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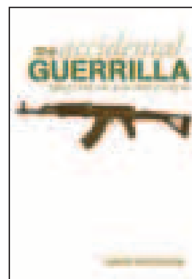
The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One

David Kilcullen

Oxford University Press, 2009



It was five years ago this month that I met the Australian anthropologist and counter-insurgent David Kilcullen. We were introduced by Jim Thomas, the Pentagon official later responsible for writing the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review that attempted to reshape American thinking on the nature of warfare. I was so taken by Kilcullen's fresh and compelling insights that I immediately, and without any right to do so, invited him to speak at the Army War College's annual strategy conference, and only then called the conference's director, Steve Metz, to beg for more time on the panel. It is fair to say that nobody noticed I was also on the stage.

Since then, Kilcullen has been at the centre of American efforts to adapt to the demands of twenty-first century warfare, leaving the Pentagon to serve successively as the State Department's chief strategist for counterterrorism, as General David Petraeus's counter-insurgency advisor in Baghdad, and finally as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's COIN troubleshooter in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *The Accidental Guerrilla* is Kilcullen's travelogue-cum-memoir, interspersed with the extraordinarily perceptive insights on warfare that first led me to yield my time to him on a panel at Carlisle Barracks. He is concerned that it is 'too academic to be popular and too populist to be purely academic'; I am convinced that it is the most important book yet written on the wars with which we are struggling today.

The central conceit of the book is told in its title; Kilcullen argues that:

> [M]ost of the adversaries Western powers have been fighting since 9/11 are in fact accidental guerrillas: people who fight us not because they hate the West and seek our overthrow but because *we* have invaded their space to deal with a small extremist element that has manipulated and exploited local grievances to gain power in their societies. They fight us not because they seek our destruction but because they believe we seek theirs.

This insight turns the thinking behind the 'global War on Terror' moniker on its head. We do not face a monolithic horde of *jihadis* motivated by a rabid desire to destroy us and our way of life (there are some of these, although Kilcullen prefers to call them *takfiris*); instead, many of those who fight us do so for conventional reasons like nationalism and honour. Kilcullen illustrates the point with the tale of a special forces A-Team that had the fight of its life one May afternoon in 2006. One American was killed and seven more wounded in a fight that drew local fighters from villages five kilometres away who marched to the sound of the guns – not for any ideological reason, but simply because they wanted to be a part of the excitement. 'It would have shamed them to stand by and wait it out', Kilcullen reports, based on interviews with some of those involved ten days after the firefight.

There is much first-hand reporting in this book, based on Kilcullen's [Robert] Kaplan-esque habit of visiting places where people want to kill him. After chapters detailing his personal experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, he returns to his doctoral fieldwork in Indonesia,

 DOI: 10.1080/03071840902965836

discusses the insurgencies in Thailand and Pakistan and evaluates the complicated plight of radical Islam in Europe. While all of these conflicts are related to each other, they are not the same, and cannot be won based on a simplistic conception like the global War on Terror; instead, the enemy in each small war must be disaggregated from the whole, strategy in each based on local conditions, motivations, and desires. One size does not fit all, and there are many grey areas. A 'with us or against us' approach is likely to result in far more people than otherwise being 'against us' in these conflicts.

Kilcullen notes that the United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, did not include Iraq or Afghanistan in 2006, because the British viewed those conflicts as alliance commitments rather than as part of a broader war against Al-Qa'ida. The current American administration seems more disposed to this point of view than its predecessor, perhaps making it more likely that Kilcullen's prescriptions will be heard. In direct opposition to the ideas that drove American intervention policy two decades ago, Kilcullen suggests 'the anti-Powell doctrine' for counter-insurgency campaigns.

First, planners should select the lightest, most indirect and least intrusive form of intervention that will achieve the necessary effect.

Second, policy-makers should work by, with, and through partnerships with local government administrators, civil society leaders, and local security forces whenever possible.

Third, whenever possible, civilian agencies are preferable to military intervention forces, local nationals to international forces, and long-term, low-profile engagement to short-term, high-profile intervention.

These sensible prescriptions show that over the past several years, a more sophisticated understanding of insurgency and techniques designed to counter it has crept into American policy and strategy, much of it drawn from Britain's colonial history. Many of those responsible for this learning process have benefited from extensive study of international relations, history and anthropology, tempered by the personal experience of having the people they are working to understand occasionally try to kill them. This is smart power, implemented by smart people who have climbed out of the ivory tower and into the foxhole.

Many of these smart people, Kilcullen included, have been involved in several reviews of Afghan counter-insurgency strategy that have been ongoing since the election of President Obama; it is therefore worth paying close attention to *The Accidental Guerrilla's* prescriptions for that conflict. Although in general the Kilcullen Doctrine recommends a light footprint and heavy reliance on local security forces, muddled strategy and the inadvertent creation of accidental guerrillas has allowed a security situation to develop in Iraq in 2006 and in Afghanistan today that is beyond the ability of local forces to control. It is therefore essential to deploy more international forces to Afghanistan to check the momentum of the Taliban while simultaneously dramatically increasing the size of the Afghan National Army – the most respected and effective institution in that country, and the best path to an Afghanistan that in time will be able to defend itself.

