

Book Reviews

Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Military Policy. William C. Martel. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.436. \$35.00/£19.99 (hardcover).

In *Victory in War*, William Martell (Associate Professor of International Security Studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Melford, Massachusetts, formerly of the US Naval War College and the RAND Corporation) argues that ‘the current thinking about victory is inadequate despite the considerable (yet imprecise) emphasis it receives in the literature on strategy and war’ (p.293). Martel reviews the strategic literature to determine what is known about the concept of victory, improve upon it by developing a ‘pretheory’ of victory, discerning the American ‘theory of victory’ as developed through wars from the Revolution to Vietnam, discussing its application in six more recent American uses of force, and evaluating the contribution that ground, maritime, and air forces make to victory. Such work in this area is to be applauded but the effort produces only modest results.

Martel’s opening claim is that ‘wars end not with the binary condition of victory or defeat but with a complex scale of outcomes that cannot be reduced to so simple an end state’ (p.300). Fair enough. Strategic thinkers have dealt with this complexity, he argues, by allowing victory to be constituted by the degree to which a state attains its objectives in war. ‘This idea worked quite well in a nonspecific sense . . . despite its failure to define precisely the range of outcomes possible in war and how these relate to what the state seeks to achieve’ (p.293).

Martel reviews the thinking of strategists from Sun Tzu to Henry Kissinger in one to three page capsules that are at once unfocused and too brief to establish how they conceived of victory, how this was shaped by their historical context, and what they believed produced victory. Although Martel establishes that too many thinkers offered vacuous nostrums such as ‘victory is created by the spirit’ through ‘action at the right place . . . followed up by swift pursuit of the enemy’ (Ludendorff, p.54), these chapters lack an analytic framework that would have produced more insights from his labours. In addition, strategic theory produced after the 1950s is given short shrift with the claim that ‘systematic thinking about victory came to a halt with the development of nuclear weapons’ (p.82). Not only is this false – deriving political gains from these unusable weapons spurred a Renaissance in strategic thinking – it is odd given his focus on ‘current thinking about victory’. ‘Spirited discussions among strategists’ such as Colin Gray and Lawrence Freedman are relegated to Martel’s endnotes (p.80).

Martel’s conceptual contribution rests primarily in his ‘pretheory’ which has the modest goal of better specifying some dimensions of the concept of victory. He proposes four dimensions: the level of victory (tactical, political-military, and grand strategic), degree of change in the status quo, degree of mobilization for war,

and degree of post-conflict obligations to the defeated by the victor. While reasonable, they are neither mutually exclusive – victory at any level changes the status quo, as Martel admits – nor are they comprehensive – why not include destructiveness or types of issues that were settled by the contest of arms? And Martel's application of these dimensions, both here and in his case analyses, is at times odd: terming the potential outcome of the current war in Iraq a 'grand strategic victory' (by which Martel means 'a victory of such magnitude that it leads to a profound reordering in the strategic foundations of international politics', p.97) but not the American Revolution or World War I (pp.107, 116), for example, or indicating that the 1986 airstrikes against Libya produced a greater change in the status quo than ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the regime change in Panama, or coercing sovereign control of Kosovo from Yugoslavia (p.294, Figure 2). And ironic claims such as 'the Vietnam War reaffirmed . . . [v]ictory is not possible in war when the state faces nuclear-armed enemies' (p.126) highlight a parochialism that generally hobbles Martel's argument.

Martel delineates six criteria by which Americans determine the degree of their victories in war: (1) defeat of enemy military forces and destruction of its economic infrastructure, (2) control of the enemy state, (3) political and governmental reform of the enemy state, (4) rebuilding of the enemy state's economy and infrastructure, (5) realignment of the enemy state's foreign policy, and (6) building a new strategic relationship with it. These appear to flesh out what Martel means by 'grand strategic victory', but they are too rooted in the American experiences of World War II and Iraq today. Did Americans believe that they were less victorious over Iraq in 1991 or in the Cold War because they did not destroy (or rebuild) their adversary's infrastructure?

