Book Reviews

How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns. Audrey Kurth Cronin. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 330, $29.95/£20.95 (hardback).

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Audey Kurth Cronin's masterful *How Terrorism Ends* offers an important outline to the best mix of approaches to end terrorism, particularly the virulent strain from Al-Qaeda and its acolytes. By offering a wider an impressive spectrum of current and recent historical groups, Professor Cronin's work draws lessons the end of a range of terrorism campaigns, while avoiding the blind application of models that so often passes for analysis in this field.

Her study offers six ways terrorist campaigns come to an end: *decapitation*, *negotiation*, *success* of the terrorists, *failure* due to loss of support from constituents, state *repression*, and group *transformation*. The author uses Alexander George's structured-focused comparison to assess the degrees of success of these strategies against terrorist groups. The most important part of the book is its application to Al-Qaeda.

Decapitation is perhaps the least successful but most gratifying strategy. If this strategy is to work, the terrorist organization most likely is a hierarchal organization dominated by a single leader. Neither of these conditions apply to Al-Qaeda, leading Cronin to conclude that removing the Al-Qaeda central leadership is of little value. The strategy is appealing for its ability to remove an individual who has at least come to symbolize the organization, so society can have revenge. There is little chance of successful negotiation with Al-Qaeda, in part due to its extreme violence, but more practically according to Cronin, there is no negotiable issue. Negotiations work when a group has a clearly defined goal, but Al-Qaeda's keeps shifting, and the organization does not really view itself as anything but a vanguard looking to start a revolution, not as the body that will necessarily lead it to power. Cronin is persuasive in saying the Al-Qaeda will never win, despite the fact that it appears that they are in Afghanistan. Repression is not going to defeat Al-Qaeda as it has a highly resilient structure; 75 per cent of its pre-9/11 leadership has been killed or captured, yet it still functions with increasing global reach. Having ruled out four of her six categories of defeat Cronin does offer two possible means to bring Al-Qaeda to an end.

For Cronin, the two best means of defeating Al-Qaeda are reorientation and failure. Helpfully, both are emerging. Groups tend to lose once they lose sight of their original objectives, either through ideological shifts, or more commonly, losing ideology altogether and becoming criminal enterprises. For Al-Qaeda it is the latter that is the biggest problem. If Al-Qaeda requires financing, as it does, and if it begins to rely on criminal activity, which to some degree it has, the ability to maintain its ideological commitment becomes problematic, as for the

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Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombian (FARC) or the Abu Sayyaf Group of the Philippines. If the ideological brand is lost, then the struggle could end.

The real threat to Al-Qaeda is its failure, and as Cronin has already said that Al-Qaeda will lose, the question is how to accelerate the process of its failure. The author highlights how to turn Al-Qaeda's, ideologically flexible, networked structure against it. From the beginning, Al-Qaeda resisted controlling its allies by imposing a ridged ideology or by dictating operational details. As long as a group or individual is committed to fighting the far enemy, with the goal of establishing a caliphate, then a group can sign on with Al-Qaeda. This means that there are many constituent organizations within the Al-Qaeda family whose core goals are national rather than global. Thus there is a possibility of negotiation with these groups, which could isolate Al-Qaeda for the larger Muslim world. Second, as the Al-Qaeda brand is adopted by many groups and individuals, it becomes impossible for Al-Qaeda to control the political impact of the often extreme violence, causing a negative backlash within the so-called jihadi community as well as the wider Muslim world. The backlash, which is already being seen, further undermines Al-Qaeda's claim to be the vanguard of a wider revolution within the Islamic world, which is ultimately what Al-Qaeda claims. With the recognition of the various cleavages within Al-Qaeda, and a mixture of incentives, the international community can begin to reduce Al-Qaeda to a rump organization that, while not defeated, will no longer pose a threat to the international community.

The book was being printed just before the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were repressed. Nonetheless, Sri Lanka's approach to the LTTE, one of the world's most ruthless and deceptive terrorist groups, validates the author's recommendation. As the LTTE used bouts of peace to rest, recuperate, recruit, regroup and resupply, the government decided to militarily dismantle the LTTE while ignoring calls by Western politicians, from Hilary Clinton to David Miliband, to renegotiate. While some of solutions may not be new, and the history may not be complete, for example, the author underplays the impact of the decapitation approach to Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the devastation of the 'middle management' of the Shining Path, the work does offer a valid context to evaluate different approaches to counter-terrorism. Cronin's book offers the best range of practical solutions to end the contemporary wave of terrorism.

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India, Pakistan, and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia. Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 152, \$21.50/£15 (hardcover).

Challenging the odds imposed by the NPT regime, India and Pakistan gate-crashed the nuclear club, carrying out 11 nuclear tests in May 1998. The tests not only

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marked a milestone in South Asia's nuclear evolution, they also prompted a refocus of the region's nuclear inquiry from proliferation rationale to the strategic consequences of nuclear weapons proliferation. The book under review offers an engaging encounter between two leading scholars on the effects of nuclear weapons proliferation in South Asia and makes an important contribution to the growing body of South Asia's nuclear scholarship.

