

MR Classics Revisited

The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War

by John J. McCuen

Featured Review

The Art Of Counter-Revolutionary War

First published in 1966, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* (Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA) is among the top primers on the theory and practice of counterinsurgency warfare during the 20th

century. This work is essential reading for all professionals who want to understand how to better prosecute today's long, irregular war against insurgents with global aspirations. The author, Colonel Jack McCuen, retired in 1976 after a distinguished 28-year career that included service as commander of an armored cavalry squadron, director of the Internal Defense and Development course at both the Vietnamese National Defense College in Saigon and the U.S. Army War College, and chief of the Military Assistant Group-Indonesia. This book was the result of a project that McCuen began with the encouragement and guidance of political scientist Samuel Huntington while studying at Columbia University's School of International Affairs in the early 1960s. He completed the book while serving on the U.S. Army General Staff later in the decade.

The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War examines insurgent and counterinsurgent organizations, operations, and mobilizations in successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgencies from the 20th century and before. While he offers no panaceas, McCuen uncovers universal principles and fundamentals that endure over time. His prescription is to "look upon the former revolutionary wars as shopping lists that have worked and can work in similar situations" to enable us to select and tailor past practices to present requirements. "We must sift the facts in each case and then take for our strategy what is likely to be successful," McCuen tells us.

Successful practices from lost wars can also be germane to present and future counterinsurgencies.

McCuen cogently argues that the imperative of any insurgent strategy against a modern, well-equipped army is to prolong the war so that, as Henry Kissinger put it, "the guerrilla wins if he does not lose; the conventional army loses if it does not win." The book offers a fourfold approach to counter such an insurgency.

First, commanders must determine which stage of an insurgency they are fighting. McCuen wrote this book during the Maoist revolutionary warfare era, so he identifies four stages of insurgency: organization, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and mobile warfare. The first three stages are still germane in today's era, but the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq are unlikely to enter a mobile-warfare phase similar to the Maoist revolutions in China and Indochina.

Second, the counterinsurgent must secure his strategic bases while eliminating or denying the insurgents sanctuary.

Third, counterinsurgents must embark on a long-term campaign to stop the insurgents' momentum, reverse their gains, and drive them back through these stages and out of business.

Fourth, the counterinsurgent government must mobilize, organize, and apply the forces necessary to implement the counterinsurgency campaign over the protracted time required to prevail in such a war. This is often a difficult task for great-power democracies.

McCuen analyzes two crucial aspects of effective counterinsurgency: counter-organization and counter-mobilization. He cites examples in which indigenous forces were organized and mobilized in offensive roles to deny insurgents sanctuary. Counterinsurgents must oppose insurgent organizations by counter-organizing indigenous groups, military formations, police, and

paramilitary elements. Self-defense by the population is a necessary element of counter-organization. Just as essential are the establishment of intelligence systems rooted in the population and the mobilization of indigenous forces for offensive, defensive, and mobile operations. Winning back control of a country requires mobilization of counterinsurgency assets for coordinated offensive operations in the military, political, and psychological spheres.

For example, the French employed indigenous forces for "nomad" operations in Indochina and Algeria. Small numbers of French cadres and indigenous forces moved about assigned zones to patrol, attack, and ambush insurgents; to collect intelligence; and most important, to maintain contact with the population. Because insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan are using sanctuaries, the book's prescription to organize and mobilize indigenous nomad counter-guerrilla formations, in order to attack enemy sanctuaries inside and beyond frontiers warrants serious consideration and further development.

American national and military strategies stress the need to enable our allies to counter Al-Qaeda and its ilk and deny them sanctuary by creating an environment inhospitable to them. If one subscribes to an indirect, unorthodox approach to this long, irregular war, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* offers several best practices that may be effective for maintaining a global, persistent, and dispersed presence in every sub-region where development and foreign internal defense are required, replicating Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa and Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines.

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MR Book Reviews



Featured Review

NO END IN SIGHT

Intentionally or not, director Charles Ferguson's *No End in Sight* (Magnolia Pictures, New York) pays subtle homage to historian Barbara Tuchman, evoking about the war in Iraq one of her particularly poignant reflections about World War I. "When every autumn

people said it could not last through the winter," she wrote in *The Guns of August*, "and when every spring there was still no end in sight, only the hope that out of it all some good would accrue to mankind kept men and nations fighting."¹ In the end, Ferguson's film radiates a sense that the main effect of the war in Iraq will be the "disillusion" Tuchman wrote about after World War I.² Hope and disillusion, though, are only two of several juxtapositions about Iraq in a cinematographic narrative that is visually compelling, emotionally moving, and intellectually thought provoking, both for what it includes and for what it leaves out.