Finally, Martel provides a rather conventional discussion of the contributions that land, sea, and air forces can make to victory, concluding that only land forces are sufficient to produce grand strategic victory on their own while acknowledging the contributions that air and maritime forces can make.

The value of this volume is not its case that current strategic thinking about the concept of victory is inadequate. Nor is it Martel's conceptual framework for considering victory, as this is quite underdeveloped. Rather its value is that it can serve as a useful introduction to those interested in American military history and the history of strategic thought.

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Intelligence in an Insecure World. Peter Gill and Mark Phythian. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2006, pp.228. \$62.95/£55.00 (hardcover), \$26.95/£15.99 (paperback).

Readers are likely to appreciate the timely and critical insights of *Intelligence in an Insecure World*. A comprehensive and informative *tour d'horizon* of main transformations in the intelligence field by two senior British Scholars – Gill is Professor of

Politics and Security at Liverpool John Moores University and Pythian is Professor of International Security at the University of Wolverhampton – the book provides an excellent introduction to a very complex, often elusive and yet increasingly important field of security governance.

The individual chapters on the ingredients necessary for a theory of intelligence, organization of modern intelligence governance, intelligence processes, intelligence failures as well as on the democratic control of intelligence illuminate key concepts and trends, in a way that a broader and deepened understanding of security intelligence requires. This said, one should acknowledge the predominantly Anglo-American context in which these chapters are embedded. As a consequence, aspects such as global intelligence democratization as well as bilateral, multilateral, even tender beginnings of supranational intelligence cooperation are only marginally invoked, despite their rising importance.

Many will agree with Gill and Pythian when they claim that intelligence studies is ‘in its infancy’ (p.6). While this may sound promising to young researchers, it should not be forgotten that ‘intelligence has been an academic discipline for half a century now’ (p.8) Leaving infancy behind should therefore be one of the main criteria for the evaluation of new publications in this field.

Does their framework for intelligence research culminate in ‘understandings and explanations that transcend particular times and places’ (p.35)? I think it does – partially at least. Gill and Pythian offer an innovative and much-appreciated signpost towards progress in a notoriously under-researched domain. It is regrettable, however, that no attempts are being made to put their framework into action.

The second chapter (‘How Do We Understand Intelligence’) is a fresh alternative to the growing literature that has been amassed in recent years. Honest attempts at theory generation, let alone the implementation of research designs to test such theories, remain extremely rare in intelligence ‘studies’. Arguably, too many scholars still fear to get bogged down by scant, politicized and often contradictory ‘data’. Gill and Pythians’ framework serves as a laudable and rare exception. While the authors return time and again to Bernard Porter’s dictum ‘not to trust a word of it’ (p.12), they managed to move beyond mere story-telling that has become quite typical in this domain. Instead, they embed their reservations about the available data into a thoughtful discussion that advocates triangulated research. It centres on the question of how to study power transformations in the world of surveillance whilst knowing that the nature of the data will be such that ‘we shall never be able to theorize in a way that behaviouralists would regard as methodologically credible’ (p.22).

Interestingly, the authors’ response consists of two rebuttals. First, they turn the question around by stating that traditional behaviouralist methods are ill-suited for intelligence studies. According to Gill and Pythian, behaviouralism’s emphasis on simple causation in apparently closed systems cannot be applied to relationships that require ‘speaking-truth-to-power’. Here, knowledge, trust and power are key variables, yet they defy positivist research instruments. Instead, the authors call for more subtle inferential schemes which can express causality beyond ‘if A, then B’ schemes as subjective factors such as perception and trust are taken to carry their