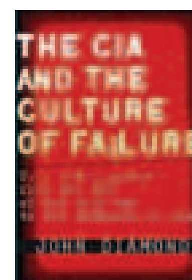
This author has previously argued that David Kilcullen has done greater wartime service to the United States than any foreign adviser since Polish Colonel Thaddeus Kosciusko helped the fledgling Colonial Army defeat an occupying power that shall remain nameless here. As a friend of Kilcullen and president of the centre where he is a senior fellow, my objectivity on this matter may fairly be called suspect. Nevertheless, that caveat made clear, *The Accidental Guerrilla* offers incredibly valuable insights on the small wars that scar the face of the planet today and present such difficult challenges to the foreign policy and military establishments of the Western world. If it is read as widely as it deserves to be, this book may be the most important service Kilcullen has yet rendered to his adopted country, and to the world. ■

Dr John Nagl is the President of the Center for A New American Security

The CIA and the Culture of Failure: US Intelligence from the End of the Cold War to the Invasion of Iraq

John Diamond

Stanford University Press, 2008



Dumping on the CIA has become a favourite blood sport among Washington-based defence journalists. In 2007, Tim Weiner from the *New York Times* produced his magisterial *Legacy of Ashes*, a history of the Agency from its creation in 1945 to the present day. Now comes John Diamond, of the *Chicago Tribune*, Associated Press and *USA Today*, with *The CIA and the Culture of Failure*.

The two books overlap somewhat in content, but their focus is different. Weiner concentrated mainly on the failures of CIA subversion and paramilitary operations and based his findings on a wide range of personal interviews, including with most if not all of the Agency's surviving directors. Diamond looks at the collection and assessment of intelligence and relies on published sources (it is unclear if any senior officer from the Agency agreed to talk to him directly). He is less harsh in his judgements than Weiner, acknowledging that in some cases (particularly the follow up to the Nairobi and Dar-es Salaam bombings) good work was done and leads were imaginatively pursued. But overall, as the title of his book suggests, he sees the CIA as having failed in a series of key intelligence challenges.

Those he addresses include the misjudgement about Soviet plans to invade Poland in 1980 (they did not) and Afghanistan in 1979 (they did); the lack of warning about the collapse of the Soviet Union; the miscalculation of Saddam Hussein's intentions towards Kuwait in 1990; the failure to spot the leakage of secrets through Aldrich Ames; the

erroneous assessments of Iraqi nuclear, chemical and biological weapons capabilities in the early 1990s and ten years later; and the unsuccessful attempts to catch or kill Osama bin Laden.

These are indeed all interesting examples of the unexpected; and Diamond traces the history of how the CIA sought to follow and understand these emerging developments in impressive detail. But it is a pity that he lumps them all together as failures of intelligence, without distinguishing clearly enough between those cases when intelligence was available but not properly assessed; those cases where there was no intelligence but where there should have been; and those cases where it would have been unreasonable to expect any intelligence insight at all.

And of course, Diamond is writing with the benefit of hindsight. The fact that, as things turned out, intelligence analysts got something wrong does not of itself mean that their judgement at the time was misguided or unprofessional. In the case of the two invasions and non-invasions (Afghanistan and Poland), the signs of troop movements were indeed picked up. But there was no intelligence to indicate the political intentions of the Soviet politburo (neither the CIA nor any other Western intelligence agency ever managed this level of penetration of the Soviet establishment). So judgements had to be made on the basis of past Soviet behaviour and an assessment of likely Soviet interests and perceptions. From this perspective, it was logical to conclude that they would be unlikely to risk a military adventure in Afghanistan, a country of some, but limited, strategic relevance; but that they would take whatever measures were necessary, including the use of military force, to preserve Communist rule in Poland. To have made these assessments was not a sign of tunnel vision or entrenched thinking: rather, it was the application of the only analytical tools then available.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a different type of phenomenon. It is unclear what sort of intelligence, had it been available, might have enabled the CIA to offer policy-makers an accurate forecast of likely events. Did Gorbachev himself know exactly how he would react to the changes in governance, which he had himself helped to bring about? Did Yeltsin in his behaviour after the attempted coup deliberately seek to bring about the disappearance of the Soviet Union? Was the popular mood in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, which formed the background to these momentous events, something which could have been better identified by intelligence sources had they existed? Why should an intelligence agency be criticised for failing to predict something which no journalist, academic or historian thought was going to happen?

Perhaps an underlying omission in Diamond's book, as in so many journalistic studies of the intelligence world, is an examination of the niche in the information market which secret intelligence is supposed to fill. Diamond records a visit to Iraq in June 1990 by Bruce Riedel, the then deputy CIA division chief for the Persian Gulf, an analyst who 'spent most of his time at a desk in Langley examining incoming intelligence reports, electronic intercepts and satellite images to develop a clear picture of his area of responsibility'. In the course of his week in Iraq, which was spent partly looking at the tourist sites, Riedel 'was an intelligence collector' and 'perhaps the most significant piece of intelligence he collected was the undisguised hostility of Iraq towards the United States.'

Why, though, did a CIA analyst have to visit Baghdad to discover something that was undisguised? Could not any journalist or any ordinary member of the US embassy's staff have conveyed the same information? It would have been interesting to know of other cases where the CIA failed to appreciate something which was obvious, but for which there no specific intelligence collateral; and of the relationship between the CIA and the National Intelligence Council, the body which is supposed to bring to bear wider perceptive and intellectual skills to the task of intelligence assessment.

But overall Diamond's book is an impressive piece of work. He is absolutely right in identifying the systemic failings which allowed Aldrich Ames, hardly the most competent of traitors, to get away with it for so long. And he is assiduous in unpicking the trail of decision-making which led to the mis-targeting of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 and the pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum in 1998. He also unpacks the decisions, which in retrospect seem to have been well justified, not to strike certain Osama bin Laden-related targets where the intelligence was unsatisfactory or the risk of collateral damage too high.