Although clearly skeptical about American presidential motives for the war, *No End in Sight* does not explicitly affiliate Ferguson with filmmaker Michael Moore and others who claim the American war in Iraq is *prima facie* unjust. The film accurately depicts the moral and geopolitical ambiguity of the American relationship with Saddam Hussein, tracing his evolution from strange bedfellow vis-a-vis Iran in the 1980s, to third-tier tyrant threatening regional stability in the 1990s, to arch-nemesis of three American presidents (two named Bush) after the 1991 Gulf War.

Whether Saddam's actions, both in relation to other countries and to his own people, provided sufficient just cause for the war the U.S. began in March 2003 is a question largely outside the scope of Ferguson's

narrative. Although his critique of American *realpolitik* is evident, he believes it is plausible that the war is essentially *about* freeing the Iraqi people from dictatorship and creating the conditions of security and stability from which they can build national identity and political community. Ferguson views American policy and American leadership in light of those goals, and this might have led him to create overly black-and-white vignettes that mask the gray areas in a complex set of circumstances.

Most of Ferguson's high-level interviewees are people who went to Iraq with special expertise, ostensibly to form the nucleus of the nation-building effort alongside the Iraqis. Their uniformly disillusioning stories tend to be variations on a theme: an expert is brought in too late in the planning; the expert sees what needs to be done; the expert tries to initiate action, but faces obstacles from and is ignored by people higher in rank; the expert leaves or is replaced. Whether physically wounded, psychologically scarred, or (merely) intellectually incredulous at the way the war in Iraq has been directed, the military interviewees—mostly junior in rank—present a picture of patriotism and idealism tinged with disenchantment after doing their utmost with what they had, often at great personal sacrifice.

If the film is skewed, it is not entirely the director's fault. The apparent refusal of several key American policy-makers to come before the camera lies at the heart of much of the film's imbalance. Two men on the "dark" side of Ferguson's binary view of Iraq who do appear—one of them American "proconsul" L. Paul Bremer (in segments lifted from news programs)—rely almost solely on excuses when asked direct questions concerning their motivations for actions, words, or inactions. Their repeated reference

to the confusion of the situation, their own stress levels, and the inadequacy of their own memories make it all too easy to come away from the film truly disheartened. Ferguson's lens sees an unbridgeable gulf between George W. Bush's hubristic appointees and a vast array of good people throughout government, the military, and academia who failed only because they were not given the resources, the authority, or the permission to succeed. Refuting Ferguson's specified and implied accusations about the character and competence of President Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and others will only be possible when memoirs are written and memoranda are unclassified.

Despite its one-sided view, *No End in Sight* is a valuable text in the evolving film narrative of the American war in Iraq, if for no other reason than the precision with which it pinpoints the genesis of the multilayered insurgency in April 2003, largely through the eyes of journalists who had the closest thing to an unbiased perspective on the events as they unfolded. Ferguson depicts in detail how the American decisions to not declare martial law, to disband the Iraqi Army, and to prevent Ba'ath Party members from serving in a new government drove many thousands of Iraqis into the streets, then into mosques (the church being the only remaining functioning community institution), and then into various (and often competing) militias defined by religious sect, tribal affinity, or other local loyalty, thus severely inhibiting the prospects for Iraqi nationalism.

Describing the first month of World War I, Tuchman notes how the "Battle of the Marne was . . . decisive . . . not because it determined that Germany would ultimately lose or the Allies ultimately win the war but because it determined that the war would go on."³ Similarly, Ferguson

reveals how April 2003 cries out “Mission *not* accomplished, Sir,” portending the years of struggle between then and now in Iraq. To say there is no end in sight is not to say the war will never end. The ultimate question is, how? Perhaps the so-called “surge” will bring about a sufficient degree of civil order for Iraqi institutions to function, driving children into school rather than the street. Perhaps the Iraqi Government will heal its divisive wounds, uniting a people divided by religion and clan.

Or perhaps—like China in the early 20th century—Iraq is, in Tuchman’s words, “a problem for which there [is] no American solution.”²⁴ In *Stillwell and the American Experience in China 1911-45*, Tuchman posits that the American mission to shape a non-Communist China failed “in its ultimate purpose because the goal was unachievable . . . The American effort could not supply an outworn government with strength or stability or popular support.”²⁵ *No End in Sight* leaves this American wondering if we will someday look back on our noble if flawed effort to enable democracy in Iraq as Tuchman looked back on our noble if flawed effort in China and see an Iraq that, like China, “went her own way as if the Americans had never come.”²⁶

1. Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 439-440.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, 440.

