the government and the media, the book falls short of making a compelling case for a more general crisis, subliminal or otherwise. Indeed, although recognizing that a state of civil-military nirvana goes unrealized, the reader is challenged to understand just what the problem is, much less how to diffuse it.

For example, Vietnam-era military leaders are vilified for not articulating their misgivings about strategy or achieving policy objectives at reasonable cost. At the same time, post-Vietnam leaders are accused of fighting the problem if not of outright disloyalty when, after weighing the chances of success in relation to costs and risks, they show little enthusiasm for particular overseas ventures—even before the President makes a final decision. The author then splits the difference: "military leaders must be willing

to tell their superiors what they *need* to hear, not what they want to tell them or what the civilian leader would like to hear." He would have served his readers better by proposing practical guidelines for mitigating the civil-military friction which he details.

There is a more serious related difficulty. As in Weigley's annihilation/attrition dichotomy, the civil/military dichotomy in *Decisive Force* often oversimplifies reality, especially as it relates to major stakeholders in the recurring debate over whether to commit forces to trouble spots overseas. Hoffman seems to recognize only two: the military and "the Nation" or "society."

In reality, there are at least three major parties to this most visceral issue of state, all derivative of Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity": the people (not uncommonly mirrored by Congress when and if it summons the courage to commit itself institutionally), the Army, and the government (political leaders and supportive opinion elites). Clausewitz warns that "a theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless."

Hoffman nods toward the trinity by referring to an apparently faulty lesson of the third leg (the people) as the military learned in Vietnam: "War is a shared responsibility between the people, the government, and the military." Rather than pursue this idea, however, he repeatedly suggests that disagreements over committing forces—and civil-military divisions, more generally—involve the military on one side and the rest of society on the other. He at least eschews the thinly veiled contempt found in *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* by Richard Haas, who in noting "there is declining popular and congressional support for military interventions" asserts that this support is "desirable, but not necessary."

Polling reflects wide differences between the general public and elites—including the current administration, the extra-governmental foreign policy establishment, and media—over international affairs, especially the use of U.S. ground forces abroad. Clausewitz aside, Central America in the early 1980s, Lebanon in 1983–84, Somalia, and Bosnia today reveal that ordinary citizens are not convinced that military power should be committed for purely political purposes,

especially when a foreign state appears deeply divided over its own national interests. At the least, they expect an equitable sharing of the burden among those with a stake in each case, especially major powers and relevant regional states.

Hoffman acknowledges that the military, once committed, realizes it is they who will go in harm's way and be hung out to dry if things go awry—even if an operation is ill-conceived from first principles by their temporary political masters who, while legally sharing responsibility, are seldom held accountable. Not surprisingly, the military wants to be heard well before any final decision. While perhaps new and disturbing to some, this has little to do with a new way of war.

When the issue of employing combat forces abroad is contentious, as seems often the case of late, one seldom finds professional military officers aligned against the other two elements of the Clausewitzian trinity. Rather, it is the executive branch and much of the rest of the establishment elite that commonly finds itself isolated and seeking broader support.

"The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people," said Clausewitz. That this obtains so rarely today says less regarding any division in public and military attitudes than about the Nation's pragmatic grasp of the reordered post-Cold War world and their perceptions of the judgment and moral standing of those David Halberstam once called "the best and the brightest." They become wary when elites discover *vital* favored projects that are at best secondary national interests, make fine distinctions regarding what constitutes war or combat, and seem too ready to draw upon the national treasure, including American lives.

This Nation has had an "all-volunteer" military since 1973. But this term conceals a reality seldom aired publicly but of which our military leaders and citizenry are keenly aware: America's yawning and seemingly widening class division and the ways it is reflected in the Armed Forces as well as the bastions of privilege and corridors of power.

In the military today, the sons and daughters of the poor, the working class, and people of color predominate. When sent in harm's way, they go at the behest of a class increasingly made up and led by those who avoided the draft or service in Vietnam through legal or other means and by those who, absent a draft, have never worn a uniform. Moreover, they are rarely accompanied by scions of the

Soldiers loading onto helicopter, Just Cause.



U.S. Army

socio-economically advantaged, educated at institutions whose alumni over the last few decades have not often made sacrifices for the Nation—especially the ultimate sacrifice.

This, then, is another new and perhaps defining component of the post-Vietnam strategic calculus, but one conspicuously absent from *Decisive Force*. This factor as much as any other may most poignantly separate the military and the rest of society from their government and other elites in the debate over whether to involve the Armed Forces in crises abroad.