Diamond's book stops with the 2003 invasion of Iraq. There is no investigation of the CIA's role in extraordinary rendition or in torture in the context of Afghanistan. This is a pity. It would be interesting to know what his technique – dogged digging from on-the-record sources and critical but on the whole fair comments on operational behaviour – would make of this sad chapter in the Agency's history. ■

Sir Paul Lever is the chairman of the RUSI Council.

Terrorism in the Maghreb: The Transnationalization of Domestic Terrorism

Anneli Botha

South African Institute of Security Studies, 2008

This monograph sums up the challenge facing the North African Maghrebi states of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from terrorist groups, which are now almost exclusively Islamist in their ideological orientation. The book uses the open source materials available in the press and other open sources, such as Reuters and the BBC, combining them with fieldwork in Algeria. Its methodology is sound and the conclusions the author reaches are accurate – to that extent that this reviewer strongly recommends reading this book and using it

as a primer for security policy decision-makers outside the region.

The methodology used is that of comparative case studies – although the data gathered on Algeria was more extensive than that collected on Tunisia and Morocco. Nevertheless, the two smaller case studies contain enough materials to make comparisons feasible as well as valid. Part of the problem that the author obviously faced is the tense diplomatic environment between Morocco and South Africa, her native country, which would have precluded access to the country. The rigour with which all the open sources were accessed says a lot about the care the author took to draw an accurate picture of the terrorism in the three countries studied. When that rigour is combined with a basically sound methodology, errors in detail do not distract from the greater picture.

The greater picture is that the terrorism in the Maghreb is caused by a complex array of ideological, social, economic and political factors. Consequently, the states' responses to it are also holistic and complex, covering a wide variety of areas of life from economic development to religious and political reforms. At the same time, the anti-terrorism efforts of the three Maghrebi states are hampered by the continuing and unresolved Sahara dispute that pits Algeria against Morocco. At the same time, the book provides details about the individuals who have waged a campaign of terror in the area. Indeed, the detail provided at the individual level bolsters Botha's overall analysis and renders the book extremely useful to both academics and policy-makers alike. While the coverage of the individuals is sometimes cursory, the sheer number of persons discussed allows some general conclusions to be drawn.

The overall picture is not one of totally indigenous or imported terrorism, but rather that of a very complex mix of social networks, foreign leadership and efforts by home-grown terrorists to build ties and links with like-minded jihadists abroad. The author is also very sensitive to local social structures and their influence regionally. Her work on the relationship between the Tuareg and Algeria is a unique example of an alliance between a state and a tribal actor in current North African international relations.

The book also makes a subtle but powerful case against the asylum and immigration policies of various European states that have hitherto disregarded the previous lives and activities of many North African terrorists and had allowed them to reconstruct their terror networks under the liberal protections they accord religious belief systems. Immigration of non-politically active people, and even that of political activists, is certainly a reality of life today and should perhaps be viewed as a limited and regulated human right. However, the use of Europe by violent Islamist activists as a redoubt certainly casts a dark shadow over freer movement of individuals across international borders. In the extreme case of the UK, British policy led Egypt to suspect that the country had an alliance with the violent offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood to overthrow the regime in Cairo. Botha provides ample evidence of the abuse of European liberalism by the jihadists she studies. If policy-makers fail to heed her warning on this matter, and violent Islamists persist in using Europe as they have, the ultimate price will be paid by Muslim communities in Europe, which will face increasing social and residential marginalisation.

There are some areas where the monograph could have been improved. The use of more Arabic language source material would have been welcome, which tends to be more accurate than European literature regarding this particular issue. For example, there is some weakness in the book in describing the contextual political history of North Africa and the unique ideologies of each of the movements studied. There is also some confusion borne out of the different transliteration systems used with Arabic. And while it is certainly true that Moroccan independence took place as a result of negotiations between France and the Moroccan monarchy, there was a great deal of violence leading up to independence and shortly thereafter by the Moroccan Liberation Army and between the Istiqlal and Shura related partisans.

Unlike many European and North American authors, Botha displays an intuitive understanding of the role of religion in North African politics, and this reflects very well on her work. Yet, there are some missing details, such as the role played by Sufism in Moroccan politics and its synthesis with Salafism in the case of the Moroccan Adl wa Al-Ihsan movement. At other times, the news and translation cycles betray the author's efforts. For example, the Ansar Al-Mahdi cell had two wives of Royal Air Maroc (the Moroccan national airline) pilots, rather than air force pilots as members as is claimed. On the one hand, it is certainly good news that the movement had not penetrated the air force. On the other hand, Royal Air Maroc pilots are vetted and act as the sworn diplomatic couriers of the Moroccan diplomatic service. The recruitment of pilots' wives into the Ansar Al-Mahdi movement represents a security breach and it indicates that the socio-economic factors are not necessarily the sole or main cause of joining terrorist movements. To the author's credit, she does detail the ideological training necessary to transform young people, mostly men, into human bombs.

Despite its occasional errors in detail, the book represents an accurate overall portrayal of the problem of terrorism in the Maghreb. It should be viewed as very strong material for those engaged in the study of political violence in North Africa. ■

Professor Jack Kalpakian is Assistant Professor at Al-Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco.

Changing the Dinosaur's Spots: The Battle to Reform UK Defence Acquisition

Bill Kincaid

RUSI Books, 2008

Weapons acquisition is one of the most difficult and problematic aspects of public administration. It is a hideously complicated mix of advanced technology, extended timescales, large chunks of public cash, complex bureaucratic and industrial structures, and high-grade political intervention. Above all, it is inextricably bound up with lethality – potential or actual. No country has got this process right; perhaps some get it just a little less wrong than others – some of the time.