4. Barbara Tuchman, *Stillwell and the American Experience in China 1911-45* (New York: Book of the Month Club, 1985), 531.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

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BEATING GOLIATH: WHY INSURGENCIES WIN, Jeffrey Record, Potomac Books, Washington, DC, 2007, 192 pages, \$24.95

If the U.S. has become the 21st century’s “hyperpower,” why does it appear so befuddled by the insurgency in Iraq, an insurgency characterized by relatively low levels of technological sophistication, limited

ideological appeal, and scant organizational unity? This is the question Jeffrey Record seeks to answer in *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*. He also asks why, in modern history, the weak have sometimes been able to beat the strong. Record’s well-chosen case studies highlight the common characteristics of successful insurgencies. He argues that the U.S. is predisposed to play the role of Goliath in asymmetric struggles, and he paints a disturbing picture of what he says is the deeply flawed “American Way of War.”

An assistant province advisor in the Vietnam War and a professor of strategy at the Air War College who has written extensively on current security issues, Record bases his theoretical analysis on the work of Andrew Mack, Ivan Arreguin-Toft, and Gil Merom, political scientists who believe that material strength is no guarantee of victory against opponents with superior will and strategy. However, Record takes the political scientists to task for failing to account for the critical role that external assistance plays in making insurgent victories possible. Here, he deploys a series of well-argued case studies to make his point. He finds, for example, that the U.S. defeat in Vietnam is nearly impossible to explain without considering the aid provided to North Vietnam by the Soviet Union and Communist China. He asserts that the Malayan insurgency lost not just because of a superior British strategy, but also because its ethnic Chinese adherents were isolated from the general population and external assistance.

What most readers will find interesting—and controversial—is Record’s assessment that U.S. “strategic culture” is dysfunctional. Although he sees many differences between America’s wars in Vietnam and Iraq, he argues that our past misfortune in Southeast Asia and our current difficulties in Iraq reflect policymaking ignorant of local culture and historical perspective, dependent on technology, unwilling to engage in irregular warfare, and resistant to the view that war is, ultimately, a political act.

His analysis is persuasive and makes for a sobering read.

LTC Scott Stephenson, USA, Retired, Ph.D., Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

BUDA’S WAGON: A Brief History of the Car Bomb, Mike Davis, Verso, London and New York, 2007, 228 pages, \$22.95.

The title of Mike Davis’s short, lively history refers to an explosives-laden horse-drawn wagon that radical anarchist Mario Buda detonated on Wall Street in September 1920. The carnage wrought by Buda’s prototype vehicle-borne improvised explosive device—40 dead and 200 wounded—anticipated the frequent employment of powerful vehicular bombs through the rest of the 20th and into the 21st century. Davis describes a dozen or more criminal, terrorist, and guerrilla campaigns in which impoverished or marginalized elements used car bombs to destroy enemies and wreak havoc. The ubiquity of such bombs, Davis observes, reflects their lethality, their ease of production and deployment, and the inability of military and police forces to counter them effectively.

A leftist historian and social critic associated with the University of California, Irvine, Davis writes in the racy style of a pop journalist. Calling car bombs the “poor man’s air force” *par excellence* and the “hot rod of the apocalypse,” he reports that they have “proliferated across the planet like a kudzu vine of destruction.” At times, however, Davis lapses into academic jargon: “The car bomb *plus* the cell phone *plus* the Internet together constitute a unique infrastructure for *global networked terrorism* that obviates any need for transnational command structure or vulnerable hierarchies of decision-making.” Additionally, Davis’s underdog political sensibility occasionally turns him into a cheerleader for dispossessed cohorts who have used car bombs to deliver asymmetrical warfare whoopings to Western powers.

Problems of tone aside, *Buda’s Wagon* offers much to think about.

Davis's ability to recall and make vivid forgotten chapters in the history of low-intensity combat is impressive. For the serving military professional, *Buda's Wagon* places into historical and contemporary focus a weapon that, along with the roadside bomb and the sectarian execution, has shaped the face of battle in Iraq and Afghanistan. In these places, warring factions have drawn on a seemingly endless reservoir of munitions, vehicles, and, in a new twist, suicidal drivers to perpetrate massacres and disrupt civil society. Describing how the car bomb has vexed American efforts to establish peaceful, democratic states in Iraq and Afghanistan, Davis claims that the car bomb "probably has a brilliant future." Implicit in his commentary is that American political and military leaders might have better anticipated that our enemies would employ these readily available and profoundly modern weapons to disrupt our plans and operations.

**LTC Peter Molin, USA,
West Point, New York**

IS IRAQ ANOTHER VIETNAM?

Robert K. Brigham, PublicAffairs Books, New York, 2006, \$24.00.

In comparing the war in Iraq to the Vietnam War, Robert Brigham's *Is Iraq Another Vietnam?* concludes that three similarities overwhelm the differences between the two wars: the initial reasons for waging the wars have been discredited; stable societies had or have to be rebuilt out of chaos; and U.S. public support for the wars declined, thereby limiting future foreign policy options.

