

Book Reviews

War Crimes and Just War by Larry May. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 357 pp., \$29.99.

Larry May sets out to lay the normative foundations for international humanitarian law in his latest, truly thoughtful, and easily accessible book, *War Crimes and Just War*. While he lays out the book to support what he says in the first sentence that he intends to do, what comes out more clearly than a foundation is a normative argument for humane treatment of your opponent in war, especially if he is your prisoner.

May grounds himself in what he calls a secularist and minimalist version of natural law. The problem with this grounding is that by secularizing and minimizing natural law, he has to determine which elements of the broader law to use as his foundation and which to leave out. Thus, he loses some measure of credibility in claiming universality in norms. That does not mean that he is incorrect. Far from it. But the problem when dealing with normative vice empirical issues is that you set yourself up for the criticism of inconsistency if you do not firmly establish that your normative claims—such as the importance of humane treatment—are truly universal.

May's primary foundational grounding for determining culpability is in the concepts of humane treatment and honor. Thus, he contends that war crimes are not necessarily crimes against humanity but against humaneness. And it is here that the reader should encounter a problem. It is difficult to measure variance from something unless we can define that from which we need to know how far we vary. By defining *humaneness* as a "simple matter of charity" (p. 71) it seems that May's own definition is fraught with ambiguity—even in our own country and culture—let alone when discussing fighting between cultures. Likewise, by his defining *honor* as the sense of being morally superior and as the "motive to follow the rules as enhanced beyond what is true for the normal person" (p. 32), we are left with trying to describe multiple concepts within a single definition.

If military professionals or the civilians who command them are to draw any benefit from this work, it is certainly to be found in May's treatment of individual dependency and how that concept relates to distinction, proportionality, and discrimination. First, May methodically defines the relationship between combatants and noncombatants as one of dependency, going far beyond Walzer and the comfort zone of even the most liberally minded US officers. He argues that when one person renders another dependent, the former has special responsibilities towards the latter. He takes this argument of dependency, which he fully develops with respect to prisoners, even farther with fielded forces.

May disagrees with Walzer's distinction of threats and, consequently, what is allowable in war. Where Walzer posits the legitimacy of attacking the naked soldier who is bathing, based on his belonging to a group that is a legitimate target and that will return to the front to fight, May argues that such group distinction is unjustifiable and that we must break down the decision to the individual level. He reasons that because the naked soldier is not a threat, he is dependent upon the attacker for mercy. Just as we would expect soldiers to "spare civilian persons," May expects soldiers to spare those who are not a danger to us at a given time (pp. 110–12) as well as those who are vulnerable to our attack without the ability to render us vulnerable in return (pp. 172–76).

If air forces were to follow May's positions as doctrine, then the attacks against barracks a hundred miles from Kosovo in the initial nights of Operation Allied Force would be deemed violations of international humanitarian law. The entire face of warfare would have to change as tactics and strategies which have become accepted through centuries, from King Arthur riding through the Gaelic Confederation camp in the night while they slept, to "plinking" tanks well behind the lines during the first Gulf War, to the use of stealth and standoff weapons to minimize an aircrew's risk while attacking a target.

From the principle of distinction, that is, who is allowed to be attacked, follows the principle of necessity, that is, what we may attack. May posits that first "the military objective must be normatively compelling in light of the overall objectives of the war [and that] there must be no other, less objectionable tactics available to achieve the same objective" (p. 208). It seems to me that May's understanding of necessity is very close to what the US military teaches its officers today. This brings us to his discussion of proportionality, which will once again challenge the US officer.

American military officers certainly understand the doctrine of double effect, such as when May argues for restricting tactics to equate them to what is to be achieved (p. 219). But May goes farther than that. He proposes that the tactics chosen must minimize suffering and promote human values, force soldiers to stop and think before they act (p. 221), and never allow us to weigh the lives of our soldiers as greater than the lives of any others (p. 225). Such rules, if followed as best practices and principles, could easily render any military force unusable in most situations. While this may be what some would argue could make a better world, it is not a practical set of guidelines for those professional officers given the Huntingtonian task of faithfully carrying out orders that they oppose.

It is a good thing to discuss where standards ought to lie and to try to define standards of right and wrong more precisely. It is also good to try to determine what a "normal" person is with respect to targeting and how many noncombatants are worth a particular objective. But it is also deeply troubling to think of ourselves as criminals for taking the opportunity to kill the enemy commander prior to the battle commencing during a war or to attack a target with standoff weapons to keep the aircrew out of reach of air defenses. Yet, while many officers discuss what is good and right, humane and honorable in other areas of life

aside from strategy and tactics, they find it difficult to extend that same reasoning to military operations and enemy soldiers. Perhaps May's book, if read and discussed in professional circles, could help us to bridge that gap.

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Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy by Frederick W. Kagan. Encounter Books, 2006, 432 pp., \$29.95.

Politicians and soldiers are still thinking in terms of the old paradigm . . . whilst the enemy and the battle [have] changed. As a result the utility of the effort is minimal: the force . . . is not delivering the required results, nor indeed any result that is in proportion to its assumed capabilities.

—Gen Rupert Smith

General Smith captures the fact that time and the “paradoxical logic of strategy” bring new enemies and new tactics to contend with.¹ Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, however, American military thought has equated capability, and its handmaiden technology, to good strategy. This is nowhere more starkly pronounced than in network-centric warfare (NCW) and the revolution in military affairs (RMA).² Today's critics argue for adaptive strategy rather than for unfocused capability, and Frederick W. Kagan is important among the critics. His hard-hitting book, *Finding the Target*, generously reviewed by the *New York Times*, the *Armed Forces Journal*, and *Foreign Affairs*, attempts to reorientate the strategic debate from operational and tactical excellence to how military power might best serve political aims. The book fleshes out the argument that many of the troubles plaguing the military stem from efforts to “transform” the armed forces by shifting to high-tech weapons.

Kagan has impeccable neoconservative credentials. His father is the neoconservative classicist Donald Kagan, and his brother, Robert, is cofounder of the Project for the New American Century—all have written on the need for a stronger and more interventionist US military. Frederick Kagan is a graduate of Yale University and has taught at the US Military Academy. Currently a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, he is a rising star among national security advisors and, as someone who has the ear of the president, deserves attention.