Reducing our dependence on what is basically an economic draft—without reinstating the pre-1973 conscription politicians were morally challenged to administer fairly—would help to produce a truly new American way of war. This suggests a policy agenda worthy of attention in coming years.

Parting Thoughts

Decisive Force is well researched, literate, engaging, and often provocative. Except for its citation of David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* and perhaps a few other ersatz sources, the bibliography is useful. The index is complete and mostly accurate, although some references to key topics in the introduction are incorrect. Notes follow each chapter—and though they allude to familiar political, scholarly, and journalistic

sources that largely argue against decisive force—the views of Colin Powell, Harry Summers, and other authorities to the debate are also well rehearsed.

Decisive Force has real value that goes beyond informing a reader and provoking serious thought. The cases have merit, albeit perhaps not for the reason intended. They offer structured, issue-oriented, historical views of intervention: the nexus of strategic culture, institutional learning, and civil-military relations in the post-Vietnam and post-Cold War eras. Not surprisingly, many insights and judgments differ, at times substantially, from conventional military wisdom.

Some aspects of these cases are likely to raise the brows, if not incite the wrath, of readers who served at the pointed end of the spear. In particular, Vietnam veterans are forewarned to delve warily into what *Decisive Force* says about their war. The same goes for those who hold strong views about the results of our involvement in Lebanon in 1982–84. But when consulted together with material that offers other viewpoints, the cases will enrich learning in staff and war colleges as well as national security studies programs within academe.

Unfortunately the book was completed before the Somalia relief operation reached its tragic finale in October 1992, when 18 rangers died and 75 were wounded while exercising something far short of decisive force. Subsequent criticism hastened America's withdrawal and led to the fall of Secretary Aspin and a reappraisal of military support for peace operations. One could usefully weigh the key judgments in *Decisive Force* against that debacle in Mogadishu. The same holds for the more recent U.S.-led Implementation Force in Bosnia, where an American armored division, with hundreds of 70-ton tanks and fighting vehicles and augmented by combat forces from other nations, appears to have successfully employed decisive force in a dangerous, politically sensitive peacemaking role.

Hoffman brings closure by assessing how well the concept of decisive force supports the major purposes of military power: deterrence, defense, decisive influence, and diplomatic support. Cautioning that one should differentiate between decisive force as applied to warfighting or violent means and the kind of involvement often associated with low intensity conflict, he concludes that, though derived from somewhat faulty lessons, decisive force does support the purposes of military power, is consistent with the American strategic culture

and its way of war, and is not a direct challenge to civil-military relations.

Whether one agrees with the book's appraisal of the often dubious quality of professional military education since Vietnam, Hoffman aptly describes in few words something of what staff and war colleges assume they have learned. This is important not only for the sake of the subject at hand, but for the state of civil-military relations. The author himself surmises that, while his focus was not to distill "correct" lessons from case studies, those lessons which the military believes it learned from these experiences are now reflected in a *new* American way of war.

"Ways of war" typologies aside, the military learns from its experience and, as has been true for almost three decades, might reasonably be expected to continue to act based that experience. The author as well as this reviewer believe that prudent civilian leaders and others who work with the Armed Forces should at least try to understand this defining body of lore.

Decisive Force calls attention to contentious issues and suggests that the best one might expect is that the parties involved try to appreciate each other's point of view even if they only agree to disagree. Whatever the lessons of the past, the future is something that military and civilian leaders can jointly begin to influence, shape, define, and bring about now.

We began by observing that issues raised in *Decisive Force* commonly find political elites and the professional military eyeing each other warily across a widening chasm. One hopes that the message of this book is interjected into a continuing dialog that leads to consensus which serves both the Nation and the Armed Forces well.

JFQ

TO WAGE A WAR OF WORDS

A Book Review by
CARNES LORD

The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade Against Nazi Germany

by Clayton D. Laurie
Lawrence, Kansas:

University Press of Kansas, 1996.
335 pp. \$35.00
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Anyone who doubts that the experience of this Nation in World War II remains relevant to contemporary issues should consult *The Propaganda Warriors*. The story of American propaganda during that conflict is on one level a sidebar to the domestic policy debates of the New Deal and, as such, of interest primarily to historians. On another level, however, it is a remarkably instructive guide to the cultural eddies and bureaucratic shoals that lie hidden in wait for unwary psychological warriors even today. Its lessons deserve to be pondered.