Brigham argues that America has forgotten one of the lessons of the war in Vietnam: U.S. power does have limits. He asserts that not achieving rapid victory has a domestic and international impact and warns that an "Iraq syndrome" may replace the "Vietnam syndrome." U.S. military power alone, he claims, cannot solve political problems.

In the past, America went to war to fight for its ideals; for example, to export democracy. Unfortunately,

this idealistic tendency has led to emotional rhetoric that sometimes blinded the nation and precluded comprehensive debate on a war's objectives. In support of his point, Brigham notes that it took Congress longer to make Martin Luther King's birthday a holiday than it did to authorize military action in Vietnam or Iraq. One result of this haste is that when the U.S. does not achieve a quick victory, opponents appear who rush to question the motives behind the war. In the ensuing clamor, little real discussion takes place. This has occurred during both conflicts and has contributed to the decline in public support for them.

Is Iraq Another Vietnam? gives military professionals insight into one of today's major debates about Iraq. Brigham shows us where the U.S. effectively considered history and where it dismissed it—and in the case of the latter, the grave results that followed. The book is well written and gets one thinking, and I recommend it for the general reader.

**LTC Paul B. Gardner,
USA, Retired,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

BUILDING MODERATE MUSLIM NETWORKS,

Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, and Peter Sickle, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2007, 216 pages, \$30.00.

Building Moderate Muslim Networks is both refreshing and thought provoking in its examination of the tough work needed to achieve democratic transformation in the Muslim world. It avoids the twin pitfalls of demonizing Muslim nations and denying the social and political differences between those nations and ours.

The book's authors provide an overview of the "war of ideas" going on in the Muslim world, criticize the shortsighted U.S. approach to this "war," and call for a clear long-term policy. While President George W. Bush's "Freedom Agenda" sees democratization in the Muslim world as an antidote to terrorism, Bush's vision has not translated into

a cohesive plan. The authors advocate a strategy that begins with the periphery: Southeast Asia and the Muslim Diaspora in Europe, areas more amenable to moderate thought. They define "moderate," "Islamist" and "civil society," and apply these definitions in assessing the state of the Muslim world today.

This assessment provides hope for change, but a heavy dose of political reality tempers optimism when the authors offer policy recommendations. Although they recognize that supporting oppressive regimes that claim to be fighting terrorism can work against democratic transformation, they have no solution to resolve the contradiction. Without resolution, they are left with only modest policy suggestions—for example, a conference of Muslim moderates—that indicate how far we are from real progress.

Building Moderate Muslim Networks also suffers somewhat from focusing on U.S. Government bureaucracy. Its lengthy analysis of network building during the Cold War, despite the parallels the authors try to draw to today's situation, seems only marginally useful. Nonetheless, the book is worth reading for its insights on countering extremism in the Muslim world and the questions it inspires about our policy priorities.

**LTC David F. DiMeo, USA, Ph.D.,
West Point, New York**

THE PENTAGON: A History: The Untold Story of the Wartime Race to Build the Pentagon—and to Restore It Sixty Years Later, Stephen F. Vogel, Random House, New York, 2007, 626 pages, \$32.95.

The Pentagon is so closely associated with the Department of Defense that reporters routinely refer to the building as if it were the department itself. The 9/11 attack only reinforced this huge edifice's iconic value.

Journalist Steve Vogel has written an entertaining history of the Pentagon building since its inception, focusing on the people who built and rebuilt it rather than just the structure itself. Foremost among the build-

ers was Brehon Burke Somervell, the engineer officer who rose from lieutenant colonel to lieutenant general in just two years because of his ability to organize huge construction projects as the U.S. Army mobilized for World War II. During the war Somervell was the commander of all Army service forces, ranking as an equal with General Henry “Hap” Arnold (Army Air Forces) and General Leslie McNair (Army Ground Forces).

In July 1941, while heading the War Department’s construction division, Somervell got the assignment to construct temporary buildings that would gather the Army’s mushrooming bureaucracy into a single place. From this task, he conceived the need for a huge permanent building, a project that he pushed through to completion despite contrary guidance from President Franklin Roosevelt and opposition from a variety of sources in the government. Although Roosevelt forced Somervell to relocate the new structure, the general otherwise accomplished everything he set out to do. In the process, he concealed both the size and the actual cost of the structure because he believed—correctly—that the looming war would require a much larger headquarters than anyone before Pearl Harbor could have imagined. In reaching his goal, he offended many people, not least the future president, Harry Truman. The story of how Somervell and a host of architects and contractors built the Pentagon in less than two years makes fascinating reading.