The authors address, equipped with two decades of South Asia's nuclear experiences, whether the introduction of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of India and Pakistan has stabilized the region's strategic environment. Representing two contending schools of thought – Optimism and Pessimism – they present sharply opposing perspectives on the issue. Offering an optimist argument, Sumit Ganguly concludes that 'nuclear weapons have actually ... helped to stabilize an otherwise volatile region by making the potential costs of large-scale war catastrophically high' (p. 24). He adopts an outcome-based approach and claims that Indo-Pakistani encounters in a nuclearized environment ended without the outbreak of any large-scale conflict, which clearly demonstrates the stabilizing effects of South Asia's nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, S. Paul Kapur, contradicting the optimistic argument and adopting a process-oriented approach, argues that repeated tensions and crisis between India and Pakistan in the past two decades are linked to their possession of nuclear weapons. Claiming himself a 'strategic pessimist' (to distinguish his position from 'organizational pessimists') and critiquing rational deterrence theory on its own ground, Kapur asserts that nuclear weapons have rather increased 'the likelihood of risky behavior, crisis, war, even between wholly rational states' (p. 24). According to him, Pakistan, behind the nuclear shield, has pursued destabilizing policies in the past two decades as being a weak power vis-à-vis India and dissatisfied with the existing territorial arrangement. New Delhi's response to the Pakistani policies has been similarly destabilizing. Therefore, the net impact of the introduction of nuclear weapons in South Asia is an enhanced level of strategic instability and potential nuclear disaster.

The initial chapters present a brief but useful summary of the Indo-Pakistani conflict and the competing theoretical perspectives of the authors. In subsequent chapters, each author offers his own reading of South Asia's nuclear past, present and future that corroborates respective theoretical position of the authors.

Despite their sharp disagreements, they also agree on a number of issues. In the final chapter, they discuss, with great subtlety and depth, these points of agreement. In particular, they stress three issues. One, their difference is indeed one of emphasis. They differ primarily about which aspect of crisis behaviour – the relatively benign outcome of South Asian nuclear crises or the process of crisis outbreak or escalation – is more revealing about future risks. Two, they both conclude that India's acquisition of ballistic missile defence would have a destabilizing impact on the region, increasing 'incentives for arms racing and possibly for the first use of nuclear weapons' (p. 84). Three, Pakistan's support for non-state actors, as asymmetric weapons vis-à-vis India, groups who have now assumed a life of their own, has worsened an intractable security problem in the region. Currently these non-state

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actors not only harm India, they are also detrimental to Pakistan's own national interests. Neither country possesses the capability to control them and the non-state actors are likely to remain as a long-term security challenge for the region.

Notwithstanding substantive analytical rigour, the book will perhaps raise some tricky questions. For example, how robust is Ganguly's outcome-based conclusion that nuclear weapons prevented the outbreak of a major war between India and Pakistan? Indeed, it is uncertain whether it was *only* the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan that prevented crisis escalation or whether there were other factors behind it. A careful analysis of the American role in Indo-Pakistani nuclear crises reveals that the outcomes could have been very different without the powerful, game-changing third-party role provided by the United States. Kapur also notes a number of crucial non-nuclear factors that determined the outcome of the Indo-Pakistani crises.

Kapur's argument that Pakistan's adventurous behaviour is influenced by its possession of nuclear weapons might be plausible; but it fails to explain Pakistan's similar adventurous decisions in relation to Kashmir in the pre-nuclear era. For example, Islamabad behaved in a similar fashion in 1965, triggering an Indo-Pakistani war long before nuclear weapons were a factor. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish between the Pakistani behaviour of 1965 and that of 1999. Therefore, the argument that nuclear weapons prompted Pakistan's adventurous decision in 1999 that triggered the Kargil War is suspect.

Notwithstanding these questions, this is a solid, useful and thoughtful contribution to South Asia's nuclear literature, and a compelling synthesis of increasingly massive literature on South Asian nuclearization.

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Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan. Antonio Giustozzi. New York and London: Columbia University Press and C. Hurst & Co, 2009, pp. 320, $35/£35 (hardcover).

Who are warlords? How did some militia leaders and local strongmen successfully turn themselves into warlords in Afghanistan? Beyond unfavourable and chaotic images of warlords from the unitary nation-state paradigm, we know very little about the origins and survival of Afghan warlordism. In *Empires of Mud*, Antonio Giustozzi, research fellow at the Crisis States Research Centre at the London School of Economics, presents a detailed field research and comparative analysis of warlord politics in the context of Afghan politics from 1978 to 2009. As the author articulates, without a better understanding of Afghan politics with regard to warlords and/or other non-state armed actors, the international community are in

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danger of making significant mistakes in their efforts towards Western 'state' building in Afghanistan.