Americans engaged in international affairs in the late 1930s were struck by the extent and effectiveness of Nazi propaganda and Western unpreparedness in this sphere. Nazi indoctrination, of course, began at home where it played a unique role in shaping and sustaining political identity. But equally impressive was its use as part of an integrated system of political and psychological warfare designed to overthrow foreign regimes with minimal force. The threat of "fifth columns" fomented by external propaganda and supported by clandestine military and intelligence operations seemed very real after the Nazi coup in Austria and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. A few Americans, however, found such actions to be more than a threat to be countered. They perceived a model for offensive operations against the Axis powers themselves. Foremost among these was William J. ("Wild Bill") Donovan who became wartime director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and later spiritual father of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The climate of national opinion, however, was far from sympathetic to such a view. Even interventionist-minded



Tactical PSYOP in Somali marketplace.

Americans doubted that the United States should, or needed to, oppose the Nazis with their own weapons; yet no alternative concept of foreign propaganda had gained wide acceptance. Early attention focused primarily on countering the much exaggerated threat of fifth column activities on the homefront and shoring up domestic morale. At the same time, memories of the notorious Creel Committee of World War I made such efforts politically controversial, and the Roosevelt administration was slow to act in an area which it feared might offend isolationist and Republican sensibilities.

In spite of undeniable successes, the American propaganda effort between 1941 and 1944 was gravely hampered by conceptual confusion, bureaucratic infighting, and indecision at the top. As Clayton Laurie demonstrates in a well-researched narrative, the nub of the problem was that no fewer than three competing philosophies of propaganda struggled for preeminence in a constantly changing organizational framework and with the virtual absence of workable doctrinal guidance or presidential direction. The Donovan view of propaganda as a tool of subversive psychological or unconventional warfare competed with the position most closely identified with Robert Sherwood, a distinguished playwright and ardent New Dealer who eventually headed the overseas propaganda arm of the Office of War Information (OWI). For him, propaganda was to be based upon "truth" alone, and its overriding purpose

was to promote American-style democracy abroad. Still another approach was that of the Armed Forces, which had little use for propaganda of any kind except in the form of essentially tactical support for combat operations.

The story begins in earnest in mid-1941 when FDR appointed Donovan as coordinator of information (COI), with a broad if vague mandate to build an organization responsible not only for overseas propaganda but for strategic intelligence and counterintelligence, subversion, and special operations. Donovan recruited Sherwood, a presidential speech writer, as head of his propaganda section, the so-called Foreign Information Service (FIS). That agency, which Sherwood staffed largely with broadcasting and advertising executives, journalists, and intellectuals, in short order created the Voice of America (VOA) as well as a variety of other overt programs in other media (including films, magazines, pamphlets, posters)—all of which later found an institutional home in the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). But the Donovan-Sherwood partnership was intrinsically unstable and did not long survive after Pearl Harbor. With America's entry into the war, Donovan understood that COI would be entirely a function of its relationship with the defense establishment and pushed for placing it under military control. At the first meeting of the newly

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constituted Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1942, the American members, under some pressure from their British colleagues, recognized the importance of psychological warfare and also the potential of COI as its organizational instrument. At the same time, fearing such a shift, Sherwood and his allies began to agitate for the removal of FIS from Donovan's purview. After months of inaction, FDR split the difference by agreeing to transfer COI to the military while creating OWI, an entity that combined FIS with those existing agencies geared to domestic information and morale needs. The journalist Elmer Davis assumed overall control of OWI, although Sherwood and his like-minded associates continued to dominate what was now called the overseas branch.

But Donovan's organization, reconstituted as OSS, was not ready to abandon propaganda entirely. Within six months of its creation in June 1942, OSS had set up a morale operations (MO) branch to realize Donovan's original vision of offensive psychological warfare to the extent it could be done without openly contesting the OWI mission. MO (according to recently declassified OSS records fully consulted by Laurie) conducted both "black" propaganda operations and an array of related deceptive or subversive activities such as rumor campaigns and forgeries designed to "incite and spread dissension, confusion, and disorder within enemy countries." After the D-Day landing it simulated German anti-regime organizations through black radio stations (such as *Soldatensender Calais*) and papers (such as *Das Neue Deutschland*) and even introduced "poison-pen" material into the German

postal system, among other unorthodox and ingenious operations.