After following the Pentagon’s construction to completion, Vogel discusses a number of key events in the Pentagon’s history, notably the October 1967 anti-war march on the building and the 9/11 terrorist attack. The latter account highlights the heroism during the actual attack and the fact that recent renovations mitigated the damage. As the author points out, the aircraft struck the building at the area that, because of ongoing renovation, was least occupied and most reinforced to absorb an attack.

In sum, *The Pentagon* is engaging reading not just for the generations of officers who have served there, but also the public.

**COL Jonathan M. House,
USAR, Retired,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

THE U.S. ARMY/MARINE CORPS COUNTERINSURGENCY FIELD MANUAL, forewords by General David H. Petraeus, Lieutenant General James F. Amos, and Lieutenant Colonel John A. Nagl, introduction by Sarah Sewall, The University of Chicago Press, IL, 2007, 473 pages, \$15.00.

Why should anyone *pay* for a copy of Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5)? There are three reasons: The University of Chicago edition has a rugged cover, rounded corners, and fits into Army Combat Uniform-cargo-trouser pockets; Sarah Sewall’s introduction is worth the price of the book alone, and part of the book’s profit goes to the Fisher House Foundation, which supports military families.

After Vietnam, counterinsurgency disappeared from the Army’s concerns. The few thin manuals on it that appeared during the 1980s were not mainstream reading. The first counterinsurgency manual released after 9/11 was FM 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, on 1 October 2004. Lead author Lieutenant Colonel Jay Horvath’s efforts resulted in an interim manual—not quite doctrine, but greatly debated in the field. FM 3-24 is a new field manual, not just a reissue of old concepts and platitudes. It incorporates the efforts of some of the Army’s leading theorists and practitioners of counterinsurgency, among them Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl and Colonel (retired) Conrad Crane, as well as journalists, human rights advocates, and academics. The FM’s wide readership includes insurgents in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries.

So, what is so special in the new manual? It emphasizes that civilian protection is the most important

aspect of the counterinsurgency mission, an idea that runs counter to decades of U.S. force-protection policies that came at the price of endangering the civilian populace. The manual states plainly that U.S. combatants need to assume more risk and often not react to provocation.

Second, it maintains that the proper approach to counterinsurgency is more political and economic than force related. U.S. Soldiers now find themselves building schools, providing medical care, repairing city services, and conducting a variety of other nontraditional military missions. Successful counterinsurgency requires that the civilian actors and agencies become fully engaged in the field alongside combat forces.

Third, it stipulates that the nation’s political leaders need to become actively involved in the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency.

And, fourth, it declares that the “American way of war,” which prefers technology to manpower, is often counterproductive. The manual calls for more ground forces, not more cruise missiles.

FM 3-24 devotes a lot of space to defining terms and framing arguments; however, it offers little discussion of actual tactics. As such, the new manual is not perfect, but it is—finally—here.

**LTC Lester W. Grau, USA, Retired,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

RUSSIA’S ISLAMIC THREAT, Gordon M. Hahn, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2007, 368 pages, \$35.00.

Russia’s Islamic Threat provides meticulously detailed research and analysis about Islamic separatism in Russia, focusing on two particular areas—the Sufi Islamic North Caucasus (with a special emphasis on Chechnya) and Tatarstan/Bashkortostan, where a jihad movement holds sway.

Hahn sees two types of Islamic separatism in the Russian Federation—violent, radical rebellion, supported by a small percentage of the population in the North Caucasus,

and a potentially broader-based and more moderate political movement for self-determination in the Tatar/Bashkortostan region. At the heart of both Islamic separatist movements lie strong nationalist sentiment, distrust of the Russian Government, and a poor (or worsening) economic outlook.

Hahn asserts that the policies of President Vladimir Putin's regime have fueled Islamic separatism, whether in the radical hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism in the North Caucasus, or in more Russified, secular, and moderate Muslim Tatarstan. Another significant cause of discontent is Putin's anti-federalist policies, which have given much more power to the Russian federal government at the expense of individual Russian states/regions.

The net effect is that Putin is dismantling the "asymmetrical fiscal federalism" established by President Boris Yeltsin that made some concessions to state/regional sovereignty and reduced inter-ethnic competition for resources in potentially unstable regions. According to Hahn, asymmetrical federalism was a key factor in limiting nationalist aspirations and radicalism.

Hahn is probably overly pessimistic about Russia's future. Judgments such as "Russia remains a weak state," "is becoming a failing state," and "risks becoming a failed one" seem extreme, considering Russia's economy is booming, its international influence is on the rise, and the North Caucasus has been relatively quiet in the last year.

Russia's Islamic Threat is a must-read for any student of radical Islam in Russia/Central Asia. In addition to its main arguments, the work provides extensive lists of resources, notes, and events concerning Islamic separatism in the region. Hahn's book will be of great interest to anyone studying Putin's impact on the development of democracy in Russia. Many journalists and scholars have written about declining civil liberties in the Russian Federation, but Hahn looks at a lesser known facet of this policy—the destruction of Russian

"asymmetrical federalism" and its repercussions.