In the introduction, Giustozzi notes that the power status of 'warlord' is not given to all military leaders or military commanders in Afghanistan. Instead, those who become warlords must earn internal loyalty, external legitimacy, and territorial control as a 'polity' by employing a variety of techniques and skills. Guided by a distinctive combination of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and contemporary political science, the book provides an original two-dimensional analytical framework – institutionalization and legitimization – of the dynamic process of the origins and survivals of warlordism in Afghan society.

Part 1, 'Gestation, Emergence, and Crisis', is divided into five chapters devoted to detailed description of the historical overview and evolution of Afghan warlordism from 1978 to 2009. Throughout his discussion, Giustozzi illustrates that, although powerful warlords such as Abdul Rashid Dostum have emerged throughout the sustained war cycle in Afghanistan since 1978, the current peace cycle after 2002 has changed the roles of 'old' powerful warlords in politics as well as in the complex social micro-dynamics in Afghan society. In Giustozzi's account, the current president, Hamid Karzai, has increased the opportunity cost of a new war cycle for warlords, who remain strongly in favour of a chaotic stateless environment, by integrating those warlords into the state formation effort. The Karzai government has appointed big warlords – Dostum, Ismail Khan and others – provincial governors or cabinet members. According to the author, however, the most important problem in the recent peace cycle is the 'erosion' of the roles of powerful warlords. As Giustozzi describes, by replacing powerful warlords, local strongmen and militia leaders, who have become local mini-warlords, have earned popular support as well as secured financial resources through the narcotics trade or protecting illegal drug and gun smuggling, behind the growing threat by the Taliban insurgency since 2006.

Part 2, 'Models of Warlordism' is devoted to a series of in-depth description and comparison of two models: feudal versus insurgent warlords. Giustozzi's analysis of *feudal* warlordism centres the orphan warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum (an ethnic Uzbek) who emerged as a charismatic military leader and manages his followers through a hierarchical and multi-layer networking system (vassals-vavassors: warlords being at the top of the network; 'vassals' being the followers of warlords; 'vavassors' being the small village military leaders who subordinate vassals). On the other hand, as Giustozzi sees Mohammad Ismail Khan (an ethnic Tajik) as a leader who emerged as a 'big' warlord through the patrimonialist practice of Jami'at-i Isami, one of the older jihad insurgent parties (mujahidin). Unlike Dostum, Ismail Kahn had to create a disciplined and centralized strong military organization under his central command by successfully grasping his power from his rival leaders. Ismail's effort to become a powerful warlord is labelled as an *insurgent* warlordism model.

After his descriptions of the two models, Giustozzi compares them with the late Ahmad Shah Massud (an ethnic Tajik), who emerged in the 1990s as leader of Shura-i Nezar, one of the most powerful Islamist guerrilla forces in Afghanistan. The author notes that, unlike Dostum and Ismail Kahn, 'without him [Massud] nothing like Shura-i Nezar would have appeared in the north-east'. Massud's organization

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'resembled a community.... in his reliance on a single group [Panjshiris] as the core of fighting forces' (pp. 281–2). Employing 'Machiavellian' techniques like flexible political aliments and tactical coalitions, Massud seized legitimacy and political control of his Panjshir followers and Shura-i Nezar, and asserted leadership over other militia leaders and international counterparts. A major feature of Massud's leadership, unlike that of Dostum and Ismail, came from his study of Mao's writings. Consequently, Massud always sought state power. As Giustozzi points out, Massud might have been a 'state-making warlord' in Afghanistan. His assassination by al-Qaeda on 9 September 2001, however, led to the decline of Shura-i Nezar in later Afghan politics.

Giustozzi's field research and descriptions of warlord politics are impressive. His research leads him to oppose the current international policy based on counterinsurgency perspectives. Instead, he recommends that Karzai's central government offer new 'mini-warlords' a stake in working with current political institutions and turn those warlords and their followers into political actors. It would been useful to see Afghanistan placed in a broader context, to understand how lessons there relate to lessons from post-conflict state and peace-building elsewhere, which often stresses comparable ideas about post-conflict power-sharing arrangements.

Even so, Giustozzi's *Empires of Mud* is an important contribution to the research on non-state armed groups and warlordism and to a better understanding of the contemporary Afghan situation.

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Justifying Ballistic Missile Defence: Technology, Security and Culture. Columba Peoples. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 299, $85/£50 (hardcover), $32.99/£18.99 (paperback).

What accounts for the persistence of ballistic missile defences in American strategic planning and political rhetoric? Columba Peoples' investigation into this question offers a meticulously documented answer that will be of interest to two different and largely distinct audiences.