In passing, it is a private grievance that such an important area of government has so little academic energy devoted to it. Fortunately Bill Kincaid and a few others take this subject on and in this case, how well it is done. This is the latest episode in what we must now call the 'dinosaur series', and very welcome and timely it is. This reviewer read this book back-to-back with the latest report on the Equipment Programme from the House of Commons Defence Committee, and it was hard to tell where one began and the other ended.

Yes, the UK is not the worst at procurement and as Kincaid does emphasise, the last decade has seen some important initiatives, substantive changes and a modicum of improvement. These are clearly and extensively charted and the book would be good value just as a summary of the Labour government's version of procurement reform (the smart procurement/smart acquisition years) and the rebuilding of a positive relationship with UK-based defence companies (the Defence Industrial Strategy).

But the overall tone is disappointment, or perhaps sad resignation that despite all the good intentions, a lot of energy by a few dedicated reformers (Lord Drayson receives deserved commendation) and a clear recognition that something had to be done, there is so little to show for a decade of 'faster, better, cheaper'. Cost escalation remains endemic; the higher rate of defence inflation leaves the UK with expenditure cuts in real terms; accountability is notional rather than real; empowerment has often led to counter-productive outcomes; and the UK defence industrial base is still threatened by underinvestment in research and technology. And these are just a few of the problems that Kincaid dissects with skill and humanity.

Yes, humanity – because the author is all too aware of the effects of waste on a nation's limited economic means and the overriding concern for the end-user, the men and women who take this kit into harm's way at the behest of politicians.

Of course, the UK system can get it wonderfully right under pressure. The success of the Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) process runs as a golden seam through this book. Kincaid is not so naïve as to appeal for a 'routinisation' of the UOR mechanism. That would be a contradiction in terms. But he does see in the UOR a partnership between an agile procurement organisation and UK-based industry a process that does deliver what it says on the tin. There is a cost; the long-term support for equipment bought through a UOR is added later to the equipment budget. It is also hard to put a UOR into a proper Through Life Management context.

Kincaid's fundamental question, then, is why 'normal' acquisition cannot 'embrace much of the culture and processes of UOR acquisition?' He notes how the US 'fast-track' approach has been able to adopt some of the characteristics of UOR behaviour. There is no simple answer. The Dinosaur is still characterised by a process and culture reluctant to embrace change – still more able to deflect and obstruct energetic reformers than to follow-through. Lessons from the past go unheeded – the suggested 15 per cent of estimated costs of a new programme to be spent on technological de-risking has a forty-year pedigree. In short, there is still far too much emphasis on serving and tinkering with the machine than really trying to improve performance. This is where the real culture change would involve adopting the UOR mindset in routine procurement.

The most depressing aspect of Kincaid's analysis (backed, it should be said, by a collection of reports from the RUSI Acquisition Focus) is that the future is likely to be even bleaker. Even without foreknowledge of the depth of the current economic crisis, Kincaid could see enough writing on the wall to predict a bow wave of problems. One fears that the system is simply not robust enough to cope and that the next government's attempt to grapple with the acquisition system will well and truly be events and finance-driven.

One weakness in the book is perhaps Kincaid's treatment of the collaborative context, and this reviewer think this reflects a lacuna in official thinking too. Some form of international collaboration is inevitable for most of the big-ticket items and none of the available partners offer ideal solutions. Yet throughout the smart acquisition and Defence Industrial Strategy days, the exact mechanics of dealing with multinational procurement have been hidden by the focus on parochial matters. But many of the problems associated with key programmes have stemmed from the international context. In the worst case a well conceived and operated domestic procurement system could still have its budget and record badly holed by a mismanaged international programme. More to be done on this issue.

The standout feature, on the other hand, is the treatment of the defence industrial issues and the links between spending on science and technology acquisition, future defence industrial capability and the maintenance of long-term operational sovereignty. We also get a balanced view of partnership concepts. This reviewer would certainly share Kincaid's fear that the failure to produce the follow-up to the DIS is a mistake and could be the death knell to the original initiative.

Kincaid ends with a list of 'Action this day' points. None are entirely original (what *is* in this business?), but all well made and valid nevertheless. Sadly, one warmly looks forward to the next in his series, for it is likely he will continue to have plenty more grist to his mill over the next few years. ■

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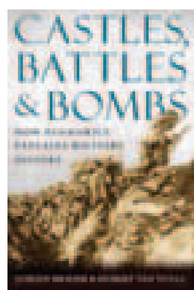
Castles, Battles and Bombs: How Economics Explains Military History

Jurgen Brauer and Hubert van Tuyll

University of Chicago Press, 2008



The authors seek to describe 'how economics explains military history', and their book helps readers to understand how and why military operations over the last millennium reflect well-established principles of economics. It first introduces six chosen economic principles, and then relates each principle to a particular period of military history.

The principle of 'opportunity cost' is used to consider why medieval rulers spent the lion's share of their revenues on building castles – Chateau Gailliard alone absorbed 30 per cent of Richard the Lionheart's income during its construction and Edward I's programme of building castles in Wales drove him to bankruptcy. But a completed castle was virtually impregnable, required only a tiny garrison and provided its owner with unmatched security. Also a castle could dominate the surrounding country, enabled a weaker force to avoid battle and imposed a heavy cost on any besieging army – even in purely financial terms, a siege could cost as much as a castle and many were unsuccessful. Medieval armies were even more expensive than castles, and only rarely achieved decisive victory.