Kagan begins by paraphrasing Hedley Bull in reminding us that “war is the organized, purposeful use of violence to achieve a political objective” (p. xvi).³ This restatement of Clausewitz's more famous dictum is central to his argument that in a complex strategic landscape, war's instruments must serve policy and not institutional preferences, a problem that “has bedeviled airpower theorists virtually from the birth of air forces” (p. 397).⁴ Kagan posits that the American military successfully transformed itself after the humiliation of Vietnam with the all-volunteer Army and a step approach to the upgrading of personnel and weapons, but then fell captive to dreams of dominance through technology alone. This concentration

on raw power, especially airpower, courts disaster by losing sight of the human component of warfare.⁵

Kagan's pitch is that successful change accrues when the military develops specific responses to clearly identifiable threats. He is blunt about airpower in Vietnam; it was a disastrous failure because of a rigid adherence to nuclear war concepts rather than to the demands of contingency operations. Kagan argues that the subsequent preparations for multiple scenarios, mixed with intellectual rigor, a definite Soviet threat, and incremental technological advances, ensured a better-balanced force (pp. 33–35). AirLand Battle (ALB) doctrine is a case in point, where a nontechnologically deterministic outlook “balanced military power” (pp. 57–69). Kagan's subsequent heavy plodding through ALB doctrine, “center of gravity” arguments, and retired Air Force colonels John R. Boyd's and John A. Warden's theories lay the foundation for his following the “people, not technology, win wars” hypothesis.

His analysis calls airpower theorists to task, as his treatment of Boyd's and Warden's theories is a case of damning airpower by faint praise. On Boyd, he concludes that the theory fails to account for the reality that “the disaggregation of the enemy system” is “likely to be fleeting rather than permanent” and that ground forces would be required to secure victory from any initial airpower successes (p. 112). Kagan then finesses Warden's theory with the simple question, “What happens if the enemy does not surrender to such an attack [targeting against the enemy's “rings”]? The answer is that the enemy “attempts to recover from the shock,” with the implication that ground troops must follow through on what airpower started (p. 141). Kagan does not dismiss airpower, but he is hinting that it needs grounding within a holistic and synergistic framework, which has ground power as the ultimate guarantor of victory—modern war, in essence, is about direct control.⁶

Kagan sees the Pentagon's vision of war as devoid of human factors and shaped by technological innovation, especially information technology, rather than specific threats. This, he argues, is the primary cause for the problems in today's Iraq (p. x). He credits ALB and the Maritime Strategy success to technological developments “just visible on the horizon,” rather than “off-the-shelf” and “leap-ahead” technologies, in answering the geostrategic challenges posed by the Soviets (p. 71). This is another subtle dig at the Air Force's preference for cutting-edge-and-beyond technology. Kagan wants doctrinal thinking and technology procurement to meet today's geopolitical and geostrategic ends, not deductive and institutional impressions of future war.

Kagan argues that after the Gulf War, military transformation was liberated “from the tyranny of a clear enemy,” and this morphed war into “a targeting drill,” where “the only systems in the future that would matter would be those that improved America's ability to put metal precisely on target” (pp. 72–73). This focus on the “minutiae of technology” privileges the primacy of destruction over planning for political outcomes (p. 253). The result is that concepts such as RMA, NCW, “Rapid Dominance” operations, and “shock and awe” led George W. Bush's administration into a transformation agenda where the means became the ends, despite the presence of an uncooperative adversary (pp. 265–81).⁷

Kagan sees this as anathema since today's problem is not one of targeting accuracy and ubiquitous knowledge but of solving concrete problems facing the military (p. 360). Kagan's advice is to stop looking for technological and doctrinal nirvana unsullied by political and practical realities, as military capability only has utility if it serves political objectives.⁸ In effect, in a world of multiple and continuing threats, the nexus between strategy and the "object of the war" needs restoring—"toys" and abstract concepts must take a backseat to the concept of strategic utility.⁹

Kagan has a point—a point that Airmen almost genetically prefer to ignore. The Air Force, since inception, has concentrated on aircraft and technology.¹⁰ Critics argue that the focus on "breaking things" and "killing people" puts targeting on a par with strategy. Kagan is adamant that war is not just about this and that "it is purposeful violence to achieve a political goal" (p. 358). He indirectly accuses airpower advocates' rose-tinted military and strategic thinking of bedeviling policy's aim by erroneously conflating war with striking targets (p. 359). The suggestion is that airpower's fixation with gadgets and possible futures, rather than the here and now of regime-change wars, is a Darwinian dead end if left unaddressed by Airmen (pp. 364–73).

Kagan has an agenda. He aims to redirect military and political thought along strategic lines that *serve* the interests of the nation from a neoconservative perspective. Kagan states that threat-based planning better meets strategic aims than capabilities-based planning, and his excoriating attack on the absence of well-grounded military thought in the nineties lays bare the folly of pursuing operational and tactical excellence as ends rather than means. Kagan wants you to think long and hard as to *why* certain equipment and concepts are needed, and Airmen are in his sights. He finishes with an analysis of the threats to come and how best to meet them, calling for a huge increase in the Army and Marines by some 200,000 troops (pp. 386–87). Kagan's cure is well grounded in strategic-utility theory and current analysis.¹¹ Essentially Clausewitzian, it sees war as a social phenomenon rather than as a targeting problem. Abstract theories of how to bring down enemies through targeting sit uncomfortably with political realities such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Air Force's preference for technological excellence and its unwavering belief that it holds the key to strategic success invites accusations of irrelevance. Kagan makes it clear that focusing on internal transformations "are unlikely to succeed" in providing strategic coinage. Air Force advocates need to think hard about how airpower adds to the nation's current and near-future fights. To claim that the F-22 can beat all comers is operationally exciting but strategically irrelevant—it is the contingency that gives any platform strategic significance. The former needs to be better tied to the latter. The challenge is for air strategy to relate to grand and surface strategies in the service of policy and not the institution. Kagan proposes that we need to think backwards from the likely future fights and then determine the force structure required (pp. 343–45). Results from this analysis may mirror today's Air Force structure, or it may not—either way, the expended intellectual endeavor will better match airpower resources to strategic utility and provide unequivocal, evidentiary, and empirical justification for requested resources.¹²

Kagan's book is not perfect as it suffers from a biased analytical perspective and errors of fact, such as omitting the sacrifice of the F-111 crew in the raid on Libya (p. 100).¹³ Technology has, however, always had a bigger role than ideas for the Air Force, which has invariably led to visions of airpower's utility outrunning reality.¹⁴ This book throws down the gauntlet for Air Force advocates to justify their budget share with reference to strategic utility rather than with a preferred image of war. The book is a provocative and timely attempt to reinvigorate the intellectual debate on what it means to have strategic utility in an age of regime-change war. It is a must-read for airpower thinkers wishing to take up the challenge.