own explanatory weight. Second, Gill and Phythian also discard exclusive reliance on post-modernist strategies for intelligence research. By invoking ‘continuities’ such as ‘our criteria for judging effectiveness’, the authors caution against a ‘wholesale ditching of modernist methods’ (p.25). As a logical consequence of their rebuttals, the authors herald critical realism as a means to ‘heed the cautionary tale that is post-modernism’ whilst not allowing ‘this “modish apparition” to immobilize us’ (p.35). In simpler terms, the authors’ recipe for advancement in intelligence studies ‘distinguishes elements of reality that are relatively unchanging and exist independently of the scientific process from those that change more frequently, being produced (socially constructed) as part of the scientific process. Further, with positivism, it believes that causal statements can be made; while, against positivism, it accepts that not all social phenomena can be observed, and that research must therefore also seek out underlying mechanisms of events’ (p.27).

However, two ‘nays’ do not automatically add up to a ‘yeah’. Whilst the authors present a very innovative map for theorizing and researching intelligence, much less of their joint attention is devoted to the discussion or application of actual research techniques. Yet, this is where intelligence studies needs to become more explicit if it wants to avoid stagnation at the infancy level. Gill and Phythian’s usage of the concept of surveillance reflects a broadened and deepened understanding of traditional accounts of security intelligence and thus *appears* better suited to grasp the transformations of modern intelligence governance better than traditional accounts. Yet, in order to move from assertion to demonstration, it is hoped that Gill and Phythian continue to operationalize their intriguing research.

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Managing Sino-American Crisis: Case Study and Analysis. Michael Swaine and Zhan Tuosheng with Danielle Cohen (eds). Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006, pp.518. \$62.95 (hardcover), \$24.95 (paperback).

This edited volume breaks new ground in our understanding of the foreign and military policy-making process in regard to major crises between China and the United States in the last six decades. The contributors shed valuable new light on a ‘closed book’ to outsiders, taking advantage of their unique position to watch how the system works from inside-out. They provide new information for the field to further study the subject that has long been explored with inadequate findings.

The paring up of Chinese and American scholars and practitioners doing comparative research on the same event is a novel feature about the volume. They supplement each other and add great depth of the analysis. And the study of past crises serves as a useful guide for both policy-makers and researchers in designing ways of crisis prevention and resolution in the future. On the other hand, the contributors test their knowledge and empirical data within a well-established analytical framework and come up with an insightful argument and conclusion. The book is an impressive

piece of work and should be read by all interested in Sino-American relations in general and their crisis management practices in particular.

Michael Swaine's introduction chapter offers a well developed theoretical framework for the volume, an important attribute to the success of the whole project. Based on his own research and the findings of the contributors he makes a number of insightful observations in the chapter. For instance, he rightly concludes that the Chinese leadership tried hard to avoid crisis, and if it emerges it would be tackled at an early stage. Its behaviour of crisis aversion is reactive by nature in the 1990s, visibly different from that of the pre-reform era. And international situation is always a key to China's crisis management, or crisis triggering.

Jonathan Wilkenfeld's excellent theoretical chapter adds depth to the book. All scholars interested in crisis management should consult his suggested reading list attached in the end of the article. He characterized the Taiwan crisis in the 1950s and in 1995–96 as full blown crisis, while the embassy bombing and the EP-3 incident are near crisis. He points out some US officials regard the 1995–96 one to be less than a crisis. This reviewer tends to take the latter view. The difference is that all the parties had no intention to escalate the tension and they kept each other well informed, as Robert Suettinger expertly revealed in his chapter. On the other hand, the embassy bombing and the EP-3 incident are more serious. First, they were military engagements that cost Chinese lives. Second, they touched upon the very nerve of Chinese feelings of historical humiliation that put tremendous pressure on the leadership. Third, there were many in China who wanted retaliation that may lead to military conflict. The different rating between the author and the Chinese analysts may be due to the different positions of the two countries in the crisis: one is the triggering country and another is the target country, an important notion mentioned by Wang Jisi and Xu Hui in their chapter (p.138). In my view if not due to Beijing's rational reaction to the events, the result could have been a lot more disastrous.