**Charles K. Bartles,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

TRIUMPH FORSAKEN: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965, Mark Moyar, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, \$32.00.

We bring to history the preconceptions of our personalities and our age. Conceptions of the past are far from stable; the urgencies of the present perennially revise them. Mark Moyar has written an ambitious book in which he tries to rewrite the history of the Vietnam War. In this version, the war was "a noble but improperly executed enterprise."

The only difference between Moyar's political-military history and a historical novel is that Moyar cites his sources. Unfortunately, his notes do not support his arguments. His thesis, that the U.S. failed to pursue its war in Vietnam vigorously enough to achieve victory, does not explain the way critical events unfolded.

Moyar presents a chronological narration of events, reinterprets each significant event from his revisionist viewpoint, and explains why the orthodox interpretation is wrong. He declares that South Vietnam was on its way to victory when the Army generals assassinated President Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963 and overthrew his government. Moyar's meticulous reconstruction of South Vietnam's army operations until then seems to favor his viewpoint. However, to reach this conclusion, he ignores the wider context of the war and North Vietnam's plans to achieve eventual total victory.

From about 1956 on, Hanoi sought to build up its southern strength by sending supplies to inaccessible parts of South Vietnam, where northern insurgents had their rallying points. The slow, patient build-up would eventually pave the way for offensive action. Official Vietnamese testimonies and provincial studies written by American scholars based on captured contemporary North Vietnamese documents con-

firm this intent. Thus, the true story of the early years of the Vietnam War is not that South Vietnam was winning, but that the northern insurgents avoided armed confrontation with the South Vietnamese Army until their insurgent proxies were better prepared to fight. The insurgents carried out offensive actions, but only as resources allowed.

Moyar's discussion of the domino theory's validity is also disappointing. While he claims to have uncovered "hitherto unappreciated facts" that caused him to conclude the theory was valid, he never reveals what they are. Instead, he merely cites geopolitical theories then accepted as truth because they fit a particular picture of Communist activities in Southeast Asia in the 1920s and 1930s.

Moyar's book is a disappointment. I cannot recommend it.

**Lewis Bernstein, Ph.D.,
Seoul, Korea**

FASCISM'S EUROPEAN EMPIRE: Italian Occupation During The Second World War, Davide Rodogno, Cambridge University Press, TN, 2006, 504 pages.

Recent historiography of World War II has focused almost exclusively on Nazi Germany and its policies in Eastern Europe. It is refreshing when a quality study with new perspectives is published. In *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War*, Davide Rodogno gives us an in-depth analysis of Germany's junior partner, Italy, and its foreign policy goals and operations, particularly in the Balkans, during World War II.

Rodogno first concentrates on Italy's nationalistic aims and aspirations as Mussolini led his country on the path to war, and then focuses on how administering the peoples and regions under occupation introduced unforeseen and sometimes unsolvable problems.

Italy's problematic relationship with Germany—Hitler never considered Italy an equal partner—and the realities of occupation governance frustrated the Duce's ambitions as

he tried to consolidate power in the Italian *spazio vitale*.

Rodogno argues that although Italy may have treated Jews and other minorities more humanely than Germany, this neither mitigated the horrible conditions the Italians allowed nor indicates they had superior morals. Political concerns alone

dictated how they treated interned persons, and no Italian organization made a sincere effort to keep innocent people from falling into Nazi hands.

Rodogno's book is a formal, well-researched look at a relatively unfamiliar topic that he renders surprisingly easy to understand. His

sound arguments shed light on the neglected topic of Italian occupation policies during World War II. Anyone with an interest in military occupations or Italian history will gain knowledge by reading this illuminating study.

LTC Michael A. Boden, USA, Mosul, Iraq

MR Letters

Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers

Ted McNabb, *North Vancouver*—Generally speaking, Major General Charles J. Dunlap Jr.'s article, "Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers" (*Military Review*, September-October), was excellent, but he neglected two "minor" points.

1. He states that "Although the paradigm is changing, for most of its history, the Air Force, completely unlike its sister services, has been an organization in which mostly its officers fought, not its enlisted force." But he neglects to mention why. Air Force pilots were officers because, when air forces were being started, it was found that those who "rode" (read as "rode to hounds") had the time, money, and learned abilities that enabled them to become effective pilots faster and more efficiently than those who didn't. Of course those who "rode" were "gentlemen," and it was inconceivable that they could be anything BUT officers.