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Notes

1. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 7; and Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987).

2. Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.

3. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 178.

4. For a discussion of images of war and service masks, see Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87; and Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

5. Barry Gewen, "War Chronicle," *New York Times*, 17 Dec 2006, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C04E5D81731F934A25751C1A9609C8B63>.

6. See J. C. Wylie's comment that the "*ultimate determinant in war is the man on the scene with the gun*" (emphasis in original) in *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 72.

7. Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

8. *Ibid.*, 90–99.

9. Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), chap. 1.

10. Builder, *Masks of War*, 67–74.

11. To name but a fraction of the literature: Clausewitz's *On War*; Gray's *Explorations in Strategy*; Smith's *Utility of Force*; and Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley's "Introduction: On Strategy," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, eds. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

12. This does not override the fact that any strategic assessment of future conflict is subjective, however exhaustive the analysis, and therefore open to alternative interpretation.

13. For an excellent detailed account of the raid, see Joseph T. Stanik's *El Dorado Canyon: Reagan's Undeclared War with Qaddafi* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003).

14. David MacIsaac, "Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, eds. Peter Paret, Gordon Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 624–47.

Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy by Zeev Maoz. University of Michigan Press, 2006, 728 pp., \$45.00.

While there are numerous books on Israel's foreign and security policy, this offering by Zeev Maoz is surely the most comprehensive and analytical of them all. Maoz, currently professor of political science at the University of California at Davis and former faculty member at several Israeli institutions, is a prolific contributor to discussions about Israeli security matters along with more general works on war and conflict. This book may stand as the magnum opus of his distinguished career.

Maoz wrote this book to address what he claims is an uncritical attitude in Israel and beyond regarding Israeli security doctrine and practice. Given that Israel is the most conflict-prone state in modern history, Maoz argues that it is essential to question some of the most basic assumptions about Israeli security policy. This is particularly the case regarding the tragically commonplace Israeli assumption that war is the most appropriate instrument for dealing with intractable foes. However, Maoz finds that none of the wars that Israel initiated (1956, 1967, and the Lebanon wars) were wars of necessity.

For Maoz, the 1956 Suez war originated because of obsessive Israeli fears about Gamal Abdel Nasser, though the vast majority of guerilla attacks against Israel came from Palestinians in Jordan. War planning also showed Israeli desires to remake the Middle East (annexing Lebanon south of the Litani River and combining Jordan and Iraq, with Palestinian refugees settled there), along with a belief that the Sinai war would make Israel more secure because no Egyptian regime could be worse than Nasser's. However, Israeli calculations were incorrect by a wide margin, and Nasser actually strengthened his position by claiming "victory."

Many have advanced explanations for the 1967 war, including, for Idith Zertal (*Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 2005), the Eichmann trial ("beyond that [Egyptian] border thousands of Eichmann's [*sic*] lie in wait") (p. 110), the diversionary theory of war (internal problems in all the belligerent states), water access issues, crisis management, and the false Soviet warnings to the Arabs about an Israeli attack. Maoz argues that the roots of the 1967 war were in the 1950s—for instance, Israel's nuclear weapons project and Israel's bellicosity in 1956. While Egypt became increasingly reckless as the crisis grew, Maoz holds that "Syria did not pose any serious strategic threat to Israel" (p. 110). The war came anyway, ultimately contributing to continuing regional insecurity. That came home to Israel in the 1973 war, when a combined Arab attack surprised Israel and killed over 3,000 Israeli soldiers in a conflict that Maoz claims was largely a consequence of Israeli diplomatic failure. While the Israelis did ultimately prevail in the 1973 war, the attack itself shocked Israel's system, and that shock would soon be magnified by Israel's incursion into Lebanon. Maoz claims that this ultimately disastrous operation occurred because of Ariel Sharon's manipulation of Prime Minister Menachim Begin's cabinet to

accept the Israeli Lebanon incursion as a part of a greater effort to perpetuate Israeli control of the occupied territories and to destroy the PLO, despite that organization's relative restraint on the Lebanese border. The operation unraveled because of the failure to anticipate negative developments (the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, the pro-Israeli Lebanese president, for example, or the Sabra-Shatilla refugee camp massacre). For Maoz, because of leadership hubris and miscalculation, Israel accomplished none of its key objectives, a conclusion that echoes in the wake of the 2006 conflict with Hezbollah.

Maoz also considers Israeli doctrines on limited force, which he argues both deterred and provoked neighboring Arabs into war—even though Israeli leaders knew that Arab regimes had not orchestrated guerilla raids against Israel for fear of Israeli reprisals. Doctrine aside, Israel was rarely able to control limited applications of force, which too often escalated into major conflicts. The Israel Defense Force (IDF) was wholly unprepared for both Palestinian intifadas and thus inflicted disproportionate casualties among Palestinian civilians, even though Israeli leaders knew that the infliction of such casualties was ineffective as a deterrent.

One of Israel's more controversial defense policy areas is its nuclear weapons capability, which Israel has kept opaque for various reasons. Maoz argues that if Israel's nuclear capacity were intended to deter adversaries, it has clearly failed to do so—witness the 1973 war, the various Palestinian uprisings, and the 2006 Hezbollah war (which came after publication). The other paradox about the Israeli nuclear program is that the more successful Israel is at hiding its existence, the less credible its deterrent effect.