One audience will find most compelling the detailed history of the advocacy of ballistic missile defence that is presented in the three cases studies that cover anti-ballistic missile defences at the beginning of the atomic age, their reincarnation as the Strategic Defense Initiative, and ballistic missile defence under the presidency of George W. Bush and beyond. Each of these case studies divides the political rhetoric over ballistic missile defence (BMD) systems into two different narratives that arise from the intersection of technology and culture. Peoples begins with 'instrumentalism', which sees technology as something manipulated by those in power; that technologies are 'value-free instruments ready to serve the purposes of their users' (p. 77). Missile defence then becomes 'a technological solution to a political problem, that of American nuclear security' (p. 77). Thus, advocates argue that

ballistic missile defence was a solution to the 1950s Soviet advances in nuclear technology and delivery systems; provided the ability to escape from mutual assured destruction under Reagan; and allowed the United States to avoid the trap of limiting itself in terms of technology and, eventually, the ability to use military force offensively in the pursuit of self interest. Under the instrumentalist rhetoric, technology can help America overcome its adversaries and plays into a deeply held faith in technological innovation as a problem solver.

Peoples juxtaposes this instrumentalism with the 'substantive' approach. Offered as a contradiction to instrumentalism, the substantive narrative focuses on technology as an almost inevitable challenge to and constraint on American power. In the 1950s the argument was that the Soviet technological advances such as Sputnik and early anti-ballistic missile systems would change the strategic balance. Under Reagan, the concern was a 'window of vulnerability' that made arms control dangerous and his Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) the moral solution. Today the fear is that the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction expertise make America vulnerable and missile defence necessary. In contrast to technology as a tool of policymakers, substantivism presents it as a menace that must be overcome.

It is not one argument or the other that matters for Peoples but the combination. Together, these narratives allow advocates of missile defence to successfully navigate the repeated technological failures of ballistic missile defence systems, as well as disagreements over the nature and potency of the threat to which they are linked. 'The invocation of America's technological heritage in response to doubts over the technical prospects of missile defence,' Peoples argues, 'discursively fills the gap created by the failure of missile defence testing to date to validate definitively the system's feasibility' (p. 261–2).

Peoples presents overwhelming evidence that both the instrumental and substantive narratives permeate the history of missile defence advocacy in the United States. But this is not the same as showing that they matter. In examining the rhetoric used to make the case for missile defence, the book seems to assume that because major themes are repeated, this documents their persuasiveness. The analysis, moreover, concentrates on proponents of missile defence while ignoring those who received their message. Yes, the advocacy of missile defence has consistently taken two narrative forms. But to what ends? This failure to link rhetoric to policy choice leaves the reader with an excellent discourse analysis but not knowing what to make of it.

The author attempts to fill this void by making a contribution to the field of Critical Security Studies (CSS) and this constitutes the second audience for the book. CSS, according to the author, offers 'a valuable base from which to approach debates on issues of "hard" or traditional security by identifying the ground upon which such debates take place and the common sense assumptions which they are predicated upon' (p. 273). Peoples focuses on Gramsci's analysis of 'common sense' as a rhetorical device and combines it with the notion of technology as a form of social control as embodied in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. As a result, technology can be seen as 'a particularly American trait that can be used to overcome even the monumental technical challenges presented by missile defence' but also a 'largely autonomous source of insecurity' (pp. 3–4). In other words, both an instrumental and

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substantive narrative. Students of Critical Security Studies will find the first two chapters a useful review of this literature.

Unfortunately, those interested in missile defence and especially in policy are unlikely to find the theory chapters useful or necessary. The main and repetitive themes in arguments about missile defence are readily discernable from public discourse and the application of CSS tools adds little that is unique to this analysis. This is a shame since, as the book claims, 'the search for freedom from the deadly application of nuclear weapons technology needs to be constantly accompanied by an attention to the *way that question is being framed and pursued'* (p. 270 italics in the original). Peoples' analysis, however, does not convincingly connect the persistence of ballistic missile defence to the text of the narratives used to promote it. And while debates over ballistic missile defence can be understood from CSS and Gramscian perspectives, Peoples does not prove they provide additional meaning.

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Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy. Rajiv Sikri. New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2009, pp. 317, $39.95/Rs595 (hardcover).

Rajiv Sikri provides us with a very timely examination of India's foreign policy and the need for a re-evaluation of its goals for the 21st century. Sikri, a 36-year veteran of the Indian Foreign Service, gives us a powerful insight into India's foreign and security policy objectives. His geopolitical bearings offer a very distinct perspective on India's current and potential future role in the world. How India proceeds in this increasingly global and interdependent world order is the key question that the author attempts to answer.