In stark contrast to OWI and OSS, U.S. Army involvement was late, disorganized, and motivated as much by rivalry with these essentially civilian agencies as by a conviction in the value of the mission. Once American forces landed in North Africa in November 1942, a psychological warfare branch was established within Allied headquarters; but it was largely staffed by OWI and OSS civilians and quickly antagonized its military sponsors by actively undercutting the decision to cooperate with the Vichy French under Admiral Jean Darlan. This incident helped accelerate Army efforts to develop organic propaganda capabilities, initially in the form of mobile radio broadcast companies which came into theater in spring 1943. But civilians continued to play a prominent and semi-autonomous role in military propaganda while the respective spheres of responsibility of the Army, OSS, and OWI remained largely undefined.

Reacting mainly to OWI objections to OSS black propaganda, a rare presidential directive issued in March 1943 affirmed OWI primacy in overseas propaganda, while putting it firmly under military control in areas of actual or projected combat operations. But as OSS activities continued unaffected, the net result of this seeming bureaucratic OWI victory was actually a loss of authority. The decline of OWI was greatly accelerated following an incident in summer 1943 when a VOA broadcast greeted Mussolini's overthrow by describing Victor Emmanuel as "a moronic little king" and the leader of the new regime, Marshal Badoglio, as "Goering-like" and an exemplary fascist. This created a

firestorm in the American press, with opponents of the administration charging that U.S. propaganda had been hijacked by New Deal ideologues and even communists. The President himself was forced to reassure the Nation that Allied dealings with the Badoglio regime would not call into question his unconditional surrender policy. All of this exacerbated internal OWI disputes and led to a purge of Sherwood's overseas OWI activities by Davis in early 1944, which probably saved the agency.

By the last year of the war, much of the dust from these quarrels had settled as advocates of competing philosophies and agencies learned to accommodate one another. Nevertheless, notable penalties had been paid, and underlying tensions and disagreement persisted. Indeed, it can hardly be doubted that they endure even today in successor agencies. One may certainly question whether the U.S. Government needs black propaganda capabilities in peacetime, but it is also true that the OSS legacy in this realm has fostered an overly rigid conceptualization of psychological warfare in nonintelligence organizations, especially in the Armed Forces. Particularly, given the new world opened up by contemporary information technologies, innovative threats as well as opportunities face the military, and it is becoming ever less tenable to understand psychological operations as an essentially tactical activity in support of conventional forces. At the same time, the history of OWI continues to limit the way we think about strategic overseas information and its relation to other agencies and missions. That strategic information activities must be part of autonomous agencies and reflect an essentially journalistic understanding of "truth" very much remains the credo of VOA and its parent organization, USIA. Such an approach, whatever its merits in peacetime, becomes questionable in a crisis or war. In future conflicts, moreover, it is unlikely that the United States will enjoy the luxury of several years of experimentation with doctrinal and organizational fixes, as happened in World War II. Problems in VOA coverage of the Gulf War, if nothing else, point to the need for radical improvement in interagency protocols for managing strategic information in the ambiguous and rapidly evolving security environment that we face today. For anyone attempting to sort through these complicated issues, *The Propaganda Warriors* holds much of interest. **JFQ**

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MIDDLE EASTERN MILITARY DYNAMICS

A Book Review by

PATRICK L. CLAWSON

The Powder Keg: An Intelligence Officer's Guide to Military Forces in the Middle East, 1996–2000.

by Edward B. Atkeson
Falls Church, Virginia: NOVA
Publications, 1996.
244 pp. \$14.95
[ISBN 0-9638692-5-6]

Edward Atkeson, a retired Army major general and intelligence officer, has expanded and updated an earlier work on the armed forces of the Middle East which surveyed the period 1991–96 in a new assessment which looks out to the year 2000. Despite some problems, *The Powder Keg* is a first-rate summary of the Middle East military landscape.

Atkeson focuses on qualitative factors and what will change over the years to come. He provides tables on expected equipment acquisitions by the major Middle East powers to 2000 and analyzes trends that will affect their military potential at the turn of the century. He also presents the sort of data on major units and equipment found in *The Military Balance* published annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies and in the *Middle East Military Balance* issued by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, which tends to fall out of date quickly since it appears biannually. Equipment listings can be quite misleading for some Middle Eastern states. Evaluating how much of the fielded equipment is operational is vital to understanding the warfighting potential of the Iraqi and Iranian militaries, given that much of it has been worn down in combat or through lack of repair.

To be sure, Atkeson falls short of providing the level of detail given by Antony Cordesman in his books, but Cordesman does not offer the same systematic survey of future military potential, and his analysis sometimes is weighed down by distracting detail. Similarly, the excellent articles on specific

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F-15C at Azraq
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U.S. Air Force (Paul R. Carron)

countries which appear periodically in *Jane's Intelligence Review* or the three first-rate studies by Michael Eisenstadt of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy over the last four years on Syria, Iraq, and Iran provide more profound assessments of individual countries, but they are not designed as a survey of the entire region.