The two chapters by Chinese scholars Wang Jisi/Xu Hui and Xia Liping raise a number of useful points. For instance, the asymmetries of interest and means and scope of choice underline the differences between the two countries in dealing with the Taiwan problem. A Chinese war in Taiwan is a war of no other choice, should Taipei declare independence, while the Iraq war was a war of choice, not one of necessity. Taiwan to China is its core national interest but to America is only of some strategic value. The guiding principle for crisis management, 'on just ground, to our advantage, and with restraint', is of particular practical importance even today.

The two chapters on the Korean and Vietnam Wars by Zhang Baijia and Allen Whiting are rich in historical data and objective analysis. It is interesting to know that Mao Zedong did consider the possibility and consequenceness of the PLA's defeat in the Korea War (p.188). What we want to learn is, in the crucial Politburo meeting to decide on sending troops to Korea, those who were against the participation. Whiting's paper should be carefully read by Chinese historians about the decision-making process in the White House. It provides detailed information regarding these wars. One particular consideration was both countries tried to avoid seeing

each other again in the battlefield. In the past there existed a level of agreement on this point. The two papers fulfilled the gap with detailed findings.

Robert Suettinger's chapter again should be particularly read by Chinese academics and policy advisors for information about how Washington managed the three crises in the Taiwan Strait. It gives us valuable details about who said what and when. The different considerations between American and Taiwanese interests are revealed at the personality level, e.g. Winston Lord refusal to meet Taiwan's unofficial representative in Washington is reflective of the current American-Taiwan quarrel on the latter's desperate move to hold a UN referendum under Taiwan's name.

Niu Jun elaborates how the Chinese leadership used military action to prevent possibly more serious military confrontation between China and the United States, as the signal of bottom line is important for crisis management. It is a pity the discussion on the third Taiwan crisis in 1995-96 is so brief for understandable reasons.

The next three chapters (Kurt Campbell, Richard Weitz and Wu Baiyi on the embassy bombing; and Dennis Blair, David Bonfili and Zhang Tuosheng on the EP-3 Incident) are no doubt the most serious, informative and objective analysis in the literature on the two subjects. For instance, Wu Baiyi's revelation of the breakdown of communication between the Chinese Belgrade Embassy and the Beijing headquarters for several hours is shocking and indicative of the loopholes of China's crisis management mechanism. At the same time the embassy bombing also exposed the problems of American security decision-making. These discussions on the sensitive issues of the top level offer rare opportunities for us to look into the jealously guarded territories. Therefore, they are the major contributions to the study of Sino-American relations.

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Taming American Power: The Global Response to US Primacy. Stephen Walt. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005, \$27.95, pp.320. \$27.95/£16.99 (hardcover), \$15.95/£3.99 (paperback).

Stephen Walt has written a very important book on the nature of the American engagement with the world. It is an important book not least because the elite of American security studies tell us it is important. For Samuel Huntington, the book is 'path breaking'; for Robert Art, 'masterful'; John Ikenberry says it is a 'landmark' book; Michael Ignatieff says it is a book to 'admire'; John Mearsheimer describes the analysis as 'brilliant'. Walt divides the book into a 'description' of American primacy, and how it has used that position; an analysis of American and non-American perceptions of American primacy; then, an outline of national strategies to manage American primacy, both by those that oppose US strategy and by those who seek to accommodate American power; and finally, prescriptions for the future.

The intended (American) reader is invited to empathize with the dilemma of various world leaders in engaging with the powerful contemporary United States.

Americans have to understand that state leaders will follow their own interests, not those of the United States, and will therefore follow a variety of strategies such as balancing (including in an asymmetric fashion), balking (in essence, 'foot-dragging'), binding (into international organizations), blackmail (against the United States), and delegitimation; and for those that seek to accommodate US power, bandwagoning, regional balancing, bonding, and penetrating the US body politic. These strategies are identified in the policies of a whole range of actors in Europe, the Arab states, and including the governments of China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Israel.