Sikri delivers a concise and thoughtful picture of India's place in the international system. His framework is qualitative and combines scholarly and diplomatic points of view. At times philosophical and personal, Sikri takes readers through a detailed analysis of where India stands politically, economically and militarily. He highlights trends in Indian foreign policy. His sources are extensive and up to date, including both Indian and Western scholarship. His book, nevertheless, would have reached greater heights if he had interviewed many of his former diplomatic contacts and incorporated them into the book. Sikri recognizes the increasing complexities and dangers in the world and India's important role in dealing with these issues. Sikri sees opportunities and benefits for India in a more diverse and less-Western oriented world. His positive views on the decline of American dominance are not unlike Fareed Zakaria's *The Post-American World.*

Sikri presents India at a crossroads both political and geographic. He argues that India has an opportunity to redress a number of regional problems that he and many Indians believe were imposed by the Western powers over centuries, as forces turn in its favour to alter historical injustices. Sikri notes that India's economic growth,

modernization, and nuclear weapons development are key to its progress and power. And, he states that a new generation of Indians more open-minded and flexible with regard to resolving problems previously considered insoluable and raise India to the highest levels in the international system.

One of the major issues Sikri focuses on is the division of the Indian subcontinent. He emphasizes that India cannot become a major world power until it resolves regional problems. Once the subcontinent is unified, either as one country or along the lines of the European Union, Sikri says, then India can look beyond and apply its newfound power and unity to global issues. To this end, he states that India must reach out more to its neighbours and encourage them to come closer to India, especially economically.

Sikri, not surprisingly, has a very negative view of Pakistan. He blames the Pakistani military, as well as interference from China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, for perpetuating tensions and divisions between India and Pakistan. He argues that Pakistan is a religious creation, not historically based, suggesting it will likely become a failed state, dependent on foreign support. Sikri, nevertheless, does hold out some hope that Pakistan's newly elected civilian government will overcome military control over foreign policy, especially Kashmir policy. He encourages India to support any Pakistani civilian force that is open to negotiations and peace. He, moreover, suggests that if all else fails, India could use what he considers to be its ace: control of the major waterways into Pakistan. He points out that India can legally divert more than enough water from Pakistan to cause serious damage and division within Pakistan, especially between the powerful agricultural groups and military. He states that water may be India's best foreign policy instrument against Pakistan. Despite international uproar, it could be decisive, forcing Pakistan to re-evaluate policy with India, especially regarding Kashmir (pp. 47–51).

Sikri contends that many people continue to perceive India as soft and insular with little power-projection capability. He states that India must dispel these views since they undermine Indian credibility and encourage foreign intrusion in the region. He calls upon India to build up its naval capabilities to ensure a defence against foreign powers and to protect national interests throughout the Indian Ocean and into the Pacific. Sikri does not hide his belief that India should compete with China's growing power-projection capabilities, and he questions whether China can continue its rapid economic development and remain stable while maintaining an authoritarian system that is mostly unresponsive to its citizens' needs and expectations.

Sikri sees India's future as one of much hope and opportunity. He believes that India's economy will continue to grow and that greater trade relations, especially with East Asia, will help catapult India to major world power status. He understands that India must play a greater role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. He realizes that Africa is becoming a major political battleground between the Western countries and China in which India cannot just stand by idly and watch. He sees the world's economic distribution of power changing fundamentally and the subsequent military and political positions altering accordingly; and he

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notes that most great power changes throughout history have not occurred peacefully. Furthermore, Sikri argues that the powerful, assertive India he envisions is consistent with the moral stature of Mahatma Gandhi.

Overall, Sikri offers a very significant insight into India's worldview and its foreign policy behaviour. All too long a Western purview, Sikri presents a very non-Western perspective of the world and, especially South Asia. Sikri's book is highly recommended not only for the Indian scholar but for all international relations specialists. Sikri covers a very broad range of issues at the top of the national security agendas for many countries, including the United States. Hearing voices like his on security issues that bedevil Western experts is illuminating and important. India's growing power and influence, moreover, gives even greater reason to take into account thoughtful, nationalistic voices like Sikri.

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Why NATO Endures. Wallace J. Thies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 334, $75/£50 (hardcover), $27/£17.99 (paperback).

As the Atlantic Alliance struggles in Afghanistan and has difficulty reaching consensus on a whole number of strategic issues, many observers have proclaimed NATO to be in a deep crisis over its future purpose and missions. Some even question whether NATO will survive the Afghan experience, with allies at odds over the core principles of burden-sharing and taking equal risks. However, as Wallace J. Thies, professor of politics at Catholic University in Washington, and an acknowledged NATO expert, reminds us in this timely book that such claims might, again, be exaggerated. They ignore the historically rooted 'self-healing' capacity of an alliance of democracies to overcome even the most severe disagreements among its members.