The Powder Keg contains detailed material on Israel, Iran, and the Arab states from Egypt to Iraq, including the Arabian peninsula. It excludes the fringes—Turkey and the Caucasus on the north; Sudan on the south; North Africa including Libya on the west; and Afghanistan and Pakistan on the east. The book's analysis also excludes non-state actors, such as the Kurdish groups which effectively control northern Iraq. Because of the limits established for his analysis, Atkeson does not discuss ongoing conflicts in the area, such as the Kurdish insurgencies in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq or intermittent fighting in southern Lebanon between Hezbollah and Israel along with the South Lebanese Army.

More seriously, Atkeson largely ignores U.S. military presence in the Middle East. That is particularly unfortunate since this reviewer is unaware of any systematic presentation of American deployments in the region. Partly because of local sensitivities about this presence, partly because some deployments are classified as temporary (despite being six years old), and partly because of inertia that hinders acceptance of a changed world situation, the Pentagon underplays this presence. For instance, there is the materiel afloat off Diego Garcia, which is often omitted from analyses of equipment in the Middle East. The 20 ships stationed there contain stock for a heavy Army brigade and a Marine expeditionary force forward as well as other supplies. By 2000—the year for which

Atkeson forecasts—our Armed Forces may have sufficient equipment prepositioned in the Gulf or afloat nearby to allow deployment of two to three divisions in days. Moreover, the United States maintains substantial Air Force supplies in the area, and it may well remain there indefinitely at the new facilities being constructed at Prince Sultan Air Base in Al-Kharg, Saudi Arabia, where 6,000 airmen were deployed. Then there is the Fifth Fleet, which on many days has more ships than the Sixth Fleet. For that matter, the Sixth Fleet is as close to the Levant as it is to Central Europe and, so long as the United States has use of the Suez Canal, it is within a few days sailing of the Arabian peninsula. In short, the United States has become a major force in the region.

Atkeson deplores our enhanced presence in the region, for “as U.S. forces have diminished in size, the pool of troops available for extended commitment has been greatly reduced.” In the final chapter on policy implications, he goes on to argue, “U.S. forces should not be employed in locales where there is recognizable risk that they may be caught up international hostilities.” This is a peculiar statement: why does the Nation maintain Armed Forces if they are not to be employed for international hostilities? Furthermore, it puts the cart before the horse by addressing the question of deployments without first asking what interests in the region may necessitate the use of force. In fact, he is exactly 180 degrees off. Because Persian Gulf oil is central to the world economy and the United States would be gravely harmed if the vast income from that oil were monopolized by a power intensely hostile to America, preventing aggression in the region is a truly vital interest. The best

means to accomplish that is by forward presence to demonstrate that this Nation has the ability and will to make aggression unprofitable. If the United States had deployed such a presence in the Gulf in 1990, Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm might have been unnecessary because Saddam would have understood that he could not get away with conquering Kuwait.

Atkeson presents comparative analyses of thirteen potential conflicts. He makes a number of important points about how such conflicts might unfold, such as the attractiveness to Israel, were it to want to hit Syria, of an attack up the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, which could put Israeli forces on the high ground overlooking Damascus from the West. However, Atkeson is less clear on potential war objectives. The recent history of the Middle East demonstrates well that war can be used to further political goals rather than achieve battlefield victories. Egyptian forces may have been defeated by Israel in 1973, but the Egyptian attack changed the political situation, broke the diplomatic logjam, and began a process that led to complete Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. Syria may be tempted to use the same technique, with an attack on the Golan designed not to hold territory but to change the diplomatic situation.

Atkeson's analysis of conflicts involving the Persian Gulf monarchies is not very useful. He does not discuss the cases of greatest importance to the United States, such as an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or Iranian attacks on shipping through the Straits of Hormuz (perhaps because, as seen in 1987–88, Iran feels that its oil shipments are being impeded by an American boycott or some other development). He ignores the issue of how effective U.S. intervention would be and offers no analysis of the key questions for the United States: how quickly it could act compared to how much warning time there would be and how well our Gulf allies would fare until the arrival of substantial U.S. forces.

In short, Atkeson provides a useful analysis of what Middle East countries will acquire up through the year 2000, but he remains caught in the Cold War world in which our Armed Forces, occupied elsewhere, were not a major factor in the regional military balance. **JFQ**

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