The military labour market for mercenaries in Renaissance Italy provides an example of the 'principal-agent' problem, in which a contractor may act in his own best interests rather than those of a customer incapable of overseeing *and* enforcing a contract. In their 'strategic partnership', a city state and a mercenary captain (*condottiere*) had to negotiate an agreement which aligned their incentives, shared their risks and exchanged honest information about their respective financial resources and military capabilities. Contracts of up to 4,000 words specified in detail the number and equipment of the armed forces hired, compensation for losses (especially of expensive horses) and allocation of booty, renewal options, billeting and travel allowances, and arrangements for arbitration. Cheating might be temporarily advantageous, but in that market loss of reputation carried serious penalties. In practice the contractual complexities proved insuperable and, despite their many advantages over militia, reliance on mercenaries declined during the fifteenth century. Thereafter the soldiers were employed individually in permanent regular armies, and their captains held estates which tied them to the nation which they served. This transformation accords with the lessons of game theory.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the principle of 'expected marginal costs and benefits' governed a commander's decision to offer or accept the trial of battle. The assessment of such costs and benefits (including intangibles like honour) was always complex and subject to considerable uncertainty, and the opposing commanders' assessments sometimes differed (otherwise battles would have been even rarer) according to their personalities and priorities. Some aggressive commanders were predisposed to attack, accepting the consequent casualties in the hope of the gains from a decisive victory, but others recognised that the cost of replacing a defeated army was now enormous and preferred to manoeuvre rather than risk defeat. The writings of Montecuccoli, De Saxe and Napoleon all display analytical objectivity in comparing the likely costs and benefits of battle, while advocating any manoeuvre or stratagem which would increase the odds in their favour. Within this logic, any commander facing a larger army with unlimited objectives was more likely to risk battle whenever a relatively-favourable opportunity arose rather than accept inevitable destruction of his country, religion or culture. Towards the end of this period, French conscription lowered the costs of attack and justified Napoleon's aggressive approach to campaigning.

The importance of 'asymmetric information' is illustrated by campaigns in the eastern theatre of the American Civil War; many of the battles in these campaigns were decided by an asymmetry of information, one way or the other. Both Confederate and Union generals recognised the importance of information gathered by observation balloons, signal interception, cavalry raids, scouting and espionage – but some were better than others in interpreting information. The Confederacy's greatest asset was Robert E Lee's exceptional (albeit not infallible) ability to anticipate the plans of his current opponent.

Medieval armies were even more expensive than castles

It is generally accepted that some aspects of the Allies' strategic bombing of Germany in the final months of the Second World War exhibited 'diminishing marginal returns to scale' (as did artillery bombardments in the First World War). However in the spring of 1945 the allied air commanders were probably less concerned with efficiency than with concluding the war as fast as possible. This reviewer was personally unconvinced by the authors' analysis linking loss of production in a particular month to bombs dropped in the same month. Furthermore, this reviewer would argue that the final collapse of the SNCF and later the Reichsbahn railway system, when damage was extensive enough to preclude effective repairs, exhibited increasing returns to scale at some

stage in the air offensive. This chapter is a useful contribution to understanding, but further analysis would be helpful.

The principle of 'substitution' – that when alternative goods offer comparable benefits, customers prefer the cheaper – is illustrated by France's acquisition of an independent nuclear deterrent as a substitute for larger regular military forces. The deterrent is officially a *force de dissuasion* but is more commonly known as the *force de frappe*. The French decision in 1958 to develop and deploy nuclear weapons was founded on a decade of technological research and doctrinal analysis, but was precipitated by the defeats at Dien Bien Phu and Suez when France had received no support from the United States. The acquisition of *independent* nuclear weapons and delivery systems may have boosted French prestige and morale, but for some years it absorbed half of the annual budget for equipment procurement and delayed the modernisation of conventional forces. The principle of substitution (also used by the US in the nineteenth century when it chose to build coastal forts instead of a battle fleet) is very familiar to military planners and barely needs illustration, but this chapter's analysis of why a second-rank nation chose to deploy nuclear weapons remains fascinatingly relevant.

Although economic insights into past campaigns are instructive, many readers will give most attention to the chapter looking forward to the twenty-first century. This addresses several contemporary issues, such as the economics of terrorism and counter-terrorism and the re-emergence of private security companies capable of limited military roles. It reviews the strategies which transnational terrorists might select to make most effective use of their limited resources, and the defensive and offensive countermeasures which governments might adopt to thwart them.

Most cultures benefit from an exchange of ideas and this book's integration of economic principles and military history will fascinate both officers and economists; it should be required reading in staff colleges around the world. ■

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Maritime Dominion and the Triumph of the Free World: Naval Campaigns that Shaped the Modern World 1852–2001

Peter Padfield

John Murray, 2009

Peter Padfield concludes his trilogy on the connection between maritime power, economic development, liberty and democracy in fine style. Those familiar with the preceding instalments will be on familiar ground; elegantly written and incisive analysis of wars, campaigns and battles from the Crimea to the Gulf, interlaced with lucid discussions of the commercial, political and ecological developments that have given victory in war to maritime rather than continental nations. It is indicative of just how far the world has turned in the past three decades that such arguments no longer seem so radical. Not that the book ends on an optimistic note: the West is already far along the road to catastrophe, largely because we have lost sight of the sea, the basis of the political, economic and social values that marked maritime powers apart from their totalitarian opponents. This is a book for those who read and reflect. Enjoy the sparkling writing and then ponder the deeper insights: they are anything but triumphalist.