Maoz also highlights Israeli efforts to interfere in Arab politics, starting with a failed effort to discredit Nasser's regime through terrorist attacks inside Egypt. Israel also tried to foment rebellions in Sudan and in Kurdish areas of Iraq against Ba'athist regimes and failed in both efforts, as did Israeli efforts to counter the PLO in the occupied territories by supporting conservative Islamists (the forerunner of Hamas). Peace-building efforts by Israel also came up short, according to Maoz, marked by a constant risk-adverse approach in dealing with potential or real adversaries. Starting with a failure to respond to Syrian peace initiatives in 1949, Maoz charts one missed opportunity after another—Egypt in 1953–54, Syria again in 1996, and the failure to reach accords with the Palestinians and the Syrians (again) during the Clinton administration. In the Palestinian case, Maoz notes that while most of the blame for failure has been heaped on Yasir Arafat, Israel must share the blame because of the continuing growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the withholding of PLO finances.

Maoz argues that some of Israel's security problems stem from the dominance of the security community in making key decisions about the use of force with little Knesset or Supreme Court oversight. The consequence for Israel is that, for Maoz, even though Israel “won” most of its wars (due largely to the incompetence of its enemies), no war has made it more secure.

This is an extraordinary book, thoroughly researched (though Israeli and Arab archives were unfortunately unavailable) and convincingly argued. It will remain a standard milepost work on Israeli security for decades to come.

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Breeding Bin Ladens: America, Islam, and the Future of Europe by Zachary Shore. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, 240 pp., \$25.00.

"No one is born a terrorist; terrorists are bred." That is the thesis of the book *Breeding Bin Ladens* by Zachary Shore, an associate professor of national security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School and a research scholar at the Institute of European Studies and the Institute of International Studies (University of California). Realizing the potential significance of the revival of religious fundamentalism among European Muslims, Shore sets out to document their perspective of the West and how this perspective is shaping future generations of European Muslims. His concise narrative revolves around interviews he conducted across Europe with Muslim immigrants. Unfortunately, it lacks the substantial analysis necessary to make it truly insightful and all too clearly projects his bias.

Throughout the book, Shore talks of a "volatile European fault line" where Western values, American policies, and perceived failures—especially as they concern Israel—clash with a growing number of European Muslims who feel disenchanted with their adopted countries due to many cultural and economic forces. Much of this disenchantment stems from Muslim views of America, and it certainly could not be argued that American appeal in the Muslim world is low.

The culprit, according to Shore, is what he calls *ambi-Americanism*. He asserts that the majority of European Muslims are not anti-American, as this would imply being against America in its entirety—its policies, people, and products. From other studies and his own research, he finds that the vast majority of Muslims are more accurately described as ambivalent towards America insofar as they are drawn by some aspects while repulsed by others.

This ambi-Americanism is the foundation of Western disenchantment. Compounding this is a feeling of deep alienation from European society by Muslim immigrants. Many, if not most, immigrants suffered from a tremendous cultural adjustment that too often left deep hurts and angers that carry on to subsequent generations of Muslims. This failure to fully integrate into European society set a course for alienation and possible extremism, especially as the younger generation of European Muslims is being targeted by those seeking to fuel pan-Islamism. Add to this the Western response to stories of Muslim female genital circumcision, honor killings, terror attacks, and a general belief that Muslims are opposed to a free, democratic society, and we have all the materials needed for a potentially devastating "clash of civilizations," to quote Samuel Huntington.

Through it all, Shore presents a compelling read and good starting point for discussion of why some—and arguably most—European Muslims feel adrift in

the West. Unfortunately, there are significant weaknesses in Shore's argument. First, he offers only a superficial discussion of the issues. Throughout his numerous interviews, he offers no substantial questioning of the participants. For example, one of the men he speaks with discusses that in Islam, Muslims feel connected to each other on a very profound, spiritual level in which the suffering of one Muslim is felt by all Muslims. In this context, the man says that it is understandable why an extremist turns to terrorism when confronted with images of the Iraqi War. Shore leaves that at face value, failing to explore this belief in context of the Shia-Sunni conflict, insurgent attacks on Iraqi citizens, violent clashes between Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza, or even the Anfal campaigns of Saddam Hussein.

Additionally, Shore makes great leaps of logic. For instance, he speaks of the poverty gap in the United States and how this is viewed by European Muslims as an example of American social injustice, which is allegedly used to justify hatred of America and the West. But rationally, it seems facetious to say that the 9/11 hijackers, or the terrorists responsible for the London and Madrid bombings, cared about what the average American salary was compared to that of Bill Gates. Income gaps are not unique to America and certainly are prevalent in the Muslim world. Consider, for example, that in 2002 bin Laden had an estimated worth of \$50–300 million; there also exists obvious economic disparities throughout Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Finally, his biases resound through the book. Shore discusses at length the anti-Muslim comments made by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, while ignoring equally heated and bombastic rhetoric from Imams and outspoken Muslim fundamentalists. While being quick to sermonize on the need for respectful dialogue from non-Muslims about Islam, he makes no similar condemnation of Muslim violence. Moreover, he expresses a clear bias against Israel. Shore frequently uses inflammatory words like "Zionist oppression" and Israeli "murder [of] innocent Muslim men, women, and children." While this may be the opinion of those he interviews, he adopts this rhetoric as if it were his own.

This leaves very real concern as to his underlying motivations for his arguments, especially in light of the fact that his recommendations require change only from the West. For Shore, Europe and America must better accommodate Muslim sensitivities. In contrast, he expresses no expectation that Muslim immigrants take some personal responsibility for their integration into Western society. There is no similar need for them to understand Western sensitivities as they pertain to a free, liberal society or how the actions of some radical Muslims can shape Western perspectives of Islam.

Despite these criticisms, *Breeding Bin Ladens* is a worthwhile read for those interested in strategy and policy. It provides a useful framework from which to begin—but not to end—exploring the culture clash between Western and Islamic values. This dialogue is vital if we are to maneuver the dangers of globalization. Without this exchange of ideas, people of opposing views cannot possibly find common ground, and there can be no growth of democratic ideals or liberal

values of human rights and pluralism. And in the end, this is what we need in order to peacefully embrace the challenges of globalism and better integrate the varied facets of our global society.

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The Last Crusade: Americanism and the Islamic Reformation by Michael A. Palmer. Potomac Books, Inc., 273 pp., \$26.95.