Thies' driving motivation behind his book is to critique what he sees as a counterproductive tendency within much international commentary on the alliance to label almost any disagreement in NATO since its origins in 1949 as indicative for a severe crisis. This 'Alliance crisis syndrome', he writes, is fed by '*exaggerated claims* based on *unexamined premises* and backed by *superficial comparisons* drawn from the history of the Alliance' (p. 3; emphasis original). It also has 'severely limited the prospects for cumulative knowledge about the Alliance' (p. 21). For the author, the concept of crisis in the alliance has 'proven to be an analytical dead end' (p. 15) since the term 'crisis' is used rather indiscriminately and because rigorous analysis shows that NATO's 'crises' have never been a prelude to disintegration.

To remedy this situation the author develops two themes. The first is that NATO is quite a different kind of military alliance from all previous ones and most contemporary examples. Following the logic of liberal institutionalism, for Thies the main reason for this lies in the democratic nature of NATO member states. In his view, an 'Alliance of democracies should be more enduring than an alliance that includes

non-democracies because democracies view one another as natural partners rather than latent rival's (p. x). NATO allies might often disagree over specific issues, but they do not fear each other. The second theme is that precisely because NATO is an alliance of liberal democracies it exhibits 'hidden strengths' that promote problem-solving and self-healing. In combination, these structural characteristics have prevented the collapse of NATO even in times of severe disputes both during the Cold War and after.

To make the case, the book first gives an insight into pre-1939 alliances, showing that these arrangements were characterized by constant rivalries, distrust and fear among allies, which more often than not led to their quick demise. In contrast, Thies' analysis of the creation of the Atlantic alliance demonstrates why NATO is different. Unlike before, the transatlantic allies 'sought to encourage rather than frustrate each other's plans to regain their military strength, to increase rather than to restrict the power of allies, and to push each other forward rather than hold each other back' (p. 124). The unprecedented degree of military integration, suppression of the need to please or confront fellow allies, and mutual interest in a permanent alliance with extensive political and military institutional capacities, allowed for a unique system of collective defence.

The author uses in-depth case studies, including the military balance between East and West (the crisis over Soviet ballistic missiles and the dispute over the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty), out-of-area issues (the 1956 Suez Crisis and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), and non-military issues (the Soviet pipeline crisis and the Bosnian civil war) to argue convincingly that even so each crisis at the time was declared a severe threat to NATO's existence. Yet, Thies is at his best in arguing that such claims were not warranted by facts. While there was indeed significant disagreement among allies in each case, often leading to bitter public shouting contests, the allies nevertheless always managed to bridge their differences. At no point did any one ally seriously consider either weakening or even leaving the alliance. Often overlooked by critics, Thies suggests, it is the internal attributes of an alliance of democracies that will continue to secure the endurance of NATO. 'What sets NATO apart from so many previous alliances is not the absence of disagreements among its members but the ability to act in concert despite disagreements among its members' (p. 296).

Overall, the book is a highly valuable contribution, supporting a more grounded debate on contemporary NATO by providing a detailed historical account the alliance' ability to overcome past 'crises', and by linking alliance theory with the democratic nature of the allies into one convincing explanation for why alliances endure.

However, Thies might have given the 'NATO-in-crisis' literature just too much credit by introducing the collapse (or non-collapse) of the alliance as an indicator for a 'real' crisis. The Atlantic alliance's major issue today and in the past has never been one of collapse, and only a few proponents of realism have maintained that NATO will dissolve in the absence of an existential external threat. Many others have long recognized that the alliance has always been much more than simply a system of collective defence and also pointed to the importance of the

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democratic nature of its members for its ability to readjust. Rather, the challenge for NATO today is to maintain its relevance as a global security actor in light of the divergent views of 28 members and to manage tiers of different interests and threat perceptions. That said, *Why NATO Endures* is a highly recommendable read for policy-makers and scholars alike.

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The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the US Military for Modern Wars. David H. Ucko. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009, pp. 258, $44.95/£34.75 (hardcover), $26.95/£20.75 (paperback).

The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq. Thomas E. Ricks. New York and London: Penguin Books and Allen Lane, 2009, pp. 402, $27.95/£25 (hardcover), $17.00/£12.99 (paperback).

The future of Afghanistan and Iraq is fully in play, but even their mere stabilization is a remarkable accomplishment. For the American military, long accustomed to rapid victory through overwhelming force, this did not come easily. There are few more ironic signs of the changes this took than America's sudden elevation to the rank of global counterinsurgency leader. Less than ten years ago, in John Nagl's classic *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, America was the class dunce and Britain was the star.[1] We know so little about this business; a partial success is enough to proclaim a new trophy winner.

These two books, one by a young academic, the other by an experienced journalist, reveal both the extent of the change and its precariousness. The more scholarly of the two, David Ucko's *The New Counterinsurgency Era*, is a deceptive work. Its restrained, almost flat tone conceals a vigorous attack on the US Department of Defense. With past victories always in mind, the American military built itself around a preferred image of operational art. The blinders of history and institutionalism are profound, but sometimes the criticism seems exaggerated. Efforts by the US Army and especially the Marine Corps to apply counterinsurgency in Vietnam and the 1980s may have been ambivalent, even self-deceptive, but at least they tried. Throughout both books one wonders: where are the Air Force and Navy? Apparently they are simply not part of the process except as supporting actors, vital contributors but not involved in the strategic dialogue.