2. He doesn't really cover the difference between "Air Force Combat Aviation," "Navy Combat Aviation," and "Army Combat Aviation," which is (generally speaking) that distance from the flight line to clean sheets and ice cream is shortest in the Navy and longest in the Army.

Admittedly "air support" is a really nice thing to have if you are a ground pounder—provided the "air support" actually manages to iden-

tify the correct target while whizzing through the combat zone at several hundred miles per hour.

Given the technology being used by the forces expected to be encountered in today's combat, an argument can be made that the P-38 or the Mosquito would be a more effective aircraft (and certainly more cost effective with the P-38 coming in at approximately 1/750th the price of an F-22—quite frankly, I'd prefer having 750 aircraft available to provide "air support" to only one...) for "counter insurgency" warfare than any of the more modern (and certainly more "sexy") aircraft in service today—especially considering the improvement in carried-weapons effectiveness.

Another View

LTC Jeffery A. Anderson—Thank you for printing Major General Charles J. Dunlap Jr.'s "Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers." While I do agree with the technological advances that seem to be a part of the Air Force, I don't think this article "hit the mark" in getting me to understand Airmen any better. It did however go a long way toward reinforcing all the negative stereotypes I had heard about Airmen in my 18-1/2-year career (and many I hadn't)! I hope we can all finally agree that the technological advance that will solve this problem once and for all will be when we can remove the limiting factor from every plane . . . The Pilot!

The Honest Airman

Major Eric C. Larson, USAF—I will never apologize for being an Airman. . . . In reading Major General Dunlap Jr.'s "Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers," I came away with the distinct impression that General Dunlap is not presenting the whole story of who we are as U.S. Air Force Airmen, and does us a disrespect by not coming clean about our part in "the service" of our country. . . . We as Airmen should be proud of our accomplishments, in the air and on the ground, and be confident of our service's contributions [but] a little humility and self-sacrifice would go a long way to gain the respect of our sister services.

There are many areas in which I take issue with the general, but space limits me to two. First, he should acknowledge that the Air Force is probably the most politically savvy when it comes to manipulating the U.S. Government bureaucracy. The Air Force has learned that winning funding for a multi-billion dollar weapons system is as much about the system's value to Congressional districts and defense contractors as about its value as a weapon.

. . . If you want a real reason why our Army brothers and sisters are frustrated with the Air Force, it is because they can do the math. The \$840,000 cost of one MRAP is a little under one quarter of one percent of the \$257 million total per plane price tag for just one F/A-22.

The average grunt knows how the MRAP is going to help him survive the streets of Baghdad today, so he doesn't really care about how the Raptor at 40,000 feet will help him in some future conflict. When Air Force skill at politics is perceived as more important than our skill on the battlefield, it does little to help our cause.

Airpower does have roles to play in COIN, and five well-considered pages in FM 3-24 just about covers them all. Simply arguing that page count trumps actual substance [as the general seems to] is ridiculous... "Airpower in the Strike Role" is a short, well-written two paragraphs within Annex E whose main point is to warn against its indiscriminant use...and relegate it to its proper role in support of COIN efforts on the ground...FM 3-24 makes it abundantly clear that the USAF's major contribution to "winning" in COIN is through USAF Airmen helping the host nation develop its own sustainable airpower expertise, not by buying and using more USAF F/A-22s.

My second objection to the article is its failure to advance positions that...justify spending the nation's limited treasure on Air Force platforms, which could include buying the full run of F/A-22s...though carefully considered prioritization means buying additional Global Reach in the form of C-17s and a new tanker fleet. General Dunlap writes that "honest disagreements as to how to address the greatest threats of the 21st century are the premise for some of the contentiousness," but he doesn't address the threats we face [right now]. . . . which are likely to be some combination of global Islamic insurgency and internal separatist movements... The F/A-22 does not directly address these threats in any meaningful way, but the C-17 and KC-X (whatever the next tanker will be) do. Connecting the F/A-22 to ongoing COIN ops in Iraq or Afghanistan is politically expedient, but ultimately misrepresents airpower's proper role in that fight.

The Airmen's hardest fight is the idea of shared sacrifice. Yes,

airpower's reliance on technology to exploit its advantages is costly and does require good political salesmanship, [but] it would only be good politics for USAF leaders to "take one for the team" on pie-in-the-sky projects for the uncertain future and concentrate on beating today's known threat.

... Airmen don't need to be better ambassadors or advocates for our service or specific airframes; we need to be ideologues of airpower in general and true promoters of "service above service above self." Here's how we do that: be proud of our strengths, honest about our weaknesses, acknowledge we can't do it alone, recognize the honor in "playing well with others," sacrifice for the good of the entire team, and ignore those that would pit us against each other. The rest will take care of itself.