Works on history may be divided into two broad categories. On the one hand are what might be called *descriptive* histories. These are primarily expository in nature and aim at simply recounting past events and explaining interrelationships and developments. On the other hand are those works that could be termed *pre-scriptive* histories. In contrast to the “scholarly” set, works of the latter sort are less concerned with history for its own sake than with its significance to contemporary affairs and tend to be more explicit in promoting a particular perspective on or interpretation of the past. While objectivity plays a greater or lesser role in all historical writing, some histories are clearly more “activist” in intention than others. Michael Palmer’s *The Last Crusade* clearly fits into the latter category.

Palmer, formerly with the Naval Historical Center in Washington, DC, earned a doctoral degree at Temple University and currently serves as chair of the Department of History at East Carolina University in North Carolina. As a professor in the Maritime Studies program, Palmer’s previously published works have focused on US naval history and other aspects of military affairs.

His foremost concern here is twofold: first, that the Muslim world is in need of modernization and that progress in this has been stymied by beliefs and practices hardwired into Islam—and are not, as many claim, the result of Western imperialism. As Palmer puts it, “A once-great Islamic culture has failed the test of modernity [and] has sought solace in a politically correct victimhood” that blames the West for its own inadequacies (p. 2). “Modernization,” Palmer points out, “inevitably leads to secularization.” But, at least in the Islamist view, “secularization conflicts with the central primacy of Islam in a Muslim’s life” (p. 4). As a consequence, “Islam [has] become a relic of the past, or a less than viable alternative to traditional Western liberalism” (p. 10).

This leads to Palmer’s second concern, namely, that the West must come to grips with the fact that it now finds itself facing a real enemy in a real war—not mere criminals who can be dealt with by law enforcement or intelligence services alone. As Palmer puts it in a statement headlining his own Weblog, “The Real War,” his worry is that “there are too many people in the West who refuse to see that we are involved in what is a real and seminal struggle against Jihadists” and that “they must be understood for what they are . . . not freedom fighters, nor terrorists, [but] . . . Islamic warriors bent on restoring a global khalifate through armed struggle” (<http://majpalmer.com>).

Palmer presents an extended overview of developments in pre-Islamic societies, followed by the birth and spread of Islam, the rise and slow decline of Ottoman power, and the genesis of political Islam from its origins in the first half of the twen-

tieth century to its present manifestation in al-Qaeda. Drawing on the works of Bernard Lewis, Richard Bulliet, Martin Sick, and other experts in the field, Palmer posits that “the political unity that Islam offered” (p. 37) was responsible for both the initial rapid spread of Islam and the subsequent gradual stagnation of Muslim societies. As progress in the West began to quicken, starting in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, Islamic societies increasingly slipped behind, resulting over time in disparities in both material prosperity and the means of projecting power. Jihadism issued from both the resentments resulting from this growing disparity and the accompanying encroachments of Western ways (i.e., modernization). In reaction, jihadists called for a revival of what they believed was the traditional source of Muslim strength: their Islamic faith—with the aim of freeing the world from Western control. To those in the West who await an Islamic Reformation, Palmer warns that “it has already arrived and its face is that of Osama bin Laden” (p. 178), a purifier of Muslim faith similar to the Protestant Reformation’s John Calvin.

Against the universalism of Islam—especially its extremist Islamist/jihadist forms—Palmer opposes the equally universalist creed of “Americanism,” the penultimate product of Western advancement, “a civic religion that combines political and economic pluralism, secularism, and the expansion of human liberties” (p. 234). Comparing the current contest to others that pit fundamentally different ways of life against one another in extended conflicts, such as the “Indian Wars,” Palmer warns that the longer the struggle goes on, the greater the chance that the West will “shed its self-imposed restrictions and adopt an ever-more brutal and unlimited response,” leading to a downward spiral of violence (p. 246). The only way of “avoiding such a scenario,” he says, “is to end the war against the jihadists as quickly as possible” (p. 246). But he offers no suggestions as to how this might be accomplished—other than to call for Western solidarity.

While Palmer is correct to remind those living in the West that they have every right to defend their way of life and their values from assault, he fails to clearly distinguish modernization from Westernization, suggesting that the Muslim world must abandon fundamental elements of its identity or else continue to nurture the resentments born of stagnation. More importantly, he fails to sufficiently recognize the degree to which fundamentalism and extremism are expressions of an internal conflict within Islam over its relationship to modernity and have little to do with the West, *per se*. Thus, he fails to offer ways for Muslims to avoid the pitfalls of the past and the temptations of jihadism while also remaining true to their faith. If our goal is to modernize Islamic societies, then the key lies more in how we meet that challenge—and less in how we respond to the immediate jihadist threat. Unity among those in the Western world is well and good. But we must decide what we are unified in support of. Solidarity without purpose is merely empty posing.

Michael Prince

*Author, Rally Round the Flag, Boys!
South Carolina and the Confederate Flag*

The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World by Rupert Smith.
Knopf, 2007, 448 pp., \$30.00.

Since its publication in Britain in 2005, Gen Sir Rupert Smith's *The Utility of Force* has garnered effusive praise from a large and eclectic group of commentators, ranging from Sir John Keegan to the *Daily Show's* Jon Stewart. Even some academic reviewers, normally more stingy in their dispersal of accolades, have likened the British general to Carl von Clausewitz. Such acclaim should be taken with a grain of salt. Compared to the dense and timeless insights of *On War*, Smith's book comes across as a more meandering and prescriptive analysis of a particular moment in the history of warfare. Nonetheless, it contains some incisive and provocative analysis of contemporary conflict and serves as an example of how to think rigorously about military strategy and its relationship to politics.

Smith's insights are based on a broad range of recent military experiences. He led a British division in the Gulf War of 1991 and served as commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia in 1995. From 1996 to 1998 he served as General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland, and from 1998 to 2001 he was NATO deputy supreme allied commander Europe. Based on these experiences, he observes in the introduction that armed forces today are frequently asked to perform roles much different from those for which they have traditionally prepared. As a result, they have often struggled to achieve the objectives desired by their political leaders. To use Smith's terminology, the force they have applied has had little utility. The book is an attempt to explain why.