Thus the key defining element of global international relations is American primacy, which Walt defines as 'first in order, importance or authority' (p.32). This does not lead inevitably to military engagements: Walt is on record in the lead-up to the invasion in opposing the Iraq War on the grounds that there was an alternative – that the United States could deter a nuclear armed Saddam led Iraq ('An Unnecessary War', *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2003, with John Mearsheimer). In relation to primacy, other frames get short shrift; neoconservatism, for example, gets only nine mentions, and then merely as a label to describe particular voices.

The drive to maintain primacy is that which has been common amongst the three post-Cold War Presidencies. But that has been carried out in different forms. The Bush senior and Clinton administrations followed a strategy of 'selective engagement': 'the United States keeps large military forces deployed in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East/Persian Gulf, in the context of . . . alliances . . . for the purpose of dampening security competition' (pp.220–1). In contrast, the administration of George W. Bush has sought a strategy of 'global hegemony', 'where the United States tries to run the world more or less on its own' (p.219). This is a failed strategy, as can be seen from the current situation in which 'America's global standing has plummeted', rogue states 'have become more resistant to US pressure', efforts to promote democracy have strengthened authoritarian rule, and America faces the 'costly quagmire in Iraq' (all p.220). Walt recommends a third strategy to American government, that of 'offshore balancer', where America deploys its power abroad only when there are direct threats to vital US interests' which can be only in those areas 'where there are substantial concentrations of power or wealth or critical natural resources' (both p.222). The United States does not need to control these areas, but rather ensure that they do not fall under the control of another hostile power, and to do that, it should rely on local actors to uphold a balance of power (and that would be in their interests). Walt defines this as the 'ideal strategy for an era of US primacy' (p.223).

So why is it an important text to the American reader? Walt's analysis is easy to grasp, and it is written in a powerful and punchy style. There are some painful home truths: America is 'remarkably immature' as a Great Power, and 'Americans remain remarkably ignorant of the world' (both p.245). It is also a very comforting analysis. There are echoes of a more comfortable world (Walt is at pains to emphasize that offshore balancing is not isolationism). Outbursts of anti-Americanism around the world, difficulties in marshalling allies, these are the inevitable problems associated with the structural position of primacy. Those global hostilities and difficulties are not the product, therefore, of what America is – there is no loathing of American freedoms,

or democracy, or capitalism, as was feared by many in the immediate post-9/11 period. Nor is it a product of American actions, of policy from the invasion of Iraq through to the use of torture or imprisonment by Americans, whether in Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, or through 'extraordinary rendition'. America's contemporary challenges are seen in a realist sense to be natural, consequences of a structural realist position.

Then why is this book important to the non-American reader? Above all, because it gives insight into the drive in the United States to insulate opinion from charges that there is something fundamentally wrong with American foreign policy, or indeed more so, with the nature of America itself. Those charges can be found in some in the United States as well as those outside, but not amongst the foreign policy elite. Walt speaks powerfully to the converted. But it is not clear how he will convert the non-believers.

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AK-47: The Weapon that Changed the Face of War. Larry Kahaner. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2007, pp.258. \$25.95/£17.99 (hardcover), \$15.95 (paperback).

Since it emerged as a major area for international security and humanitarian action in the late 1990s, small arms policy has suffered from tortuous politics, unresolved disputes over basic issues and thick veils of secrecy. While a massive stream of writing has illuminated many aspects of small arms problems, we are still looking for a handy classic, something suitable for newcomers, also spelling a clear agenda for the future. Larry Kahaner has written an eccentric book, devoted to just one major slice from the broad spectrum of small arms concerns. But he comes closer than anyone else to the agenda-setting work the field badly needs.