A master of his sources, Padfield employs telling evidence from economic history to debunk the theory of British 'decline' before 1914, demonstrating that Britain was rising, not falling. It would be the cost of waging two world wars that broke the British Empire – the second of which was fought for moral principles, with Churchillian idealism overriding realpolitik. His treatment of Imperial Japan dispels the illusion that the island empire on the other side of the world shared Western values. Japan was an authoritarian regime dominated by the army, a Prussian constitution and a divine emperor. Insular geography is no guarantee of liberal principles; those are only secured when the commercial class secure a share of power.

Sadly for those tasked with its defence, the value of maritime dominion only becomes clear when it has been lost. In the early months of 1942, the British Empire was brought to the brink of ruin by the lack of naval power. It would be saved by ill co-ordinated enemies and potent allies, but the cost of salvation was fatal. American Lend-Lease had been carefully targeted to destroy British overseas markets, and secure dominion of world trade for the lenders. The dominion of the seas passed to the United States, much as it had passed to the British in the late seventeenth century, but one might dispute the analysis that the Americans were the heirs to the Anglo-Dutch tradition. Since the late nineteenth century the United States has been a vast continental territorial empire with resources that the Dutch or British could only have dreamt of, able to maintain massive armies, air forces and a huge navy to project its power. After the Civil War, westward expansion and industrialisation fundamentally changed America's relationship with the sea. It became a naval power, essentially independent of the sea. By contrast, Dutch and British maritime power reflected critical sea dependency. Consequently, New York is not the new London or Amsterdam: sitting at the edge of a continent it handles import and export, while its precursors were the hubs of global networks of cross trades.

Nor is Padfield impressed by the European Union, which he argues has become a protectionist trading bloc, the polar opposite of free trade. As Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell warned in 1962, 'it means the end of Britain as an Independent state' (p. 316). Little wonder the British struggle to comprehend Europe. Never afraid to nail his colours to the mast, Padfield is scathing on the catastrophic impact of Common Agricultural and Fishing policies. He warns that Europe will implode much as the Warsaw Pact imploded, and for the same reasons

– centralised control and lack of accountability – he anticipates it will be unable to deal with the challenges of population explosion and climate change.

Ultimately, he leaves unspoken the deeper meaning: there are no more maritime powers. The big powers – Europe, China, the United States and Russia – are all continental blocs with naval adjuncts, none depend on the sea and the two liberal powers all content to let their shipping needs be handled by third party organisations with the ships flagged out to unaccountable and occasionally irresponsible states. If freedom, liberty and economic dynamism go down, we will not need to look far for the reason why. ■

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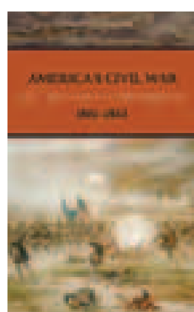
America's Civil War: The Operational Battlefield, 1861–1863

Brian Holden Reid

Prometheus Books, 2008



When the newly promoted Brigadier General Irvin McDowell contemplated his new command, the Army of Northeastern Virginia, in the summer of 1861, he was far from sanguine. His new soldiers were raw, untrained and indifferently organised. So many of the recruits were shooting themselves with their own pistols, some argued that revolvers should not be allowed in the inventory of arms. But from the halls of Congress and all over the Union, cries of 'On to Richmond' rang in McDowell's ears. He pleaded for more time from President Lincoln. 'You are green, it is true,' Lincoln replied, 'but they are green; you are all green alike'. And so on 17 June 1861, the man who two months before had been a major herded his 30,000 men down the pike toward Manassas Junction.

The American Civil War began, as do so many wars, with the belief on all sides that it would be short, sharp and decisive. Hastily raised armies composed of soldiers whose passions more than compensated for their lack of military skill would, it was hoped, come to grips with one another in a few climactic battles. Civil populations on both sides would be quarantined from war's baleful effects. Both the Union and the Confederacy, suffused with self-righteousness, believed the nobility of their cause would see them through a fierce but brief trial by arms.

During the next two and a half years, this polite, narrow view of the war's nature, purposes and methods would be redefined by its actualities. By early 1863, the Union's war was a crusade to abolish slavery, a goal that offered no hope of compromise even were the South inclined to relent. Distinctions between soldiers and civilians began to fade; the war was reaching well beyond the battlefields into the most distant homes and fields. Now the war was between two societies and their two irreconcilable ideas.

The armies not only reflected but interacted with the war's transformative escalation. From the first, both governments and their generals struggled to keep pace as the war grew in scope, complexity and intensity. The overarching challenge for both sides was to translate national policy into a workable military strategy, and thence into an operational system that exploited tactical successes or mitigated tactical failures. This challenge was compounded by the war's refusal to stand still: ambitions were foiled, solutions would not stick, extreme efforts won no reward and casualties seemed to count for less as the war drove on.

The transformations of the Civil War during its first two and a half years is the theme of Brian Holden Reid's *America's Civil War: The Operational Battlefield, 1861–1863*, the second of his three-volume study of the war. The vastness of this subject, its many complexities and its rich, often combative historiography pose a real test to even the most practiced scholar. But Holden Reid has already established himself as the most acute and perceptive scholar of the American Civil War in Great Britain as well as the leading biographer and student of J F C Fuller's life and thought. In addition to his academic attainments, however, Holden Reid brings to his subject a unique professional background. Until recently the Head of War Studies at King's College, he also spent many years at Camberley, where he was instrumental in some of the British Army's most adventurous intellectual reforms of the last century. Not the least of these was the education of a generation of rising officers in the mysteries of the modern operational art. Holden Reid's direct knowledge of war and its inner workings has been brought to bear in the volume under review here.