Smith develops his argument in a Clausewitzian manner. Part one of the book chronicles the development of what he calls the paradigm of interstate industrial war. Initiated by Napoléon and refined by American and German politicians and generals during the nineteenth century, this form of warfare culminated in 1945. In part two, Smith focuses on "people's wars," which he identifies as the antithesis to interstate industrial war. He traces their history from the Spanish uprising of 1808 through the partisan campaigns of the Second World War. Smith then identifies a synthesis in a new paradigm of conflict that he calls *war amongst the people*. Although it first emerged after 1945, this paradigm became fully evident following the end of the Cold War.

War amongst the people is characterized by six interconnected trends. First, the objectives of conflicts have become less absolute, with armies fighting to achieve general conditions rather than specific and tangible ends like the destruction of the enemy force and the overthrow of the opposing state. Second, armed forces conduct operations literally in the midst of civilian society and figuratively in front of it, via the global media. Third, given the often intangible objectives for which they are fought, conflicts tend to be timeless. Fourth, Western armies increasingly fight in ways that minimize losses to their own forces. Fifth, armies are required to put old weapons to new uses. Finally, the actors in conflicts are often nonstate entities such as terrorist groups or multinational coalitions. Overall, war amongst the people is

characterized by the continual intermingling of military and political activities. It also sees ongoing fluctuation between political confrontation and outright conflict.

According to Smith, the limited effectiveness of Western militaries since 1991 reflects their continued focus on interstate industrial war despite the emergence of a new paradigm of conflict. Part three of the book explains this problem and offers recommendations based in part on Smith's own experiences in Bosnia. Smith emphasizes the importance of managing multinational forces carefully and maintaining effective relations with both the media and the civilian population amongst which military forces operate. He notes that in war amongst the people, intelligence regarding enemy intentions is at least as important as information regarding enemy capabilities. Above all, he argues that the use of military force will not be effective unless it is combined with political, diplomatic, and other tools and situated within an overarching strategy to achieve a clearly defined objective. In his words, "The strategic object cannot now be achieved through the singular use of massive military force alone; in most cases military force can only achieve tactical results, and to have more than passing value these must be stitched into a greater plan" (p. 378).

Smith could have made his case more succinctly. His detailed explanations of interstate industrial war and people's war are not new, and they reveal an uncertain grasp of military history and theory. For example, Smith's discussion of the First World War focuses almost entirely on Britain and Germany and ignores a wealth of recent scholarship on British tactical innovation. In discussing Vietnam, Smith implies that it was John F. Kennedy, rather than Dwight Eisenhower, who first dispatched military advisors to support the Diem regime. In addition, despite the influence of Clausewitz on *The Utility of Force*, Smith is not particularly careful in his definition and application of Prussian ideas. He reduces the "remarkable trinity" of violence and hatred, the play of chance, and rational calculation to the simpler but less accurate "people, army, and state." Smith then applies this stripped-down version of the trinity in ways that would likely have bewildered Clausewitz himself. In discussing German unification, for example, he argues that the army "was the dominant element. It used the people to create the state, since conscription was as much a tool for nation building as a way for manning the army" (p. 92). These shortcomings do not undermine Smith's central thesis significantly, but neither do they lend credibility to it. Moreover, they may mislead readers unversed in the history of modern war.

A shorter book focusing specifically on contemporary conflict would likely have delivered Smith's argument with greater force. Nonetheless, in its present form the book is replete with insights into the problems facing Western militaries today. Smith's concept of war amongst the people serves as a powerful lens through which to view the current American predicament in Iraq. Some scholars might argue that military force retains more strategic potency than Smith allows. Few, however, would contest his assertion that it must be coordinated more effectively with other tools of power in order to prevail in the conflicts of the twenty-first century.

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Virginia at War, 1862 edited by William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr.
University Press of Kentucky, 2007, 243 pp., \$35.00.

Each year hundreds of new books are published on the Civil War alone, with only a select few worthy of high praise. One such work, the vast undertaking of Civil War historians William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr., is worthy of such praise. Eight eminent historians contributed articles to *Virginia at War, 1862*, touching on topics including Virginia's industry during the war, hospital system in Richmond, home front, and supply system.

John S. Salmon's fine essay on land operations profoundly states that 1862 became a turning point for civilians in Virginia, with many realizing that the war would become a "bloodletting unprecedented in American history" (p. 13). During a five-week period, Brig Gen Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson—with his 17,000-man foot cavalry—defeated three various Federal armies, inflicting roughly 7,000 casualties while only suffering approximately 2,500. The realization to both sides would come on 13 December with the Federal attack at Fredericksburg by Maj Gen Ambrose Burnside. With General Jackson on the right and Maj Gen James Longstreet on the left at Marye's Heights, General Burnside's Federals entered a virtual "meat grinder" and suffered over 12,653 casualties. This final battle of 1862, a Confederate victory, produced the first occurrence of heavy shelling and major looting of a city in the South (p. 47).

Not only had Virginians realized that the war could rage longer but Confederate authorities also came to this conclusion in the fall of 1862. Wilson points to the Confederate Congress's ending of the commutation system on 8 October 1862 as proof. Congress established 2,000 cobblers and detailed them to the government for the manufacture of shoes. Three days later, the Second Confederate Conscription Act authorized the "quartermaster general to delimit the profits of all contracting mills to seventy-five percent on costs through the control of exempt or detailed workers" (p. 33).

The Second Confederate Conscription Act not only delimited the profits from the mills but also expanded the age of men drafted from 35 to 45, increased the number of exempt occupations, and allowed an exemption for those who owned or supervised 20 or more slaves. John G. Selby, in his essay on Virginia's civilians, stated that substitution under this new act provided "some essential income for the needy," with the prices for substitutions in April averaging around \$1,000 and doubling by the end of the year (pp. 45–46). But civilians had other fears besides conscription.