There has been broad agreement on the outlines of counterinsurgency for about 50 years. Beyond the basic model of isolating insurgents and assuring public security, all agree success cannot be based on template; massive adjustment to local circumstances are essential every time. Some of the clearest evidence for institutional resistance to counterinsurgency comes from widespread agreement on what it is. In lieu of any serious disagreement on what to do, failure to adapt must lie elsewhere.

At the heart of the problem lies what Ucko calls the 'counterinsurgency syndrome', where an unprepared military painfully drops its expectation of battlefield decision and adapts to the realities of irregular warfare, only to return to battlefield assumptions as soon as possible. One of Ucko's services is reminding readers how much work on counterinsurgency was done by the US Army and Marine Corps over the years. Through the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, a series of field manuals on both counterinsurgency and stability operations were published and quickly forgotten. Field manuals do not equal sincerity. 'DoD was at this time fundamentally unconvinced of the importance of learning counterinsurgency' (p. 70). Military leaders agreed, instead, that counterinsurgency was a dangerous diversion of resources, violating the principle of concentration of resources and unity of effort, risking the ability to defeat the USSR and its successors. None found its way into the Army's primary guide to warfare, FM 100-5 *Operations*. The Weinberger-Powell doctrine was a deliberate effort to make sure it never would. As late as the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review, 'the appearance of learning' concealed adamant denial (p. 88).

The most publicized effort to adapt to counterinsurgency during these decades was creation of Special Operations Forces. Ucko is at his best arguing this is better appreciated as official subversion, segmenting unwanted missions so they would not dilute core forces. As late as 2006, SOFs were promoted as way of insulating larger units from counterinsurgency responsibilities, while cooperation with civilian agencies was minimized.

Publication of the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, FM 3-24 of December 2006, was a milestone, but not a conceptual breakthrough. The ideas are older, as the manual readily acknowledges. The novelty was the institutional context. Under the leadership of sympathetic commanders, for the first time, the words mattered for the entire force. Gone was the idea that post-conflict operations were something secondary, that insurgency was something other than major war.

Ucko's analysis is best explaining institutional resistance to adaptation. Explaining what went right in 2006–2007 is much tougher. Ucko believes the decision to fully operationalize FM 3-24 was due to a 'coincidence of disparate events' (p. 112). The switch in strategy and the surge to support it were huge experiments. Under David Petraeus, counterinsurgency was on trial. Luck played a big role; Iraqi Sunnis, disgusted by jihadi zealotry, were receptive to something different. Experimentation and luck do not diminish Petraeus' achievement. He innovated under pressure, but the same is true of all great military leaders.

Ucko argues that 'For the US military, this period of institutional change has the potential of marking a historically significant turning point' (p. 23). Without a better understanding of what went right, though, it is hard to believe the cycle has been broken. Has the US Defense Department finally begun to accept counterinsurgency? Ucko shows that what really happened in 2006–2007 was the start of a new attitude. Institutionalizing that attitude will require much more than a new field manual. The best sign, he shows, is not better writing on counterinsurgency –there really isn't much new to say about that – but replacing existing war planning with counterinsurgency. Re-writing FM 100-5 to stress insurgency would be much more meaningful

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evidence of transformation. Even more meaningful would be reorienting spending away from 20th-century weaponry and into stabilization programs. By that standard, the process has just started.

What went right in Iraq is the question behind Thomas Ricks' *The Gamble*. This is a follow-on to his previous *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, the standard treatment of how things went wrong after the 2003 invasion. His new book is more journalistic than academic, but it is an invaluable guide to the US Army's transition to counterinsurgency in 2006–2007.

Ricks relates transformation of the Iraq war through a series of heroic innovators, most of them senior American Army officers, above all David Petraeus himself. The prominence of these individuals owes something to Ricks' research method, relying heavily on interviews. His approach is far more omnivorous than Bob Woodward's portraits of the Bush administration, casting a net wide enough to catch not just leaders but less conspicuous advisors like David Kilcullen and Emma Sky, as well as mid-level witnesses. One danger of this approach is it tends to emphasize whoever spoke with Ricks the longest. But it makes for a compelling read.

While the major events of 2005–2008 seem clear enough, the causes of the shift are still hazy for Ricks, as they are for Ucko. Counterinsurgency was in the air, but far from inevitable. The prominence of the US Army in this shift is well-known but historically remarkable. As writers like Eliot Cohen have emphasized before, some of the most important wartime strategic decisions have come through civilian intervention, overcoming military opposition. But to call this adaptation Army-led would be misleading. As Ricks shows, if left to normal processes, innovation would not have occurred. There was profound resistance from tradition-bound officers like General George Casey, commander in Iraq in 2004–2006, caught up in the doctrine of force protection, determined to preserve traditional combat methods, and assuming that counterinsurgency basically meant killing insurgents.