The result is a work replete with such a wide array of new and compellingly argued interpretations one is almost convinced one is reading about a different Civil War than that handed down to us by historiographical conventions. The leading principle upon which Holden Reid bases his work is that above all the war must be understood as preeminently a political act, and further, that politics never ceases to interact with the war's nature and conduct. This principle enables Holden Reid, for example, to step past the perennial argument between historians over the relative strategic importance of the Eastern and Western theatres of war. For Holden Reid, the question is decided by which exercised not the most military, but the most political influence. For him, the war spins around Virginia; the political consequences of its possession far outweigh any military calculation.

Historians who charge Robert E Lee with strategic myopia, with failing to appreciate the strategic promise of the Western theatre, will find no support from Holden Reid. Lee's focus on Virginia was appropriate to the political object at hand; to see his fortunes elsewhere would have been a dangerous diversion of his ever-dwindling assets. At the same time, Holden Reid is no unthinking Lee partisan. Although he sees Lee's

victory at Chancellorsville as 'the greatest achievement of American generalship in the nineteenth century', he does not shrink from the larger verdict, that the battle was 'bereft of strategic advantages'.

When applied to other preoccupying historical controversies, Holden Reid's unsentimental, exacting view of the war's military actions reminds his readers how far from reality interpretations can wander. One historical convention holds that during this war the tactical defence was virtually invulnerable. Some have even extrapolated from the tactical to the strategic level, arguing that the South's best course to victory was to stand on the defensive, to trade space for time in the hope that the Union's strategy would collapse from exhaustion. Holden Reid is having none of this, arguing throughout that the defence, paraphrasing Clausewitz, is only the stronger form of war with a *negative* purpose. But by the second year of the war, the South had assumed a defensive-offensive strategy on the grounds that independence could not merely be waited upon, but that it must be *seized*. Lee's two invasions of the North were the product of this realisation.

However, as Lee and indeed other generals were to learn during the first half of the war, the conception of a plan was far different than its execution. Historians of the war have had a fine old time dissecting the foibles of Civil War generals, so much so that the war often devolves into case studies of ancient psychology. Holden Reid prefers instead to see these individuals within the framework of the military system in which they acted. The picture that emerges is one in which the general, however talented, faces at least two enemies: his opponents as well as the primitive command, control and logistical systems he inherited. That some generals managed any success at all under these circumstances seems close to miraculous.

Toward the end of 1863, Ulysses S Grant was sent to rescue Major General Rosecrans' army, then besieged at Chattanooga, Tennessee. The force he found waiting for him was dispirited, out of ideas, its enthusiasm for the fight long gone. Within one month, Grant reinforced and resupplied his new army, broke the siege, and drove the besieging army in disarray back on its line of communications. In this penetrating and insightful study, Holden Reid has charted the long road between McDowell and Grant with the great skill we have come to expect of him. ■

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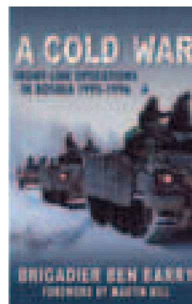
A Cold War: Front-Line Operations in Bosnia, 1995–1996

Ben Barry

Spellmount, 2008



Bosnia, from 1992 the focus of civil war, the UN's largest peacekeeping operation, NATO's first land operation and the largest Western military operation since the first Gulf War, has inspired an enormous array of books. The perceived inadequacy of the international community's efforts to engage successfully with the meltdown of the former Yugoslavia, factional conflict, 'ethnic cleansing' and multilateral peacekeeping has led to a good deal of soul searching in print from a British perspective. On the civilian side, one might single out former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd ('We made a sustained attempt to deal with an appalling tragedy, and it was not good enough'); and rather differently, journalist Martin Bell whose experiences led him to formulate 'Bell's Law of Bosnia': 'the worst that can happen will happen.'

On the whole, though admitting mistakes were made, such accounts are rather more forgiving than those of commentators like Brendan Simms, whose views on British policy are encapsulated in his title: *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*. Nevertheless, there is general agreement with Lord Owen, who served as co-chairman of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia from 1992–95, that the situation was extremely complex – and looked quite different from within, as opposed to outside Bosnia.

Military accounts are equally diverse. Most very senior soldiers see Bosnia as in some sense a turning point: for General Sir Michael Rose, it altered NATO's commitment from war-fighting doctrine into a new focus on peacekeeping; while for General Sir John Kiszely, it highlights the difficulties of coalition command. General Sir Rupert Smith's perspective is even wider, since Bosnia, as he argues in his cogent treatise *The Utility of Force*, is an exemplar of the 'war amongst the people' that has taken the place of 'industrial war' on a battlefield between men and machinery. Smith's analysis of events in Bosnia – including the statement that 'No nation that sent forces to join UNPROFOR, or for that matter NATO in support of UNPROFOR, had any intention of committing those forces to battle or indeed of risking them at all' – is balanced by a clear prescription for success in such a situation, based on the principle that war amongst the people is 'conducted best as an intelligence and information operation'.

It is against this context that Brigadier Barry's impressive account of his command of the 2nd Battalion The Light Infantry (2BLI)'s deployment in 1995–96 to implement the Dayton Accords must be set. For in a sense it represents both the philosophical and practical application of the policies and doctrines that had evolved in, and in relation to, developments in Bosnia. His task, as part of IFOR (Implementation Force) was to conduct 'peace enforcement operations' to compel the factions in Bosnia to comply with Dayton, and to allow ordinary people in Bosnia to return to some form of 'normality'. Unlike UNPROFOR, IFOR's mission relied explicitly on demonstrated combat capability. Barry makes clear how central this was to the strategy he and his subordinate commanders adopted, and to its success. No one in

Bosnia must be under any illusion that force could and would be used. Reinforcing that message, while avoiding conflict wherever possible, was 2BLI's mission.