As in any war or conflict, civilians constantly feared being looted and pillaged, which could be on a "colossal scale," but Virginians had little to fear. Unlike Kentucky, where one month after the firing on Fort Sumter roving guerrilla parties were spotted in the Lexington area, Virginia witnessed very little of this. Importantly, Selby points out, "random acts of kindness" occurred while "Northern soldiers and Southern civilians tested the boundaries of a new, forced relationship" (p. 38). However, in July 1862, three Federal armies scattered across Virginia were consolidated into the Army of Virginia under the command of

Maj Gen John Pope. Selby touches briefly on three general orders that General Pope issued shortly after taking command with the backing of Pres. Abraham Lincoln, which Selby believes “significantly altered the policy and perhaps the outcome of the war” (p. 42). One such order, General Order No. 11, would be used by various Federal commanders throughout the Border South and South in dealing with the citizenry—the oath of allegiance to the Union. This order stated that those who violated their oath would be “shot, and [their] property (including slaves) seized and applied to the public use” (p. 42).

Virginia at War, 1862 contains an excellent essay on the Confederate hospital city, Richmond. In February 1861, the Confederate Congress authorized the establishment of the medical bureau, to be headed by Surgeon General Preston Moore. As David J. Coles highlights, Moore had the monumental task of building an Army hospital system from scratch. By 1862, Richmond developed into not only a political and military center but also a medical center; by war’s end, hospitals throughout Richmond would treat between 200,000 and 300,000 men. Coles ably convinces the reader that 1862 was the turning point for medical care with the development of the “encampment” hospitals, along with smaller general hospitals established and funded by specific states to treat their soldiers (p. 72). Ultimately, six encampment hospitals were established: Chimborazo, Winder, Howard’s Grove, Louisiana, Jackson, and Stuart. Chimborazo consisted of more than 150 buildings with close to 100 wards and became the most famous of the six encampments, having a capacity of over 3,000 and treating roughly 78,000 patients by war’s end (p. 75).

One downfall of this compilation was in Brian Steel Wills’s essay, “Virginia’s Troubled Interior.” Wills ably describes the Virginia state line, which constantly changed hands throughout the war. Bushwhacking (or guerrilla/irregular warfare) was not an uncommon act on the border of western Virginia and Kentucky. It was in this region that Confederate brigadier general Humphrey Marshall with his Army of Eastern Kentucky would base their operations, but they were constantly hampered by small bands of guerrilla fighters. Wills fails to point out that these groups rarely cared which side they were attacking—with booty their prime objective—or the frequency with which they occurred in this area. Wills points to Brian McKnight’s *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (2006), which expertly handles the environment in western Virginia during this time.

Davis and Robertson have produced an excellent second book for the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies. The editors have skillfully assembled essays that examine various aspects of society in the context of this turbulent period. Overall, *Virginia at War, 1862* is an excellent work that helps to inform the military historian/strategist about the initial stages of this epic conflict in our history. Serious historians should include this on their bookshelves as a reference on the initial stages of the Civil War.

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The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914–1940 by Mona L. Siegel. Cambridge University Press, 2004, 227 pp., \$80.00.

Mona Siegel, assistant professor of history at California State University, Sacramento, explores the connections between educators, the society they serve, and the roots of pacifism and patriotism. In doing so, she tackles one of the most difficult cases, the French experience from the beginning of World War I until their defeat by Germany in 1940. Using a wealth of archival sources and contemporary school textbooks, she revises orthodox scholarship that holds French schoolteachers partly responsible for the moral decay of their nation that led to the catastrophe of 1940. According to the narrative promulgated first by members of the French right and later picked up by Marshal Philippe Pétain's Vichy government, schoolteachers sapped the national will between 1918 and 1940 by indoctrinating students with pacifist doctrine. This labeling of schoolteachers was just one of many attempts the right made to relieve pressure on the army by identifying scapegoats for the French defeat. Like other such attempts, the case of schoolteacher culpability for the flaws in French society in the interwar years is much more complicated.

Siegel begins by showing how teachers' values mirrored those of the nation at the beginning of the Great War. She uses textbooks produced during the war along with lesson plans and student class exercises from several regions to paint a picture of the nation's determination to defeat the German invaders. Women consistently emerge as influential agents because of the demand for men to serve in the trenches. Over time, the teachers began to reflect on the terrible materiel and human costs of the war, which prompted subtle shifts in the ways they communicated moral lessons about the war to their students. This was not unique to the teaching profession; war-weariness affected all of French society as four long years of sacrifice took its toll. Nevertheless, teachers remained patriotic and loyal throughout the conflict.

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, schools adopted a narrative that sought to honor the French poilus' sacrifices while blaming the Germans for the devastation that accompanied the war. Once again, Siegel shows that the curricula supported the general thrust of government and popular opinion rather than seeking to undermine the national spirit. But the persistent evidence of the war—especially in those regions where the fighting occurred—gradually began to influence a shift in how French educators viewed the utility of war as a national policy.

Women comprised the vanguard of social change because of their roles as mothers and teachers. Siegel shows that the removal of men from large segments of the workforce brought women in contact with jobs and responsibilities that they had never experienced before. This was especially true in the teaching profession, which even before the war had represented one of the few professional outlets for women in a nation where women did not have voting rights. The

continuation of a strong feminine presence in the teaching profession—added to the voice of war veterans who grew increasingly disillusioned about the utility of war—began to shape a consensus that favored collective security and disarmament over the power balancing that had led to war.

The labor movement also played a significant role in how teachers expressed their opinions about the utility of war between 1919 and 1940. The Syndicate Nationale (SN) became the most influential union representing teachers' interests. It also became a platform for shaping national education policy because it attracted a large swath of teachers from across the nation. Through the SN teachers debated the value of war, pushed for educational reform, supported militant teachers who protested government mandates for curriculum or textbook content, and refined their opinions about how to approach the subject of war with their students. One union member proposed eliminating history as a curriculum subject because the available histories of the day were inevitably focused on wars and competitions between nations, with the rationale that propagating a view of war as a normal event in the interaction between nations made its occurrence more likely. Although the proposal met with defeat, the debate it sparked caused many teachers to question the content and methods they used to educate their students about war.

The collective security impulse also encouraged French teachers to reach out to their counterparts in other countries in a couple of different ways. The SN attempted to forge relationships with German unions. In the early interwar years these efforts met with obvious difficulty owing to the lingering resentment harbored toward the German people—in later years visits between French and German educators reflected an awareness of the need to create vehicles for understanding the perspectives of other nations as a way to prevent conflict. Unfortunately, the Nazi rise to power in Germany curtailed the burgeoning relationship between educators just as it began to gain momentum. The other significant alternative that Siegel explores was the effort to create a common language, Esperanto, to increase understanding among European nations. This met with even less success than the exchanges because of the lack of buy-in among teachers, the government, and students and their families.