The strength of the book comes from a single powerful insight: the problem is this one gun. Previous efforts to create an overall introduction tried to cover the full spectrum of issues, such as Wendy Cuiker and Victor Sidel's *The Global Gun Epidemic* (Westport, CT: Proeger, 2005). Kahaner is an intellectual hedgehog by comparison, possessed by a single big truth. A journalist, he sometimes reveals a casual relationship with matters of fact. He repeats unsubstantiated assertions, like Pakistan's alleged stockpile of three million AKs (p. 66). It could be true, but became accepted through mere repetition. He also repeats discredited reports that Mozambicans own five to ten million AKs (p. 99). The officials, activists and analysts who devote their careers to untangling small arms riddles will find many other reasons here to grimace. Aggressive fact checking would have made a more reliable book, but Kahaner's basic point is overpowering.

The book transforms our understanding of small arms proliferation in several ways. It is the first book to deal with a type of gun itself as a fulcrum of systemic conflict, crime and violence. Orthodox assessments of small arms problems

avoid tangling with the imponderable *accessibility thesis*, the widely held but hard-to-prove argument that more guns equals more death. Previous books about the AK, moreover, were written by gun buffs, including Mikhail T. Kalashnikov himself. Their treatments inevitably are more technical, politically uncritical or outright laudatory. In her recent book, *The Gun that Changed the World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), the author Elena Joly (Kalashnikov's daughter) is polite enough to never quite say how it changed the world. Kahaner is the first to describe the AK as something pathological. He leaves no doubt that the world would be a much better place if a young sergeant recovering from battle wounds had found another way to busy himself. If ever there was a misguided sorcerer's apprentice, this was the man.

Innumerable automatic rifles have been introduced over the years. Kalashnikov's was not the first, and depending upon the criteria, it certainly is not the best. But it is exceptionally cheap, easy to manufacture, easy to use, and weirdly resilient. Where other rifles require a modicum of training, careful handling and routine care, Kalashnikov's weapon is perfect for cadres selected exclusively for their political or ethnic loyalty, for untrained partisans or part-time guerrillas. It is so simple it can be operated by careless children.

And that is the worst of it. Behind the glorious fiction of revolutionary posters lie dreadful realities. Having tried to make a weapon ideally suited the simple task of hosing enemies with bullets, Kalashnikov inadvertently created, and the Soviet system popularized, a weapon that later turned children into soulless killing machines. Like the novelists William Golding and Philip Pullman, Kahaner regards children as morally weak and easily corrupted, vulnerable to situations and specific catalysts. Although he is a bit slippery, Kahaner leaves the impression that without the AK, there would be no armies of child soldiers, and far fewer warlord forces. Social scientists are taught to be suspicious of technological determinism, but in this case, Kahaner is on to something.

The worsening problem is illustrated by detours into 1980s Afghanistan and the Iran–Contra scandal. The tales are numbingly familiar. Kahaner's originality is using them to show how much the world has changed. As recently as the 1980s, the global pool of excess automatic rifles was relatively small. The Afghan resistance and Iranian armed forces struggled to get the infantry weapons they desperately needed. Twenty years later, no one seems to be struggling for AKs.

With so much harm to account for, much ink needs to be devoted to the subject. Thorny causal issues, and even thornier questions about what to do, require much more examination. A much-awaited book by Chris Chivers, reporter with the New York Times' Moscow Bureau, is expected to bite much deeper into a subject that Kahaner introduces.

As part of international security studies, the small arms field remains far from mature. But there are basic problems we can be sure of. With tens of millions still stacked away in half-forgotten arsenals, inherited from governments that have themselves disappeared, the world will be dealing with Kalashnikov's legacy for decades to come. Kahaner provides ample evidence that the world does not have a small arms problem so much as an AK problem.

Some analysts regard its scale as so vast as to be unsolvable. Efforts to eliminate surplus infantry weapons have shown success is possible, but the scale of the problem is intimidating. Focus instead, critics recommend, on the political and social forces that create demand for such weapons. Others suggest that more can be accomplished through control of its ammunition. Kahaner's description of the effects of this weapon leave no doubt, however, that sooner or later we will see a massive global effort to clean up the incredible mess Kalashnikov started.

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