Of course, things were not straightforward. Barry describes with admirable calm some of the obstacles and frustrations he faced, quite apart from the ferocities of a Balkan winter: three sets of maps showing the same terrain in different ways; NATO's inability or unwillingness to make its air component visible or detectable to the factions it was supposed to impress; poor intelligence and unreliable communications. Above all, he had to deal with the factions themselves, with absolute firmness yet awareness of their inflammable sensitivities; and also with civil agencies who, he notes with restraint, operate in a way the British army considers 'incredibly inefficient. If this is the price of peace implementation, we must swallow our pride and carry on.' In this situation the three components of British military doctrine, set out by Barry – conceptual (the thought process behind the ability to fight), physical (the means to fight) and moral (the ability to get people to fight) – are equally important.

Yet this is no straightforward account of a mission planned and executed, albeit in difficult conditions. Where Barry's book stands out is in the intermingling of personal experiences and anxieties (both his and his men's) with clear explanations of the complexities of the chain of command (complex to this non-military reviewer, at least). He tells us not just why but how training exercises provided vital preparation; and in contrasting the faction commands, where only the most senior officers could take any decision, with 2BLI where responsibility was devolved to anyone capable of initiative, he brings the whole mission to life. The central importance of a clear mission statement, of constant communication between commanders and soldiers, of flexibility and 'the ultimate subordination of the individual to both the group and the mission' by all members of the battalion is underlined at all turns.

The practical application of this can be seen in an account of the same mission by Lance Corporal Les Howard, a Territorial Army soldier who volunteered for active service in anger at the West's apparent inability to 'stop the horrendous things that we saw on the news'. Though Howard, who served in 2BLI's signals platoon, tells the story from a different angle and in different language, the message is identical to his commander's: the mission required 'an extremely high level of cohesion at every level, built on self-sacrifice and mutual trust, fostered by teamwork, high morale and leadership'. Barry's excellent book shows how that demanding set of requirements was achieved during the final winter of the Bosnian conflict; even if, as General Smith notes, confrontation remains. ■

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Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam

Gordon M Goldstein

Henry Holt and Company, 2008

Near the end of his life, McGeorge Bundy, national security adviser to Presidents John F Kennedy (JFK) and Lyndon B Johnson (LBJ), decided to write at long last a memoir analysing in detail the decisions and processes that led to the massive escalation of United States direct military involvement in the Vietnam War. Bundy died in 1996, while work on the book was still at the preliminary stage.

Gordon M Goldstein, his young research assistant, has used their conversations as well as their research to produce a different sort of book. This is a relatively informal discussion of the Vietnam War and Bundy, the former youthful Harvard faculty dean who remained throughout his life a talented teacher.

These reflections on their partnership also cast light on a pivotal as well as tragic time in US foreign policy. The Vietnam War ended the bipartisan Cold War consensus in American politics, and also the central role of New England Ivy Leaguers who had navigated international policy waters for three decades.

The book is not organised chronologically, but rather in a series of chapters intended to encapsulate fundamental Vietnam lessons. Bundy in government developed a very well deserved reputation for extraordinary skill at summing up key elements of extremely complicated issues, and presenting policy options in a detailed as well as usually dispassionate manner. This was acknowledged even by very biased critics such as David Halberstam, whose Vietnam book *The Best and the Brightest* is especially hard on Bundy, reflecting a personal animus dating back to the author's student tenure at the *Harvard Crimson*. In the case of Vietnam, Bundy's great skill at argument as well as analysis became wedded to advocacy of escalation.

In a poignant passage, Bundy notes he frequently visits the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. The terrible human costs of the war, not just on the American side, gnawed at him. Clearly one incentive for the former national security adviser to undertake the study was personal catharsis.

The book deals effectively with the personalities of Kennedy and Johnson. Bundy was treated exceptionally well by the former, almost unbelievably badly by the latter, and to his great credit apparently never allowed personal experiences to get in the way, at least consciously. There has been a recent tendency to argue that JFK would have been able to avoid the quagmire that trapped LBJ. Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara has been particularly prominent in advocating this viewpoint.

In fairness, Johnson inherited a far more difficult situation. After leaving the White House, Bundy became President of the Ford Foundation, where this reviewer served as a very junior staff member for several years. When the Pentagon Papers were published by *The New York Times*, Bundy held a general

staff meeting, usually done only after quarterly board meetings.

We listened to a tortured man. Saigon had not yet fallen, but the Vietnam War was widely regarded as a mistake. Bundy noted President Kennedy regularly stated both that our strategic stake in Vietnam was vital, and that the war had to be won by the Vietnamese themselves; President Johnson by contrast had to choose drastic escalation or withdrawal.

Nonetheless, the book makes a good retrospective case for Kennedy, who was consistently sceptical of the utility of military force in Vietnam. Goldstein argues that JFK was privately explicit that he would leave Vietnam after securing re-election in 1964.

Bundy, however, made another telling point at that Ford Foundation meeting. The Kennedy White House, preoccupied with Berlin and Cuba, simply did not see Vietnam as a top policy priority. He made that point with particular emphasis.

Early in the book, Goldstein describes Bundy as transforming the post of national security adviser from one 'of marginal influence' during the Eisenhower administration. Actually, the job had been extremely important, but less visible and divided in two, with one staffer co-ordinating policy planning and the other policy implementation.

This staff system avoided a range of policy missteps. In 1954, a desperate French government pleaded for direct American military support in Indochina. But bolstered by staff review, Ike was able to refuse. The only apparent misstep in this fine book is its underestimation of Eisenhower.

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