Like Ucko, Ricks sees several trends coming together. In his telling, it was the convergence of four simultaneous rebellions that made transformation possible. One strand came from innovative brigade commanders like Sean McFarland and H.R. McMasters, whose personal initiatives in 2005–2006 showed counterinsurgency could work. A second strand came from General David Petraeus and others who created the basis for institution-wide change through preparation of the now-famous *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, released in December 2006. The third strand came from retired General Jack Keane, who convinced President Bush that something had to change. The forth and arguably most decisive force was President Bush himself. Depressed by the deteriorating situation in Iraq and shocked by eroding public support, on election day he finally fired Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, removing a major barrier to adaptation. By November 2006 the White House was defeated and passive, willing to yield leadership of the war to whomever was willing to take it.

The biggest change amounted to a difference in attitude. Compelled to make sense of it all, Ricks concludes that 'The biggest single strategic change in Iraq in 2007, the one that preceded all others and enabled them, may also have been the

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least noticed one: a new sobriety in the mid-set of the US military' (p. 160). The long-time critics took over. Ricks show it was not the Joint Chiefs or Army chiefs who were ready to act, but field commanders in Iraq led by Petraeus who were able to ignore their higher command and assert control.

The tale is far from over. Iraq is far from settled and Afghanistan looks much tougher to resolve. Even if stabilization succeeds, the tale of adaptation in Iraq has enough loose ends to keep scholars busy for a long time. The adoption of counterinsurgency as the American military's dominant approach to war also remains contested. As articulated by traditionalists like Colonel Gian Gentile, the most important task of the American military remains defeating enemy states.[2] Get the current job done, they say, and return to old fundamentals.

Above all, though, Ricks warns that there is much we still do not understand about counterinsurgency. The basic approach remains unchanged from the early 1960s. But every case is different and precedents are potential traps. The method remains more attitude than recipe. The attitude of counterinsurgency may be essential to success, moreover, but no one claims it guarantees anything. Success requires identification of distinctive factors in each situation, flexible goals and operational adaptation. As developed here, counterinsurgency is an anti-doctrine. Propagating its attitudes will require much broader institutional reform.

Even if it is more attitude than plan, counterinsurgency appears to be gaining momentum. In a March 2010 speech that did not specifically advocate strategic reorientation around counterinsurgency, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized more the need for strategic adjustment. Repudiating the all-or-nothing simplicity of Weinberger-Powell, he accepted the indecisiveness of military force, and endorsed the tactical restraint of people-oriented operations.[3] But the armed services remain divided. Should the US Air Force or Navy assert greater strategic leadership, state rivals and antiseptic counterterrorism are likely to return to the fore.

Other international actors appear to be adapting to similar learning experiences of their own. The rise of counterinsurgency and stabilization coincide with more nuanced appreciation of conflict resolution among international agencies. Indeed, counterinsurgency has become less distinguishable from conflict resolution. Both stress the centrality of the people, the importance of assuring their security, appreciating the uniqueness of every conflict and the limits of transferring winning formulas from one situation to the next.[4] The differences between the two seem to be mostly institutional and especially their attitudes toward violence: counterinsurgency is led by armed forces and assumes greater violence by all sides; conflict resolution is led by international organizations and development agencies, and has much less acceptance of violence. But as with all things in this nuanced field, such distinctions usually are exaggerated. One difference is less arguable: counterinsurgency tends to be much better funded.

The greatest weakness of both books is their failure to look beyond the armed forces. Resistance to counterinsurgency did not start with the military. It also reflects widespread attitudes toward war in American society, especially distaste for military restraint. Blame for the failures of 2001–2002 and 2003 has to be shared with the

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White House and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. But a complete explanation of the American preference for offensive operations, rapid decision, and discomfort with counterinsurgency has to consider their cultural roots.

While the American armed forces may have begun to adapt, there is much less evidence American society has. Can a major institution overcome societal predispositions? In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the military remains under enormous pressure to get out. Counterinsurgency has been used not so much to create long-term stability as a decent interval. When a smart politician like Sarah Palin continues to win applause by demanding victory over the terrorists, talk of military transformation may be wishful thinking. Instead of transformation, we may be witnessing the birth of unprecedented tension between American armed forces and its people, with very unpredictable political consequences.

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NOTES

1. John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).
2. Gian P. Gentile, 'Let's Build an Army to Win *All* Wars', *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2009), pp. 27–33.
3. Speech by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, 3 March 2010; and Thom Shanker, 'Joint Chiefs Chairman Readjusts Principles on Use of Force', *New York Times*, 4 March 2010.
4. Mats Berdal, *Building Peace after War* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009).

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