General Dunlap's Reply

I am glad to see that my article so stimulated these readers! That it published not just these responses, but my article in the first place, is a testament to the greatness of our Army—and its *Military Review*. America's military is the finest in the world because it welcomes all points of view!

I found it interesting that the commentators seem to evaluate the Air Force solely in the context of today's conflicts. In that regard I am heartened by the fact that the fourfold increase in airstrikes in Iraq reported by *USA Today* (22 October 2007) coincides with a steep decline in the number of U.S. casualties there. Thoughtful ground-force commanders are learning that the savvy use of airpower saves Soldiers lives.

By way of information, I have a 20,000-word monograph entitled *Shortchanging the Joint Fight? An Airman's Assessment of FM 3-24 and the Case for Developing Truly Joint COIN Doctrine* due to be published in November 2007 that details airpower's potential in COIN.

Having said that, we all need to be careful about falling into the trap of thinking the next war will be like the last. Irregular warfare is a very

serious matter, but it does not present an existential threat. Weapons such as the F-22 are designed to counter capabilities of peer-competitor nations that can threaten our very survival.

Even 100,000 MRAPs and a million troops do not deter undemocratic nations with huge populations, high-technology, and a voracious appetite for resources. Airpower is America's asymmetric advantage; in many ways, the Air Force is the "Next-war Force."

Center of Gravity

Brian Allen, *Fort Leavenworth, Kansas*—Reference Major Mark P. Krieger's article, "We the People Are Not the Center of Gravity in an Insurgency" (July-August 2007, *Military Review*). Let us put the term *Center of Gravity* to bed not because it is irrelevant but because it means so many things to so many generals. And as much as Dr. Strange, Joint Forces Command, and our doctrine writers try to refine the term, its various interpretations continue to flummox the poor majors attempting to navigate though the Joint Operations Planning Process. We spend too much time debating whether something is a decisive point, a center of gravity, or a critical capability. We should spend more time applying logic to determine the correct objectives, determining the tasks required to attain those objectives, determining the forces required and available to execute those tasks, and sequencing those tasks to optimize the forces—in short, applying operational art.

I propose modifying our taxonomy. Replace *Center of Gravity*, *Decisive Point*, *Critical Capability*, *Critical Requirement* and *Critical Vulnerability* with *Really Important Thing/Task* (RIT). Dr. Strange should approve this convention because it acknowledges both nouns and verbs.

After identifying the *Really Important Things*, the planner should be able to answer a series of questions: A) Why is that *thing* important?—ANSWER 1, B) Why is *that* important?—ANSWER 2, C) Why is *that* important?—ANSWER

3, and so on. True, it's a simple parlor trick for which management consultants are well-compensated, but the answers to these questions clearly reveal the logic, or lack of it, in a strategy, scheme, concept, plan or idea.

Before we attempt to describe a complex concept or process in elegant terms, perhaps we need to remind ourselves that the reason we plan is to take (or not take) action to sustain a current environment or create a new one. We evaluate success and failure by our understanding of the environment, selection of objectives that will create or sustain this environment, ability to see the significant obstacles to our achievement of those objectives, and ability to overcome those obstacles.

Whatever products or phrases we create to convey these essentials should be perfectly understandable to everyone who may be affected by our actions. Perhaps the following advice to prospective World War II planners is still applicable:

Since the earliest days, man has attempted to formulate the relationships between causes and effects without, however, always possessing the specific knowledge essential to accuracy. Pithy statements have always had a great appeal to man, as evidenced by the existence of proverbs, maxims, and adages preserved from times of great antiquity. Frequently, however, such statements are not expressive of the truth. Sometimes, again, they state facts, without, nevertheless, expressing

the whole truth...To rely upon rules of action which do not express the whole truth is to court the danger of encountering exceptions which may entail serious consequences.—Sound Military Decision, p. 24, U.S. Naval War College, 1942.

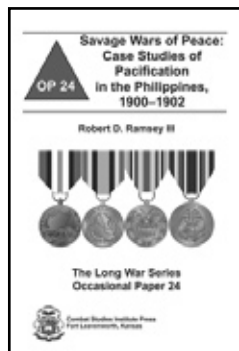
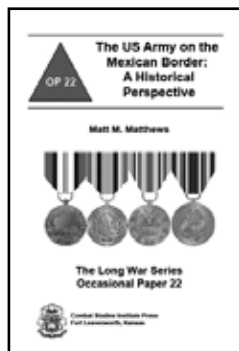
Major Krieger's article raises excellent points to be considered by those planning counterinsurgency operations. He will undoubtedly not be the last author to posit the use and abuse of planning jargon. In the final analysis, perhaps this type of forum is the place for our sophisticated terms. Debating definitions sharpens our logic and focuses the planner's answers on the basic questions that must be asked of any plan: *Who, What, When, Where, How*, and most importantly, *Why*.



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