As war loomed on the horizon, teachers shifted their perspective from one that opposed war at any cost to one that accepted the necessity of defensive warfare. Here again, Siegel shows that rather than acting as agents determined to sap the national will, teachers' values and opinions reflected the will of the nation that was firmly grounded in the Republican ideals of *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité*. Moreover, teachers left their classrooms to serve in the army without protest or question when France declared war in September 1939. Far from being a subversive influence that actively campaigned to defeat the nation, teachers enriched the debate about the utility of war and encouraged efforts to find collective solutions to international problems.

The French loss to Germany left scars on the national psyche that persist even until the present. This prevails in part because of the attempts to shift blame for

the defeat to various groups within the society. Mona Siegel shows that in the case of teachers, the blame is not as cut-and-dried as the orthodox interpretations would have us believe. French teachers certainly developed a consensus centered on pacifism—but a pacifism rooted in a deep sense of patriotism. They taught their students to be reluctant to go to war, not to refuse to go to war in defense of their nation. There are many lessons for today in this book. Through her excellent research and writing, Siegel points to the socializing role of educators, to the role of women as leaders in society, to the utility of war, and to the dangers of accepting simplistic explanations for complex problems. Strategists would do well to consider how these issues might affect the national consensus today and in the future.

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Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965 by Mark Moyar. Cambridge University Press, 2006, 542 pp., \$32.00.

Mark Moyar's *Triumph Forsaken* is testimony to the continuing tumultuousness of the Vietnam War's historiography. The nature of the war, the causes of America's defeat—even that we were defeated—remain hotly disputed. The war itself may have ended in 1975, but it continues to be waged among American historians and political commentators. Indeed, much of what has been written about the war is ideologically adulterated. Leftist orthodoxy, still the dominant school of thought, holds that the war was both immoral and strategically mistaken, whereas an emerging neoconservative revisionist school sees the war as a noble and strategically imperative, albeit poorly executed, undertaking.

Moyar—who received his doctorate from Cambridge, now teaches at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia, and considers himself a victim of liberal academic bigotry—stands firmly on the revisionist Right. Indeed, Moyar's book is *the* Vietnam War book for those who still believe that the United States had vital interests in South Vietnam's survival; that US abandonment of South Vietnam in 1965 would have triggered the communization of the rest of Southeast Asia; that Vietnamese nationalism was a minor force on the Communist side of the war and had little to do with the war's outcome; that Ho Chi Minh was simply a stalking horse for Chinese imperialism; that South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem was a wise and effective leader who had the Communists on the run until the United States stupidly incited a coup against him; and that journalists David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan were unwitting accomplices of Hanoi.

It is no wonder that *Triumph Forsaken* has received loud applause from neoconservative organs—e.g., the *Wall Street Journal*, *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *Washington Times*, *New York Sun*—which continue to preach that America's defeat in Vietnam was self-inflicted by presidential meddling in military operations, a hostile media, and a near-treasonous antiwar movement. Moyar makes no bones

about his determination to challenge what he terms “the reigning ideological orthodoxy” on the war, which is centered among liberal American university professors guilty of “haughty derision and ostracism” of those who, like Moyar, take a contrary view. Indeed, Moyar once told a colleague of mine at the Air University that, as an undergraduate, he determined the liberal orthodoxy in the war to be so wrong that he decided to go to graduate school in part to obtain the academic credentials necessary to credibly challenge that orthodoxy.

There is no question that the liberal orthodoxy on the war is well-entrenched among university social science departments across the country and that the very nature of orthodoxy, liberal or otherwise, makes it intolerant of those who question fundamental assumptions. There is also no question that *Triumph Forsaken*, which covers American policy and events in Indochina from 1954 to the commitment of US ground combat forces in 1965 (a second volume covering the remainder of the war is in the works), is the most detailed revisionist work published to date. Thoroughly researched, well written, and focused as much on the Communist side of the war as on the American side, *Triumph Forsaken* builds on previous revisionist works, notably Michael Lind’s *Vietnam: The Necessary War* (2002) and C. Dale Walton’s *The Myth of Inevitable U.S. Defeat in Vietnam* (2002), by offering (in Moyar’s own words) “many new interpretations” and by “challeng[ing] many orthodox interpretations that have hitherto gone unchallenged.”

Yet, in attempting to refute virtually every tenet of the liberal orthodoxy—and some, especially of the Marxist variety, are untenable—Moyar establishes a counterorthodoxy of his own, replete with evidence-challenged assertions and counterfactual hindsight. (Hindsight is never 20/20 vision; it is, rather, a refraction through the lens of subsequent events. The Munich Conference of 1938 is notorious only because it was followed by World War II and the Holocaust; we would have long since forgotten it had Hitler dropped dead after his last meeting with Neville Chamberlain.)

Moyar announces that “the domino theory was valid,” that Vietnam was “a wise war fought under foolish constraints,” and that the United States could have won the war early on had it stuck with Diem and invaded Laos and North Vietnam—bold moves that would have provoked “a Chinese abstention from the fighting.” He further announces that the stakes were enormous. A US decision to relinquish South Vietnam in 1965 would have triggered “the crumbling of American power in Asia,” including the “defection of Japan” and the loss of “access to vital Indonesian sea lanes.” (The United States would then “have [had] to invade Indonesia” to restore that access.) Worse still, “forfeiture of South Vietnam” would

decrease America’s national strength and undermine confidence in the United States across the world, thereby reducing America’s long-term ability to resist Communism on the remaining Cold War fronts in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, which then might lead to the termination of key alliances and to major alterations in the trajectory of . . . the Cold War.

Sound familiar? It should. It is the same kind of apocalyptic rhetoric the Johnson administration used to mobilize public support for intervention in a war that was just as unnecessary as the neoconservatives' strategic fantasy-driven American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Triumph Forsaken is as ideologically contaminated as the liberal orthodoxy it seeks to refute. As such, it contributes little to a better understanding of an exceptionally complex war that continues to arouse American political passions.

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